

# AI Readiness Skills: A Common Minimum Framework for Upskilling Humans



## Abstract

This paper proposes a framework of a skill-set called **"AI Readiness Skills"** that every human needs to survive & succeed in the rapidly evolving AI world. The framework addresses four key objectives which are common to all humans: staying safe from AI-related threats, rebuilding careers after AI replaces jobs, retaining current jobs as AI becomes increasingly capable, and qualifying for new jobs in the post-AI economy.

The framework is built as a three-level pyramid with Digital Citizenship & Internet Maturity (DCIM) skills at the bottom, the 4Cs (Critical Thinking, Creativity, Collaboration, and Communication) in the middle, and AI Strategy at the top. We provide evidence showing why this skill-set is foundational for humans to respond to the ever-increasing threats & opportunities of Artificial Intelligence.

## Table of Contents

<b>1</b>	Introduction: AI Will Dominate Industries and Humans Must Adapt Fast	4
<b>2</b>	The Objectives Achieved Through AI Readiness Skills	5
<b>3</b>	The AI Readiness Skills Framework: The Minimum Set of Skills Needed for Humans to Have a Career in the Post-AI World	5
<b>4</b>	Understanding the Base Level of Pyramid in Detail – DCIM Skills	7
<b>5</b>	Understanding the Middle Level of Pyramid in Detail – The 4Cs	12
<b>6</b>	Understanding the Top Level of Pyramid in Detail – Strategic Use of AI	18
<b>7</b>	How the AI Readiness Skills Help Achieve the Key Objectives	21
<b>8</b>	Conclusion and Call To Action	24

# 1

## Introduction: AI Will Dominate Industries and Humans Must Adapt Fast

AI is transforming society and the workforce. From automating complex industrial processes to the growth of personal digital assistants, AI's influence is becoming widespread across multiple sectors.<sup>[1][2][3]</sup> The rise of generative AI has gained global attention, with many seeing it as a transformative industrial revolution. This major technology shift challenges all humans to adapt quickly by acquiring new skills and abilities.<sup>[4]</sup>

This paper proposes a structured framework called "**AI Readiness Skills**". It is a minimum skill-set which a human would compulsorily need to stay safe from the threats & risks of AI technologies on their careers & personal lives, while making their best utilization for professional growth and personal wellbeing.

It is worth noting that this skill-set defines the **baseline** of skills needed by humans, **not the topline**. It excludes all domain specific skills which might be critical for building expertise in a domain. The framework is organized as a three-level pyramid, with Digital Citizenship & Internet Maturity (DCIM) Skills at the bottom, the 4Cs (Critical Thinking, Creativity, Collaboration, and Communication) in the middle, and skills for strategic use of AI at the top.

# 2

## The Objectives Achieved Through AI Readiness Skills

The proposed "AI Readiness Skills" are critical for every human to achieve four key objectives:

### 1. Stay safe from online safety threats.

*(all online threats have been exacerbated due to malicious use of generative AI)<sup>[5]</sup>*

### 2. Restart a career after losing a job due to AI.

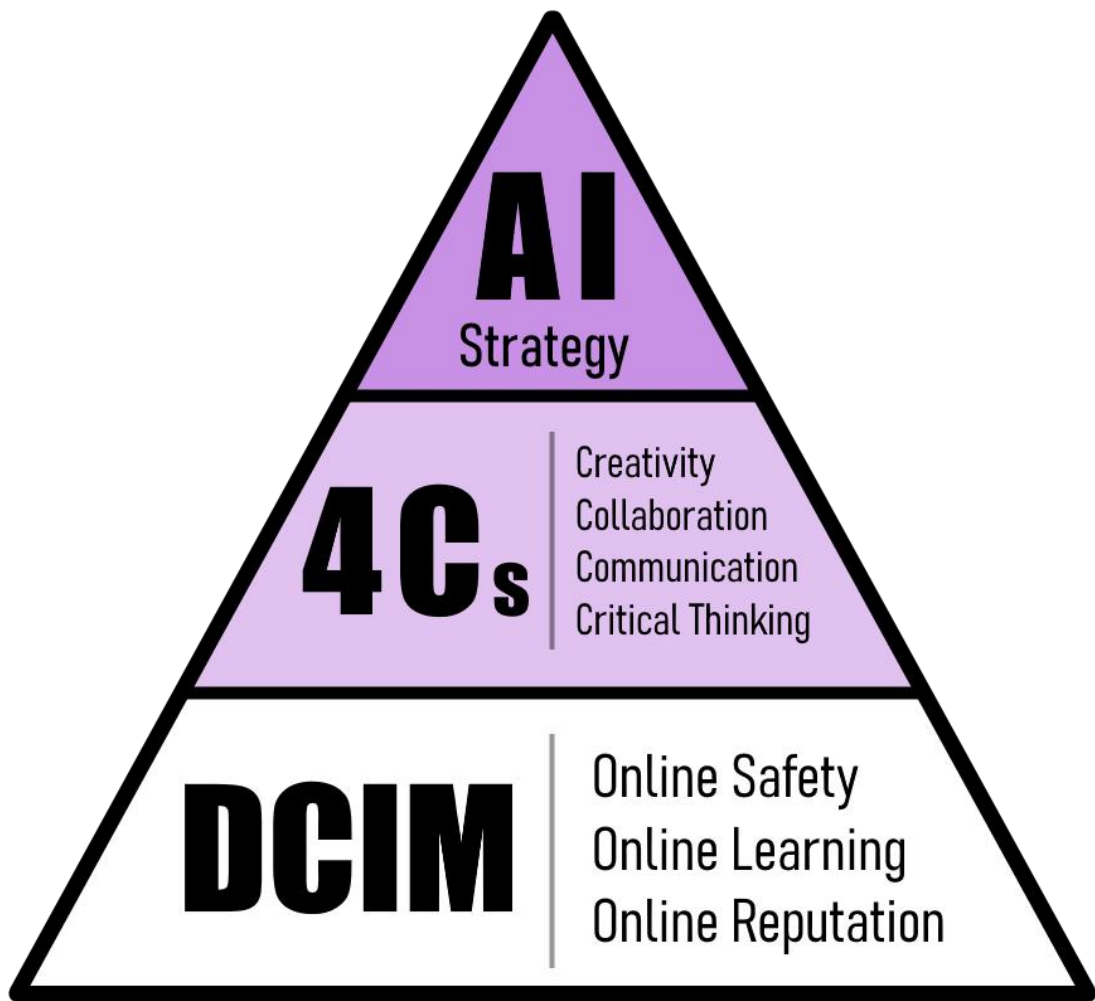
### 3. Avoid losing an existing job amidst lay-offs driven by AI-adoption by companies.

### 4. Be eligible for new types of jobs that emerge in the post-AI world.

# 3

## The AI Readiness Skills Framework: The Minimum Set of Skills Needed for Humans to Survive & Succeed in the Post-AI World

The "AI Readiness Skills" framework is structured as a three-level pyramid, visually represented as follows:



## *AI Readiness Skills*

The base level of the pyramid is formed by **DCIM Skills (Digital Citizenship & Internet Maturity)**. These skills create a strong foundation for safe and productive use of the Internet, which manifests in the form of three core competencies - online safety, online learning and online reputation management.

The middle level includes the **4Cs (Critical Thinking, Creativity, Collaboration, and Communication)**. These widely accepted skills are vital for success in the 21st century and are particularly important for humans to remain relevant in the AI-driven job market.<sup>[6]</sup>

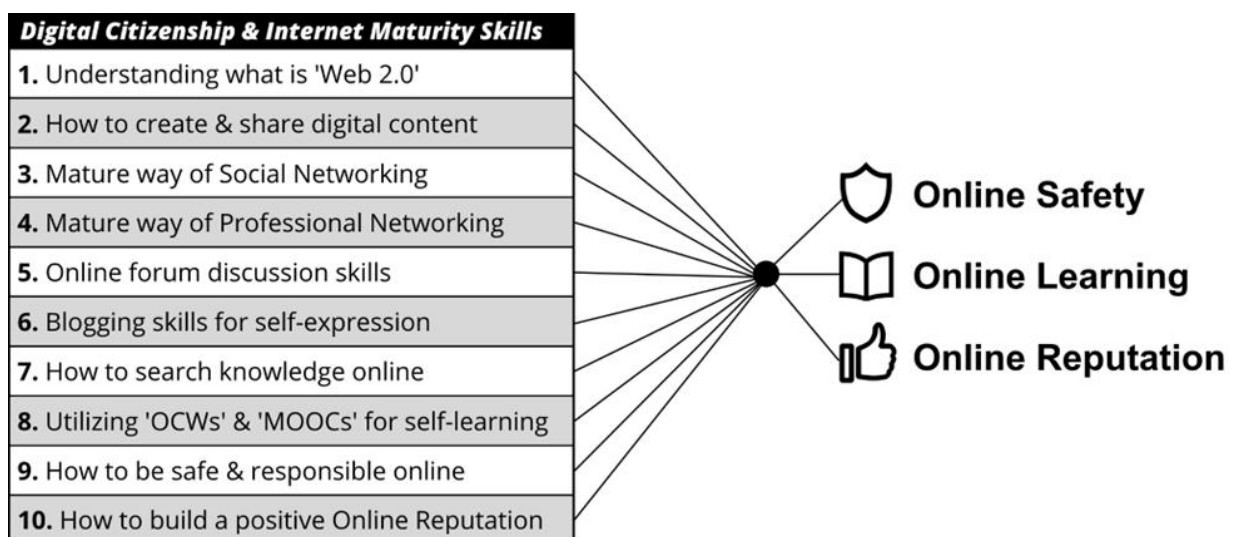
The top level of the pyramid focuses on **strategic & effective use of AI Tools**. Therefore it's dependent on the levels below.

# 4

## Understanding the Base Level of Pyramid in Detail – DCIM Skills

Digital Citizenship and Internet Maturity skills help people navigate the digital world **safely** and **effectively**.<sup>[7][8]</sup> As AI becomes increasingly embedded in all online interactions, strong DCIM skills serve as the foundation for developing higher-level AI Readiness capabilities. DCIM skills comprise of ten digital skills that combine to provide three major digital competencies:

- ✓ **Online Safety,**
- ✓ **Online Learning,** and
- ✓ **Online Reputation.**





## 4.1 Online Safety Skill

AI has made online safety much more complex by empowering the cyber criminals to launch sophisticated phishing attacks, create hyper-realistic deepfake images & videos, mimic voices of anyone with high accuracy, generate code for dangerous malware quickly... the list is long.<sup>[9]</sup>

According to CrowdStrike's 2025 Global Threat Report, there was a 442% increase in voice phishing (vishing) attacks between the first and second halves of 2024, driven by AI-generated phishing and impersonation tactics.<sup>[10]</sup>

The efficiency and speed of cyber criminals to target an individual or society, using social engineering attacks or technological attacks, has been significantly boosted by AI.<sup>[11]</sup> The entry barrier of skills for becoming a "successful" cyber criminal has been demolished by AI.<sup>[12]</sup>

The online safety best-practices are well known, including being careful when sharing personal information online, particularly with AI chatbots, using multi-factor authentication, creating strong passwords, and keeping software updated, staying alert to phishing attempts and understanding AI security risks, maintaining healthy skepticism towards online content, and verifying information through multiple reliable sources, etc.

These capabilities cannot be developed simply by reading a list of Do's & Don'ts or attending a few awareness workshops. They require deep



understanding about the nature of threats on social media & modern-day Internet, and serious hands-on practice to avoid them. The objective of staying safe from AI-enhanced threats is directly addressed through Online Safety Skills under DCIM.



## 4.2 Online Learning Skill

AI is rapidly changing job requirements across all industries while simultaneously creating new roles that didn't exist previously.<sup>[13]</sup> That's why the skill of learning new skills is **critical** for career survival.<sup>[14]</sup> In the post-AI world, the curricula of schools and colleges, and the books based on them, might never be able to stay updated with the new knowledge and perpetually remain out-dated. That's simply because the change cycles of the industry have become shorter than one year and the update cycle of curricula is much longer than that. That's why the trend of **Skills-Based Hiring** is gaining popularity in the industry, which prioritizes skills of a candidate over his/her educational qualification.<sup>[15]</sup>

The only place anyone can learn relevant knowledge & skills would be the Internet. Professionals must commit to **lifelong learning** and develop high adaptability. The rapid pace of AI development is enforcing everyone to become an **expert self-learner**.

Online learning skills include developing the ability to identify trustworthy information, recognizing credible sources while avoiding misinformation and misleading content, mastering information literacy that enables critical evaluation of online information for biases & intent, developing appropriate skepticism toward online claims, utilizing reliable

fact-checking resources, and managing information overload.

Skills to make the best use of Open Courseware, MOOCs, AI-powered learning platforms, Blogs and Discussion Forums are also a critical part of online learning skills.



### 4.3 Online Reputation Skill

The value of traditional college degrees in the eyes of an employer is continuously **decreasing**.<sup>[16]</sup> Degree is no longer a factor to judge the capabilities of a job applicant.<sup>[17][18][19]</sup> However, almost every employer judges candidates by how they have presented themselves on **LinkedIn, Blog, Youtube, Facebook, Instagram etc.**<sup>[20]</sup> Employers prefer to assess their capabilities by what the candidates have shared online, not their marks on the marksheets. Therefore, a positive online reputation is a critical asset for an aspiring professional now. In the eyes of potential employers, partners, clients, and collaborators, your online reputation equals your capabilities and trustworthiness. Conversely, a negative online reputation would be a severe liability for one's career.

This trend will further intensify when AI starts to conduct the hiring interviews and online reputation assessment of candidates. Then, **a well-managed online reputation will be the ONLY way to attract the attention of AI recruiter agents!**

Building a positive online reputation requires strategically showcasing skills, achievements, and expertise on various social platforms and doing online activities to impress the potential employers or clients. It's not

easy! We say online reputation is **the black-belt of Internet maturity** skills! Only when a student has mastered the top 9 DCIM skills, as shown in the figure above, he/she will have the maturity to craft a positive online reputation across LinkedIn, Youtube, Facebook, Instagram, personal Blog/Website, relevant Forums etc.



#### 4.4 “Career Insurance” - The Combination of Online Learning & Online Reputation Skills

Online learning and online reputation skills work together like “career insurance” in the AI era. When someone gets laid-off due to AI-automation, online learning skills will ensure quick acquisition of new industry-relevant skills. Then online reputation skills ensure that the person is able to showcase those newly acquired skills on the Internet, to attract relevant employers or clients.

This powerful combination creates a **safety net** that allows for quick

career transitions when facing AI-driven job market changes. The ability to continuously learn new skills and effectively communicate those capabilities to the market forms a robust mechanism for **career resilience** that becomes more valuable over time.

This capability to restart one's career is very important for everyone, as AI-induced lay-offs become a new normal.

# 5

## Understanding the Middle Level of Pyramid in Detail – The 4Cs

On top of DCIM skills, the middle level of the AI Readiness skills pyramid includes the well-known 4Cs of 21st century education:

- ✓ **Critical Thinking,**
- ✓ **Creativity,**
- ✓ **Collaboration,** and
- ✓ **Communication.**

The importance of 4Cs will be clear from a simple yet useful career hack we have created:

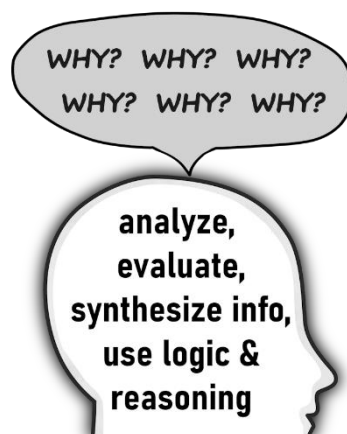
A thumb rule for assessing how AI-safe a job is

***If a job requires frequent application of all 4Cs, it will remain safe from AI automation. Conversely, if any job can be performed without frequent application of all 4Cs, it will be done by AI.***

The 4Cs have long been recognized as essential for 21st-century success and have now become the **biggest differentiator** among human and AI workers.<sup>[21][22]</sup> These 4Cs are absolutely crucial for avoiding job loss due to AI adoption and for establishing eligibility for emerging job categories. Let's understand each one.

## 5.1 Critical Thinking

Critical thinking represents the ability to analyze information objectively, question underlying assumptions systematically, and evaluate evidence carefully. Basically, it's about **asking a lot of "Whys"**. Now, when AI can out-perform humans in executing instructions, i.e. in the 'how' part of any task, **humans must excel in the 'why' part of tasks**. That means humans must excel in taking wise decisions, making right choices (or judgement) and understand the purpose in any project. Critical thinking skill is critical to excel in the 'why' part of any project!



There is another reason why critical thinking skill is now critical for humans. AI generates vast amounts of information quickly and convincingly, critical thinking becomes essential for **evaluating the accuracy, reliability, and potential biases** present in AI-generated content.

To effectively evaluate AI outputs, it requires questioning data sources and their reliability, comparing AI-generated insights with human expertise and experience, and identifying unusual patterns or anomalies that might indicate errors or biases in AI reasoning.

Human judgment remains indispensable in this context. AI should assist and enhance human decision-making processes, never replace them entirely, especially in situations requiring deep contextual understanding and complex ethical considerations. Only the humans with strong critical thinking skills can make decisions with ethical reasoning and contextual awareness that current AI systems fundamentally lack.<sup>[23]</sup>

## 5.2 Creativity

In this context, creativity means **creative thinking, innovative thinking, out-of-the-box thinking, and problem-solving**. Creativity in this context is **not about being artistic**.



Humans with strong creativity can do the following two things very well:

- ✓ **Finding new ways of solving a problem**
- ✓ **Imagining new kinds of things that can be built**

Both of these capabilities are now critical for humans, because, as explained earlier, AI can out-perform humans in executing instructions, i.e. in the 'how' part of any task.

Now, even the capability of AI models to "think" creatively & innovatively is increasing every few months.<sup>[24]</sup> They too can generate new ideas, imagine novel solutions, help overcome creative blocks, or act as a catalyst in the creative process. AI has already reached the level of becoming a powerful creative assistant.<sup>[25][26]</sup> This makes it even more important for a human to be **better than AI at creative thinking**, providing vision, and applying contextual understanding. The synergy between human creativity and AI creativity offers tremendous potential for innovation that was unthinkable till now.

## 5.3 Communication

Let's clear one big misconception about communication skills which is deeply rooted in Indian mindset. A vast majority of Indians have a very narrow definition of "good communication skills". They equate it to good English. Good communication is the ability to effectively convey one's views and opinions to others, ensuring that the listener understands exactly what the speaker wants to communicate, without any confusion.

It is a fundamental skill in modern workplaces for effective collaboration within and outside the teams. Poor communication creates misunderstandings that can reduce overall team productivity.

In the AI-dominated world, effective communication becomes even more important as it serves as the bridge between humans and AI systems. It enables you to convey your intentions, objectives, and specific requirements to AI models effectively.

The need to precisely “engineer” the prompts for AI tools is no longer necessary to get the latest LLMs to produce the desired output.<sup>[27]</sup> But the need for clear and **unambiguous instructions with clear context** will always remain important.

Communication skills are also important to let the world know about your other 3Cs – Creativity, Collaboration and Critical Thinking.

## 5.4 Collaboration

Collaboration skills are primarily about **teamwork**. This involves working effectively with others to achieve common goals. In workplaces, effective teamwork becomes the basic requirement for successful completion of tasks. Collaboration skill is a fundamental human strength that current AI systems cannot fully replicate, despite their impressive capabilities in many other areas.

While AI can perform many individual tasks autonomously and efficiently, complex challenges require collaboration between **multiple people and even AIs working together on a project**.

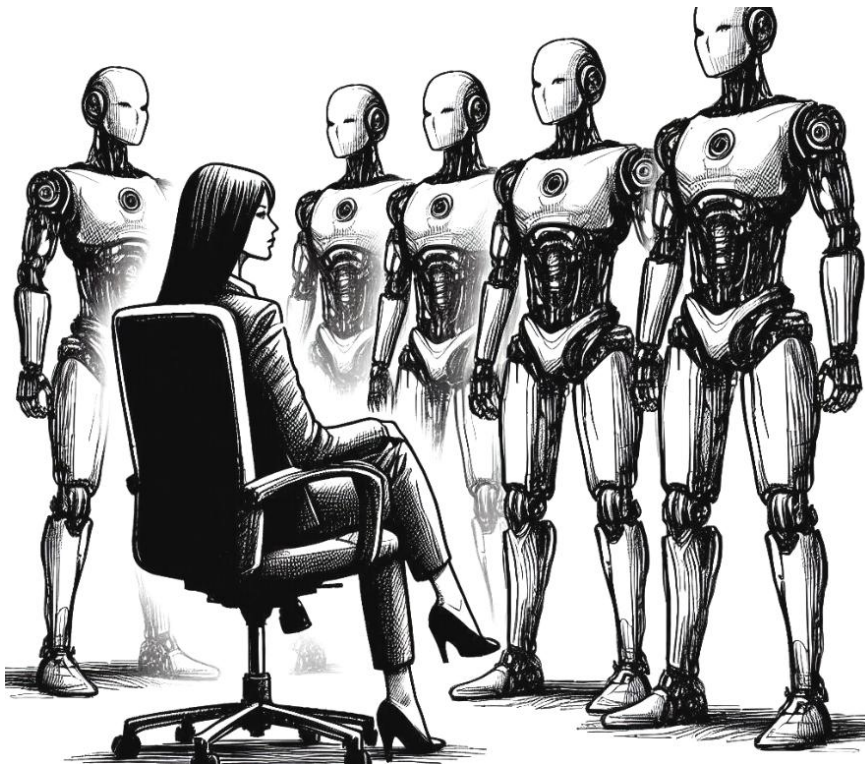
Good collaboration requires maintaining genuine human connections, empathy, emotional intelligence, trust-building through transparency & authenticity, and seamless movement between the online and the physical world. These capabilities are difficult for AIs to master in the near future.

The ‘Human-AI’ collaboration is a new scenario which is fast emerging in organizations. It’s about humans and AI working together on a project. In most such scenarios AI brings the strengths of data analysis, pattern



recognition, and process automation, while humans bring intuition, critical thinking, and emotional intelligence.

## 5.5 Mastering the 4Cs makes you the "Boss of AI"!



Only the people who master the 4C skills can become the **"boss of AI"**. Others will have to compete against AIs in repetitive jobs and are guaranteed to lose.

4C skills make you capable of performing complex roles of a **leader**, a **visionary**, a **decision-maker**, a **strategic planner**, an **entrepreneur**, a **risk-taker** etc. In these roles you can use AI as your assistant. It is unlikely that AI would be taking on those roles anytime soon.

# 6

## Understanding the Top Level of Pyramid in Detail – Strategic Use of AI

At the top of the AI Readiness Skills pyramid lies the skills to use AI tools **strategically & effectively**. The key point here is to have a **strategy** for using AI tools or agents for achieving the highest possible productivity and quality in any project. Now that we have AI tools or agents for almost every white-collar task, the differentiator would be the strategy applied by a human to use them, not merely the access to them.<sup>[28]</sup> To build a good strategy for using AI tools in a project, a human must be good at the following four aspects:

- ✓ **Output clarity**
- ✓ **Process & workflow clarity**
- ✓ **AI Tool selection & combination**
- ✓ **Prompt writing**

### 6.1 Output Clarity

Success with any AI tool requires "output clarity" in the user's mind, which means knowing exactly what you want to achieve before prompting the tool. Vague or ambiguous prompts yield low quality or unwanted outputs. Output clarity will result into the right kind of prompts with clearly defined output, target audience, desired format, or technical requirements so that AI's output aligns perfectly with your desired output. Having output clarity requires very clear understanding of the "why" of the task.

*“The sooner you start coding, the longer it takes”*

It means that if a programmer starts writing code without sufficiently thinking, planning & documenting the desired output of the code, he/she will end-up wasting a lot of time in modifying the code later. So, applying the same logic to AI tools, we can say...

*“The sooner you start prompting, the longer it takes to get the desired output from AI”*

## **6.2 Process & Workflow Clarity**

If the task is complex or multi-step, the human will require the clarity of all the steps before applying AI to the task. The proof of that clarity should be a well-documented workflow or a Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for the task.

## **6.3 AI Tool Selection & Combination**

The rapidly expanding AI landscape includes thousands of specialized tools for almost every knowledge task, each with their own strengths & weaknesses.<sup>[28]</sup> Successfully selecting the right tool based on specific task requirements, cost considerations, and desired output quality becomes essential for optimal results.

Like a skilled craftsman selecting appropriate tools for each job, AI users must pick the best AI tool for the specific task or sub-task. This can only be done effectively when you regularly play or experiment with lots of AI tools.

For complex and multi-step tasks, each step might require a different AI tool (or agent). This would require the human user to create a 'chains of AI tools' working together seamlessly to handle complex, multi-step processes. Based on well-designed SOPs, each AI tool performs a specific step in the overall process. Achieving high quality output with consistency with a chain of AI tools is advanced level skill, requiring serious practice!

## 6.4 Prompt Writing

Effective prompting is both an art and a science! It's a combination of **clear articulation**, **keyword-rich vocabulary**, and **high output clarity**. Well-crafted prompts include **sufficient context**, well-specified output format, appropriate tone, and even relevant examples.<sup>[29]</sup> Techniques like chain-of-thought prompting, defining AI personas, or limiting output scope refine responses.<sup>[30][31]</sup> Many techniques have evolved to write effective prompts, which a user can learn from Youtube.

We must repeat what we said under communication skills section - Although the need to precisely "engineer" the prompts for AI tools is no longer necessary to get the latest LLMs to produce the desired output, the need for clear and **unambiguous instructions with clear context-setting** (in any language) will always remain important.<sup>[27]</sup>

# 7

## How the AI Readiness Skills Help Achieve the Key Objectives

As mentioned in the beginning, the AI Readiness Skills framework is specifically designed to address four key objectives for successfully navigating the AI age, with each level of the pyramid contributing strategically to these objectives.

**Achieving the Objective #1: Staying safe from online safety threats** (which are becoming even more worse due to malicious use of generative AI).

This objective is primarily addressed through the **Online Safety Skills** which are a part of DCIM Skills. These skills make a person ready to understand & handle the threats & risks coming from the Internet and AI.

**Achieving the Objective #2: Restarting a career after losing a job due to AI.**

It is important to understand the difference between a job-loss due to AI and a job-loss due to other reasons. When a human loses a job because AI took over it, that job role will cease to exist for humans across all companies, as all companies in a very short span of time would adopt the new AI tools or agents for it. Therefore switching to a new employer for the same job-role will no longer be an option! The only option would

be to restart your career in a different role. Career restart capability comes through developing strong **Online Learning and Online Reputation Skills**, both of which are a part of DCIM Skills. Online Learning skills are critical for on-demand upskilling and reskilling, in response to market needs, while Online Reputation skills are critical to showcase those newly acquired capabilities to potential employers. This powerful combination acts as a "**career insurance**", making a human resilient to frequent career disruptions.

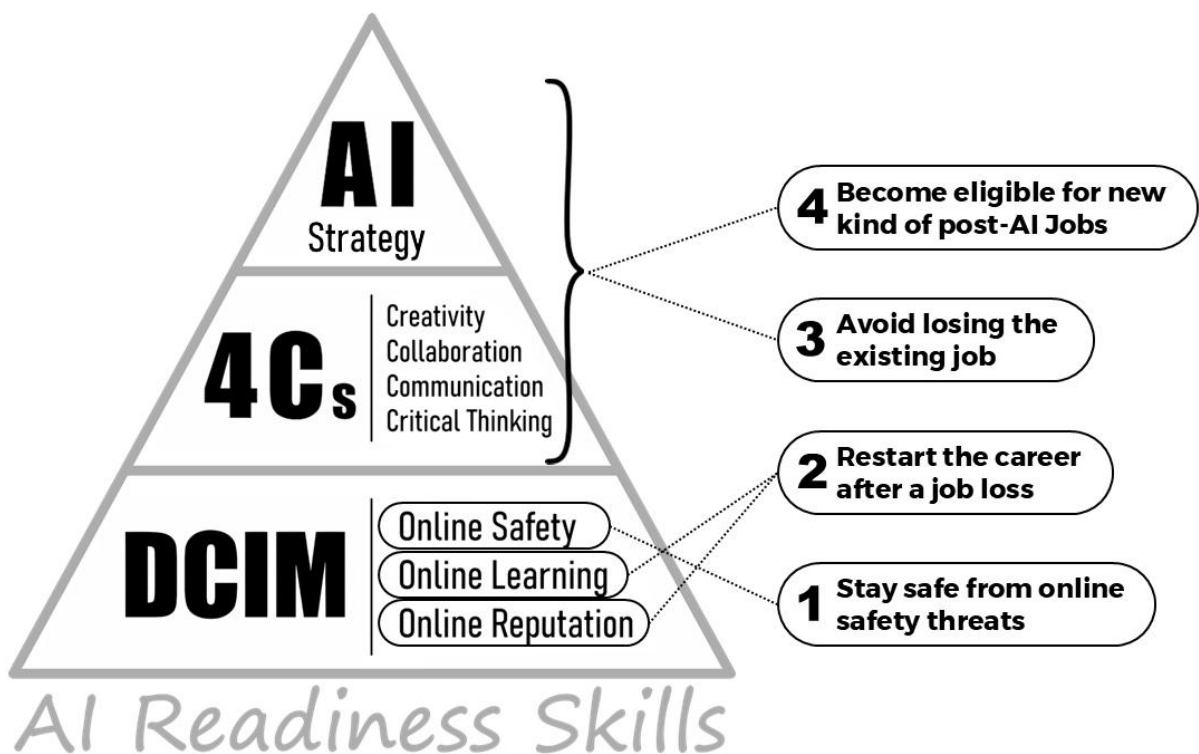
### **Achieving the Objective #3: Avoiding losing an existing job amidst lay-offs caused due to AI.**

Avoiding a layoff from the job is achieved through mastering the 4Cs and developing effective strategies for using AI tools. Mastering Critical Thinking, Creativity, Communication, and Collaboration, makes a human capable of performing **non-repetitive & complex tasks** which AIs cannot perform effectively. Any human having strong 4C skills will be safe from AI replacement for a long time. By also mastering the strategic use of AI tools, that human would also be productive by 21st century standards, and thus remain significantly immune from job losses.

### **Achieving the Objective #4: Becoming eligible for new types of jobs that emerge in the post-AI world.**

The new types of jobs which emerge in the post-AI world will be **complex, non-repetitive** and requiring high levels of **empathy & human insight**. The best examples of such roles are **leaders, visionaries, decision-makers, strategic planners, entrepreneurs,**

and **risk-takers** etc. All such jobs would require high-level mastery of the 4C skills. The future jobs would also require very high levels of productivity & quality which would be achieved through the strategic use of AI tools.



# 8

## Conclusion and Call To Action

The "AI Readiness Skills" framework comprising of DCIM skills, the 4Cs, and AI strategy, represents the **minimum** skill set required to survive & thrive in the AI age. These skills are critical for ensuring personal safety against AI-enhanced digital threats, enabling career restarts after job displacement, preventing job loss during increasing AI adoption in companies, and becoming eligible for newly emerging job roles.

**The capabilities of AI are increasing month-on-month. If the 'AI Readiness' of humans, especially students of India, is not taken up URGENTLY on HIGHEST PRIORITY, we might witness catastrophic outcomes among youth in the period of 2027 to 2035.**

**WE STRONGLY RECOMMEND THE SCHOOLS & COLLEGES TO START THE 'AI READINESS SKILLS MISSION' URGENTLY. We've created FREE toolkits for that. Download from – <https://aireadinessskills.com>**



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## About iMature.in

iMature.in is India's pioneer in 'Digital Citizenship & Internet Maturity' education, with 12 years of thought leadership. Been through incubation at IIM Bangalore, ISB Hyderabad & TISS Mumbai, the team is working to design the post-AGI education system.

## About Humans Winning AI

Humans Winning AI is a growing community around AI Readiness, and aspires to become the world's largest.

## Official Website of 'AI Readiness Skills Mission'

To access all the resources (toolkits etc) for schools and colleges on 'AI Readiness Skills', please visit <https://aireadinessskills.com>

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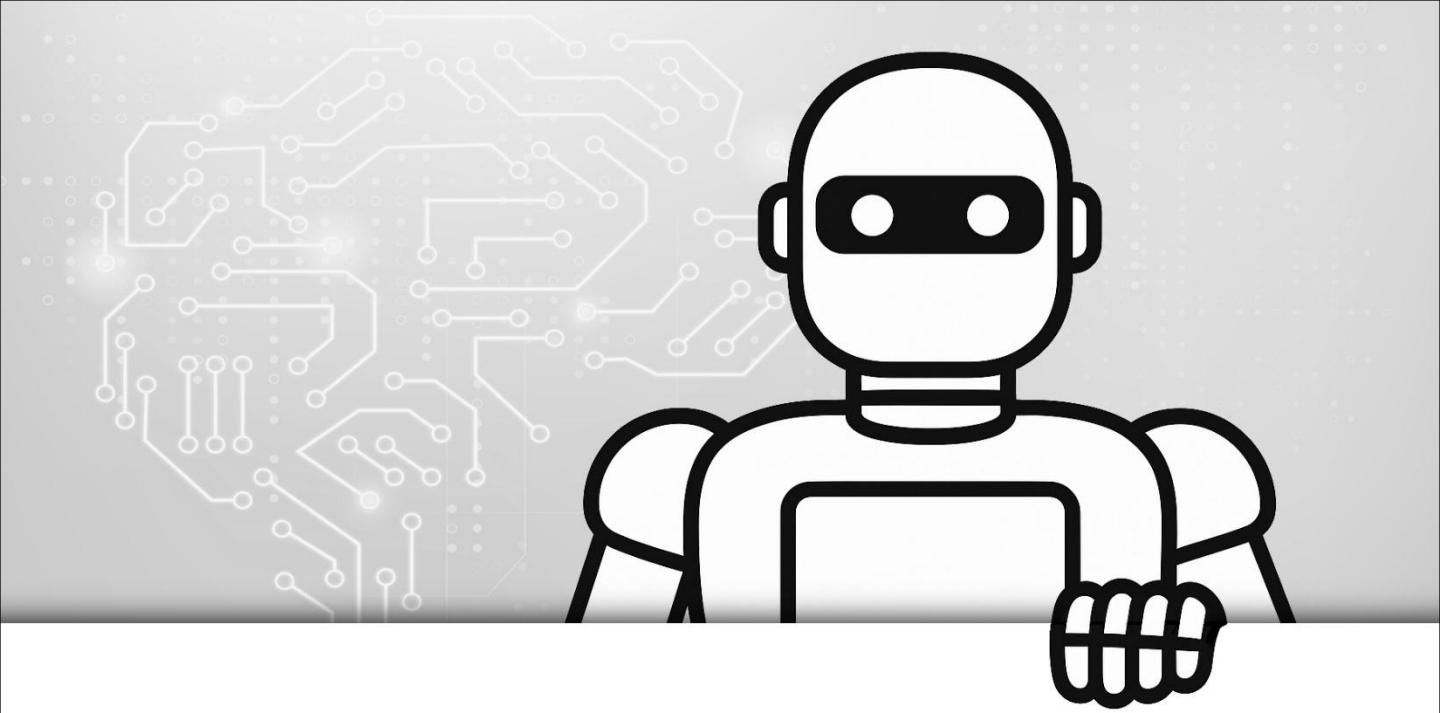
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[https://openreview.net/pdf?id=\\_VjQlMeSB\\_J](https://openreview.net/pdf?id=_VjQlMeSB_J)

**31. What is chain of thought (CoT) prompting?**

<https://www.ibm.com/think/topics/chain-of-thoughts>



*Humans,*  
**Are You Ready?**



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