Instructional Guide

AI literacy and ethics for grades 9 to 12: 10 lessons, one class period each

Start here. This guide explains what is in the course, how a lesson runs, how to fit it into your schedule, and which standards it supports. Read it once, then read Lesson 1's plan.

The course at a glance

This is a 10-lesson AI literacy course for high school students in grades 9 to 12. Each lesson takes one class period of about 50 minutes and asks one question about AI that students already use: what it is, how it works, whether to trust it, who owns what it makes, what happens to their data, when using it is cheating, how to use it to learn, and what it means for work.

Grades	9 to 12. Lessons 1 to 10 are written for all four grades. Each plan has Support, On level and Advanced adjustments.
Time	10 lessons of about 50 minutes. Every plan includes a 45-minute version.
Teacher background	None needed. Each plan gives timed steps, what to say, and an answer key with sample student work. Each plan includes a note for substitute teachers.
Technology	A projector and internet for the 6 to 11 minute (Lesson 10 runs 11:02) video. Students need no devices and no AI accounts. If you have no video, every lesson has a paper-only activity pack.
Cost	Free. Lesson plans, worksheets and activity packs need no account. Answer keys need a free teacher account.
Subjects it fits	Computer science, English, social studies, civics, health, library and media literacy, and advisory.

What you get for each lesson

Each lesson comes as five printable files plus a video. All files are on ethicslabs.ai/teacher-resources.

Document	For	What is in it
Lesson plan	Teacher	Essential question, objectives tied to exit ticket items, vocabulary, a before-class checklist, six timed steps with talking points, a 45-minute version, a no-video option, differentiation, sources, and printable cards for the activity.
Student worksheet	Each student	Video checkpoint questions, the activity record sheet, and the exit ticket.
Answer key (Teacher's Edition)	Teacher	Every answer with an explanation, rubrics for open responses, sample student answers at different scores, and answers for the activity pack.
Teacher guide	Teacher	The lesson plan and the answer key in one file.

Document	For	What is in it
Activity pack	Each student	The no-video version: a short reading, a word bank, comprehension questions, a group activity, discussion scenarios, and homework with a rubric.
Video	Whole class	A 6 to 11 minute video made by The Ethics Lab's student team, free on YouTube. The lesson plan lists exactly when to pause.

Two documents cover the whole course: this guide and the AI Glossary, which defines every vocabulary word from the 10 lessons with an example.



Scope and sequence

The lessons are written to be taught in order, and each one also works on its own. The order builds from what AI is, to how it works, to the choices students make with it.

#	Lesson	Essential question	Main activity	Video
1	What is AI?	What counts as AI, and what should we ask about the AI we already use every day?	Card sort. Groups sort 12 everyday AI uses by what they do and how advanced they are.	8:02
2	How AI Works	If a chatbot is only predicting the next word, why does it sound so smart, and when should we trust what it says?	Be the language model. Groups act as a tiny language model that may only use the words on its cards.	10:04
3	Deepfakes	If AI can make a fake photo, video or voice that looks and sounds real, how do we decide what to believe and what to share?	The Verification Desk. Groups run a newsroom verification desk and decide what to do with six posts.	7:08
4	Sycophancy	When an AI chatbot tells you what you want to hear, how can you tell, and how do you get honest feedback instead?	The Feedback Lab. Groups sort six chatbot replies as honest or flattering, then rewrite one.	6:21
5	Plagiarism and Copyright	When you use someone else's work, or an AI's, what do you owe the people who made it and the people who read yours?	The Two-Rule Sort. Groups sort eight cases by two rules: plagiarism and copyright.	7:16
6	Art and Creativity	How does AI impact the creative industry, and how are artists responding?	The Festival Rule. Groups write an AI rule for a school art show and film festival, then test it.	7:21
7	Data Privacy	What happens to the things you type into an AI chatbot, and how can you decide what to share?	Read the Whole Clause. Groups read real privacy clauses, first a short excerpt and then the full text.	7:59
8	Cheating	When does using AI for schoolwork cross the line into cheating, and what does it cost the student who does it?	Case Files. Groups study a case file and find where the thinking moved from the student to the AI.	6:35
9	Practical Tools and Uses	How can students use AI ethically in the classroom? Where do students and teachers draw the line?	Human Chatbot Lab. Students take turns playing a student, a chatbot and an observer.	10:03

#	Lesson	Essential question	Main activity	Video
10	Looking Ahead	What does the future AI workforce look like, and how can students prepare?	Job Remix. Groups sort the real tasks of one job as automation, augmentation or human work.	11:02

Units: How AI works (Lessons 1 and 2). Truth and trust (3 and 4). Ownership and creativity (5 and 6). Privacy (7). Learning with AI (8 and 9). Work and the future (10).

Lessons that lean on earlier ones: Lesson 7 refers back to tokens from Lesson 2. Lesson 9 uses hallucination (Lesson 2), sycophancy (Lesson 4) and cognitive offloading (Lesson 8). If you skip a lesson, preteach those words from the glossary.



How a lesson runs

All 10 lesson plans follow the same six steps, so students know the routine after the first lesson. Times vary a little from lesson to lesson; the ranges below cover all 10.

Step	Time	What happens
Before class	15 to 20 min prep	Print worksheets and cut the activity cards (one set per group). Load the video, turn on captions, and read any video correction notes.
1. Warm-up	4 to 5 min	A quick question or vote that connects the topic to students' own lives.
2. Video with checkpoints	12 to 16 min	Play the video and pause at the times listed in the plan. Students answer checkpoint questions on the worksheet.
3. Mini-lesson	5 to 7 min	Short talking points that add what the video leaves out, each tied to a named source.
4. Activity	14 to 17 min	Small-group work with printed cards. Each student records answers on their own worksheet.
5. Discussion	3 to 7 min	Whole-class questions, with notes on what strong answers include.
6. Exit ticket	6 to 8 min	Individual questions that measure the lesson objectives, usually ending with a short written response.

Tips from the plans

- Read the whole lesson plan once before you teach it. The before-class checklist tells you what to print, cut and write on the board.
- Groups of 3 or 4 work best. Nine of the ten plans assign group roles, such as Reader, Recorder and Reporter, and most say how to adjust for a larger or smaller group.
- Most video checkpoints are opinion questions. Give completion credit for those and use them to start discussion. The few with right answers are marked in the answer key.
- The videos are made by students. Where a video overstates a study or gets a detail wrong, the lesson plan says so, gives the correction with a source, and tells you when to share it. Read these notes before class.
- Facts about company policies, laws and studies were checked in November 2026. If you teach a lesson much later, open the sources it lists to confirm nothing has changed.

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Pacing options

Option	Class time	How it works
Two-week unit	10 class periods	One lesson a day in order. This fits a unit in a computer science, English, civics or health course.
Four-week unit	About 20 class periods	Teach each lesson, then use its activity pack the next day for reading, discussion and homework.
One lesson a week	10 weeks	Good for advisory or a weekly seminar. Start each lesson with a 2-minute review of the last one using the glossary.
Short periods (30 to 40 min)	2 periods per lesson	Day 1: warm-up, video and mini-lesson. Day 2: activity, discussion and exit ticket.
Pick and choose	1 to 4 periods	Teach single lessons where they fit your course. See the suggestions below.

Suggested lessons by subject

Course	Lessons	Why
Computer science	1, 2, 7	What AI is, how language models work, and how user data is collected and used.
English and language arts	3, 5, 6, 8	Evaluating sources, plagiarism and citation, authorship, and honest use of AI in writing.
Social studies and civics	1, 3, 7, 10	Rules for face recognition in schools, misinformation, privacy policy, and changes to work.
Health	4, 8	Chatbots and emotional support, and how relying on AI affects learning.
Library and media literacy	2, 3, 5	Hallucinated sources, verifying images and video, and citing AI.
Advisory or study skills	8, 9, 10	Academic integrity, studying with AI, and planning for future work.

Assessment and grading

- Video checkpoints: mostly opinion questions. Give completion credit.
- Exit ticket: the main check for understanding. Each lesson objective names the exit ticket items that measure it. Most lessons end with an open response scored on a 6-point rubric in the answer key, with sample answers at different scores.
- Activity record: the worksheet's activity section shows each student's part in the group work. Use it for participation credit.
- Activity pack homework: a written response, scored with the rubric in the answer key. It works as a summative task.
- The exit ticket step in each lesson plan ends with a quick way to use the results, such as which students to reteach and how.

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About AI detectors: do not treat an AI-detector score as proof that a student used AI. A 2023 study by Liang and colleagues found that several widely used detectors consistently misclassified writing by non-native English speakers as AI-generated. Lessons 3 and 8 explain this to students.



Paper, video and the online platform

You can teach the whole course from the PDFs. The platform is optional and adds tracking and grading.

	PDFs only	PDFs plus the platform
Where	ethicslabs.ai/teacher-resources	ethicslabs.ai (free teacher account)
Student accounts	None	Students are added to your class roster. The Ethics Lab signs a Data Privacy Agreement with your district before any students are added.
Videos	Show from YouTube (youtube.com/@ethics-lab)	Video lessons with the checkpoint questions built in
Answer keys	Need a free teacher account	Included
Tracking	Collect paper worksheets	Class rosters, assignments, and a gradebook that shows who finished and lets you grade responses
Teacher guides	PDF	Editable
AI features	None	If your students will use any AI feature on the platform, review it the way you review any AI tool (AI Policy Toolkit, Guide 5) and send the family notice first (Guide 4). Florida schools: this is an AI instructional tool under Rule 6A-1.0957.

Setting up the platform

1. Create a free teacher account at ethicslabs.ai. The Ethics Lab confirms that you are a teacher, and then you can open every answer key.
2. Check with your school's technology or privacy office before adding students. The Ethics Lab sends a Data Privacy Agreement (the SDPC National DPA plus your state's exhibit) and does not add students until your district is verified and approved.
3. For a school or district rollout, email anik@ethicslabs.ai. The team will set up your classes, walk your teachers through the platform and help with district privacy approval, at no cost.

No video, a blocked YouTube, or no internet: use the activity pack in place of step 2. Students read a short article (about 10 to 15 minutes) and answer its Check Your Understanding questions. Then teach steps 3 to 6 as written.

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Standards alignment

The table lists standards each lesson addresses, so you can cite them in your plans. This is The Ethics Lab's own mapping; no standards organization has reviewed or endorsed it. Codes and wording come from each organization's official site, opened in November 2026. Many states adapt these standards, so check your state's version before citing them.

Standard	What it asks (summary)	Lessons
ISTE 1.2.a	Digital Footprint: manage digital identity, understand the lasting impact of online behavior, and make safe, legal and ethical decisions.	5, 7, 8
ISTE 1.2.c	Safeguard Well-being: be intentional about what you do online and how much time you spend online.	4
ISTE 1.2.d	Digital Privacy: protect privacy on devices and manage personal data and security online.	7
ISTE 1.3.b	Evaluate Information: evaluate the accuracy, validity, bias, origin and relevance of digital content.	2, 3, 4, 9
CSTA 3A-IC-24	Evaluate the ways computing impacts personal, ethical, social, economic and cultural practices.	1, 6, 10
CSTA 3A-IC-28	Explain the beneficial and harmful effects that intellectual property laws can have on innovation.	5, 6
CSTA 3A-IC-29	Explain the privacy concerns related to the collection and generation of data through automated processes that may not be evident to users.	7
CSTA 3A-IC-30	Evaluate the social and economic implications of privacy in the context of safety, law or ethics.	1, 7
CSTA 3B-IC-26	Evaluate the impact of equity, access and influence on the distribution of computing resources in a global society.	10
CSTA 3B-IC-27	Predict how computational innovations that have revolutionized aspects of our culture might evolve.	10
CSTA 3B-IC-28	Debate laws and regulations that impact the development and use of software.	1, 5, 6
CCSS SL.9-10.1 and SL.11-12.1	Take part effectively in collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups and teacher-led), building on others' ideas.	All 10
CCSS RI.9-10.8	Delineate and evaluate the argument and specific claims in a text, assessing whether the reasoning is valid.	8, 9
CCSS RI.11-12.7	Integrate and evaluate multiple sources of information presented in different media or formats.	3

ISTE: ISTE Standards for Students (ISTE Standards © 2024, version 4.02). CSTA: K-12 Computer Science Standards, Revised 2017. Level 3A is grades 9 and 10; Level 3B is grades 11 and 12. CSTA has since released 2026 PK-12 standards, which spread AI content across five reorganized concepts. This guide does not yet map to the 2026 codes. CCSS: Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts and Literacy.

Sensitive topics and privacy

- No lesson asks students to use an AI tool, open their own chat history, or share what they have typed into a chatbot. If you want students to try a real tool later, use only one your district has approved.
- Lesson 4 discusses using chatbots for emotional support. Know your school's counseling referral process before you teach it. The plan lists the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline (call or text 988, or chat at 988lifeline.org).
- Lesson 8 is about cheating. Do not ask students to name times they cheated. The plan lets students answer about "a student" instead of themselves.
- Lessons 5, 6 and 7 describe copyright and privacy law in general terms for teaching. They are not legal advice. Send questions about a real situation to your district's legal counsel.
- Open questions are left open. Polls and opinion questions have no single right answer, and the answer key marks them that way.

Adapting the lessons and getting help

You may print, copy and adapt every document for your own students: reorder steps, swap in local examples, rewrite the cards, or shorten the discussion. The documents may not be sold or republished without written permission.

School leaders writing an AI policy can find The Ethics Lab's free policy resources at ethicslabs.ai/ai-policy.

Questions, corrections or a mistake in a lesson: email anik@ethicslabs.ai. A person on our team will reply.

Sources

1. **The Ethics Lab, "Free AI Curriculum for Teachers" (teacher resources page)**. Free downloads, answer keys behind a free teacher account, platform features (editable guides, video checkpoints, rosters, assignments, gradebook), subjects, two-week and doubled-time pacing, setup help
   https://ethicslabs.ai/teacher-resources
2. **The Ethics Lab, "For schools" page**. Data Privacy Agreement (SDPC National DPA plus state exhibit) before students are added; classes and gradebook
   https://ethicslabs.ai/for-schools
3. **The Ethics Lab, Lesson 1 to 10 lesson plans and their source lists (json/lesson01.json to lesson10.json, rebuilt November 2026)**. Essential questions, step times, activities, video lengths, 45-minute versions, no-video option, group roles, rubrics, sensitive-topic notes
   https://ethicslabs.ai/teacher-resources
4. **ISTE, ISTE Standards for Students (ISTE Standards © 2024, 4.02)**. Indicators 1.2.a, 1.2.c, 1.2.d, 1.3.b
   https://iste.org/standards/students
5. **Computer Science Teachers Association, K-12 Computer Science Standards, Revised 2017 (condensed PDF)**. Level 3A and 3B Impacts of Computing standards; level grade bands
   https://csteachers.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/03/csta-k-12-computer-science-standards-revised.pdf
6. **Computer Science Teachers Association, "About the 2026 CSTA PK-12 Standards"**. 2026 revision with five concepts; AI spread across concepts
   https://csteachers.org/k12standards/
7. **Common Core State Standards Initiative, ELA Speaking and Listening, grades 9-10 and 11-12**. SL.9-10.1, SL.11-12.1
   https://www.thecorestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/SL/9-10/
8. **Common Core State Standards Initiative, ELA Reading Informational Text, grades 9-10 and 11-12**. RI.9-10.8, RI.11-12.7
   https://www.thecorestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/RI/9-10/
9. **Weixin Liang et al., "GPT detectors are biased against non-native English writers," arXiv:2304.02819 (2023)**. Detectors consistently misclassify non-native English writing as AI-generated
   https://arxiv.org/abs/2304.02819
10. **988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline**. Call, text or chat
    https://988lifeline.org/

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