Student Edition Lesson Pack

CivicOS Labs

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    - This does not have to be your final project topic. It is a quick start for civic thinking.
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Lesson 1: What AI Is and Is Not

Student Edition

What you will learn today

By the end of this lesson, you should be able to explain in your own words what AI actually is, what it can do well, where it fails, and why that matters for how you use it.

You should also be able to explain it to someone who has never thought about it before — a parent, a younger sibling, a friend.

Bellringer / Warm-Up Options

Your teacher will choose one option.

Option A — Fast Start (3 minutes): Answer in one sentence:

Name one AI tool or AI-powered feature you have used or seen. Examples: ChatGPT, Siri, Alexa, Gemini, Copilot, a phone autocorrect suggestion, a YouTube recommendation, a translation app, or a game bot. What do you think it is doing "behind the screen"?

Option B — Standard Warm-Up (5 minutes): Answer these three questions:

1. Name one AI tool or AI-powered feature you have used or seen. Examples: ChatGPT, Siri, Alexa, Gemini, Copilot, a phone autocorrect suggestion, a YouTube recommendation, a translation app, or a game bot.
2. What do you think that tool is doing "behind the screen" to produce its answer, suggestion, or action?
3. What is one thing you would want to know before trusting its answer or recommendation?

Option C — Extended Launch (6-7 minutes): Answer all four questions:

1. Name one AI tool or AI-powered feature you have used or seen.
2. What do you think that tool is doing "behind the screen"?
3. What is one thing you would want to know before trusting its answer or recommendation?
4. Which matters more when using AI: knowing what it can do well, or knowing where it fails? Explain your choice in 2-3 sentences.

Do not worry about being perfectly correct yet. This is your starting idea before we build a clearer explanation.

Vocabulary

These five words show up over and over in any conversation about AI. Learn them now and the rest of the lesson is much easier.

AI (Artificial Intelligence). Programs that can do tasks people used to think only humans could do — understanding language, recognizing pictures, having a conversation, writing.

LLM (Large Language Model). The kind of AI behind tools like ChatGPT, Claude, Gemini, and Copilot. "Large" because it learned from huge amounts of text. "Language Model" because what it does is work with language.

Model. The actual AI program. Different models are trained on different data, in different ways, at different sizes.

Prompt. What you type to an AI — your question, instruction, or text. Everything an AI generates is a response to a prompt.

Hallucinate. When an AI makes something up that sounds completely true but is wrong. AI hallucinates a lot more than people realize.

Reading: What AI Actually Is

You have probably used AI before. Maybe you asked ChatGPT to help with homework. Maybe you talked to Siri or Alexa. Maybe you got a movie recommendation from Netflix that figured out what you liked. All of those use artificial intelligence.

But here is something interesting. Most people who use AI every day cannot actually explain what it is. They know it works. They do not know how. And when you do not know how something works, you sometimes trust it when you should not, or avoid it when it would actually help.

This lesson is about learning what AI actually is.

The Kind of AI This Lesson Is About

When most people say "AI" today, they are usually talking about a specific kind of program called a **Large Language Model** — an LLM. That includes ChatGPT, Claude, Gemini, Copilot, and most of the AI tools you might use for schoolwork.

Here is the simple version of how an LLM works.

Imagine reading every book ever written. Plus most of the internet. Plus millions of articles and conversations. After all that reading, you would notice patterns. Certain words tend to follow other words. Certain kinds of sentences appear in certain kinds of writing. Certain topics come with certain vocabulary.

That is basically what an LLM does. It is "trained" by reading a huge amount of text. Through that training, it learns the patterns of how humans use language.

When you type something to an LLM — your prompt — the AI uses what it learned to figure out what words probably come next. It generates its response by predicting one word at a time, based on patterns from all the text it learned from.

That is the whole job. The AI predicts what word should come next.

This Sounds Too Simple. How Does It Do So Much?

You might be thinking: that does not sound powerful enough to do everything AI can do. How can predicting the next word write essays, explain science, or help with math?

Here is the surprising part. When you can predict the next word really well, on a huge scale, you can do almost anything that involves language.

Want a summary of an article? The AI predicts what comes after the words "Here is a summary:". Want an explanation of how plants make food? It predicts what comes after "Here is an explanation of photosynthesis for a 7th grader:". Want a poem about your dog? It predicts what comes after "Here is a poem about a dog:".

By treating any task as "predict what comes next," one trained AI can handle a huge variety of things.

This surprised the researchers who built the first LLMs. They did not expect their AI to do all of this. The AI just got good enough at predicting words that lots of useful stuff fell out as a side effect.

What AI Is Good At

LLMs are good at almost anything that involves language.

They can explain concepts in different ways or at different reading levels. They can summarize long articles or book chapters. They can brainstorm ideas with you. They can help with writing by drafting, revising, or finding better phrasing. They can answer questions about topics that were well-covered in their training data. They can help with code — explaining it, fixing bugs, writing it from a description.

If your task is mostly about words, AI can probably help.

What AI Is Not Good At (Important Limits to Know)

The same way it works creates real limits. Four of them matter for students.

First, base LLMs do not have current information unless they're connected to other tools. An AI model was trained at a specific point in time. The base model does not know about anything that happened after that training cutoff. Some commercial AI systems add web search or other tools that let them pull in current information — but the underlying model itself does not know what is happening today. If you ask an AI about something that happened last week, you may get "I don't know" (good response), a real current answer (only if a search tool is connected), or a confidently invented answer (when the AI guesses without telling you it is guessing).

Second, AI is not reliable for math unless it's using a calculator or code tool. A base LLM writes equations the same way it writes everything else — by predicting what should come next, not by actually computing. Sometimes the prediction matches the real answer. Sometimes it does not. Some modern AI

systems can call out to calculators or run code to get accurate math; if your AI does that, math becomes more reliable. If you cannot tell whether your AI is doing real computation or just predicting digits, treat its math as unverified — use a calculator yourself for any answer that matters.

Third — and this is the most important one — AI hallucinates. This means AI sometimes makes up information that sounds completely true but is wrong. Not "occasionally a small mistake." Actually invented facts. Fake quotes from real people. Fake historical events. Fake details about real things. The AI usually cannot tell when it is hallucinating. It produces wrong answers in the same confident voice it uses for right answers.

This is not just a bug that engineers will eventually patch out. It is a persistent structural risk built into how LLMs work — they predict what comes next based on patterns, and when the patterns produce a plausible-sounding wrong answer, you get a plausible-sounding wrong answer. Modern AI systems reduce hallucination through better training, source-grounding, and tool use, and they will keep getting better at it. But hallucination is not going to disappear, and treating AI as if it never hallucinates is the most common way students get into trouble.

Fourth, AI only knows what you tell it. It does not know who you are, what class you are in, or what your assignment is unless you say so. If you give vague questions, you get vague answers.

What This Means for How You Use AI

Here is the practical takeaway. AI is a powerful tool for things that involve language. It is a bad tool for things that need current information, exact math, or claims you cannot verify.

The single most important habit when using AI is **verification.** Anywhere a fact actually matters — for a homework assignment, a paper, a project, a decision you are about to make — you should check the AI's answer against a real source. A textbook. A reliable article. A trusted website. A teacher. A real source you can trust.

Students who form this habit early use AI well throughout their education. Students who do not form it tend to get burned at some point — by a fake citation that did not exist, by a confidently wrong fact that ended up in a graded paper, by a misunderstanding the AI never told them about.

This is not about avoiding AI. It is about using AI well.

Is AI Really "Thinking"?

People argue about whether AI is really thinking or really understanding. Some people say yes — look at everything it can do; that has to be some kind of real intelligence. Other people say no — it is just pattern matching with no real understanding behind it.

The honest answer is that AI is doing something genuinely new, and we do not yet have good words for what it is. It is not exactly thinking the way you think. It is also not just dumb pattern matching like a calculator. It is something in between, and the people who study this are still figuring out what to call it.

For using AI well, the question matters less than it might sound. What matters in practice is that AI sometimes produces correct answers and sometimes produces wrong ones, and AI itself cannot tell the difference. That is the operating reality.

Treat AI as a tool that can be very helpful but cannot be fully trusted. That stance gets you most of what AI can offer, while protecting you from the most common ways AI use goes wrong.

Activity 1: Watch the Demonstration

Your teacher will use AI to explain a topic. As you watch, pay attention to:

- How does the AI start its response?
- Is the explanation clear? Easy to follow?
- Does the AI sound confident? Should it?
- What is one question you would ask to check whether the AI got something right?

You will discuss what you noticed after the demonstration ends.

Activity 2: Build Your AI Concept Map (Portfolio Artifact)

A concept map shows how ideas connect to each other. You will build a concept map of what AI is, based on what you learned today. This goes into your portfolio for the curriculum.

Step 1. In the middle of your page (or canvas if you are working digitally), write **AI** or **LLM**.

Step 2. Draw four branches off the center, labeled: - What AI is good at - What AI is not good at - How AI works (the basic idea) - Why we need to verify AI answers

Step 3. Off each branch, add at least three sub-branches with specific examples or details from today's lesson. For instance, off "What AI is not good at," you might add "current information," "math," and "hallucination."

Step 4. Somewhere on your map, add one thing about AI that surprised you today.

Step 5. Sign and date your map. Put it in your portfolio.

You will refer back to this map at the end of the curriculum to see how your understanding grew.

Reflection Questions

Take 5 minutes to write a short response to each. Write enough to show your thinking; complete sentences are fine.

1. Before this lesson, what did you think AI was?

2. What is one thing you learned today that surprised you?

3. Describe a way you might use AI for school that you would feel okay about. Then describe a way you would not feel okay about.

4. What is one question about AI that you still have?

Self-Check

Before you move on, check whether you can answer these. If you can, you are ready for Lesson 2. If you cannot, go back and re-read.

1. What does the abbreviation **LLM** stand for?
2. Name one thing AI is good at and one thing AI is not good at.
3. What does it mean to say AI **hallucinates**?
4. Why is it important to verify AI answers against real sources?
5. If AI tells you that a famous person said a specific quote, should you trust the quote? Why or why not?

Looking Ahead

In the next lesson, you will practice the verification habit directly. You will take a real AI answer and check it against real sources, document what you find, and start building a habit that protects you from the most common way students get into trouble with AI.

Lesson 2: Verifying AI Answers With Sources

Student Edition

What you will learn today

By the end of this lesson, you should be able to take an AI answer that contains a factual claim, find real sources to check whether the claim is accurate, and document what you learned. You should also know why this habit — verification — protects you from the most common way students get into trouble with AI.

This is the most important habit you will build in this whole curriculum. You will use it every time you use AI, for the rest of your life.

Bellringer / Warm-Up Options

Your teacher will choose one option.

Use this warm-up claim for all three options:

> "Dolphins are fish because they live in water."

Option A — Fast Start (3 minutes): For the claim "Dolphins are fish because they live in water," write the exact claim you would need to check. Do not answer whether it is true yet; just identify the claim.

Option B — Standard Warm-Up (5 minutes): Answer these three questions about the claim "Dolphins are fish because they live in water":

1. What exact claim would you need to check?
2. What kind of source would you use to verify it? Examples: a science textbook, a reputable aquarium or marine biology website, an encyclopedia, or a government wildlife page.
3. What would count as enough evidence to trust your answer?

Option C — Extended Launch (6-7 minutes): Answer these four questions about the claim "Dolphins are fish because they live in water":

1. What exact claim would you need to check?
2. What kind of source would you use to verify it?
3. What would count as enough evidence to trust your answer?
4. If two websites disagreed about the claim, what would you do next?

The point is not just whether the claim is right or wrong. The point is how you would check.

Vocabulary

Six words for today's lesson.

Verification. The process of checking whether something is actually true by comparing it against a source you can trust.

Source. Where information comes from. A source can be reliable (a textbook, a peer-reviewed article, an official government website) or unreliable (a random social media post, an AI without verification, a stranger making claims).

Credibility. How trustworthy a source is. A source has high credibility when it is produced by people with relevant expertise, has accountability for accuracy, and can be checked.

Primary source. A first-hand record of something — original documents, eyewitness accounts, official records, the actual study a finding came from.

Secondary source. A second-hand discussion of something — a textbook explaining a study, a journalist reporting on an event, an article summarizing other sources. Useful, but you may need to trace back to the primary source for the most reliable information.

Citation. A documented reference to where you got information. Citations make it possible for others (and your future self) to check whether a claim is accurate.

Reading: Why Verification Is the Habit That Matters Most

In Lesson 1, you learned that AI hallucinates — that it sometimes produces wrong information in the same confident voice it uses for right information, and that it usually cannot tell the difference. Today's lesson is about what to do about that.

The answer is short: **verify**. Anywhere a fact actually matters, check the AI's answer against a real source before relying on it. Get into the habit early, do it often, and use AI from a position of strength instead of from a position of trust you have not earned.

This sounds simple. In practice, it is the single move that separates students who use AI well from students who get burned.

Why You Cannot Just Trust AI

Here is a concrete example. Imagine you ask an AI for a quote by Abraham Lincoln. The AI gives you a quote that sounds Lincoln-like — thoughtful, a bit folksy, on a topic you would expect Lincoln to address. You use it in an essay.

Three weeks later, your teacher writes “Lincoln never said this — please cite a source” on your paper.

This happens. A lot. AI is particularly prone to inventing quotes from real historical figures because the patterns of how those figures spoke are well-represented in its training data, but the specific quote it produces may be invented. The AI is not trying to deceive you. It just generated text that fits the pattern of “Lincoln-style quote about X” without retrieving an actual quote.

If you had verified the quote against a real source — a Lincoln biography, the Lincoln Presidential Library website, a primary-source archive — you would have caught the problem before it reached your paper.

The Verification Workflow

Verification is a workflow, not a single check. Here is the basic version, which you will practice today.

Step 1: Identify the specific claim. AI responses often contain many claims. Pick the ones that matter most for your work — the facts, dates, names, statistics, quotes you might actually use.

Step 2: Decide what counts as verification. Different claims need different evidence. A factual claim about history needs a historical source. A claim about science needs a scientific source. A claim about current events needs a current source. A quote from a real person needs a confirmed primary source where the person actually said it.

Step 3: Find at least two independent sources. One source is not enough — you might find a source that simply repeats the same wrong information. Two independent sources, each tracing back to credible original information, gives you much better confidence.

Step 4: Compare the AI claim to the sources. Does the AI claim match what the sources say? Is it close but not exactly right (a paraphrase rather than a real quote)? Is it partly true but missing important context? Is it just wrong?

Step 5: Document what you found. Write down the AI claim, the sources you checked, and what you learned. This documentation is the artifact that proves verification happened. If you ever need to defend the use of AI in your work to a teacher, this documentation is your evidence.

What Sources Are Worth Checking Against

Not all sources are equally reliable. Here is a rough hierarchy, from most to least reliable for verification purposes:

Primary sources. Original documents. The actual study, the actual speech, the actual government record, the actual eyewitness account. These are the most reliable because everything else is built on top of them.

Reputable secondary sources. Textbooks, peer-reviewed articles, established encyclopedias, well-edited journalism. These are reliable when the publisher has a track record of accuracy and accountability for errors.

Official sources. Government websites for government information, university websites for academic information, professional organizations for professional information. These are reliable for the kinds of information they are responsible for.

General reference websites. Wikipedia is often a useful starting point — but a Wikipedia article is only as good as the citations it links to. Use Wikipedia to find primary and secondary sources; do not stop at Wikipedia.

Less reliable sources. Random websites, blog posts without citations, social media posts, AI without verification (so: not the original AI claim you are trying to verify), opinion pieces that do not cite their evidence.

Almost never reliable for verification. AI claims you have not checked, anonymous online sources, sites known for producing misinformation, sources that disagree with the well-established consensus without good reason.

Why This Matters for Civic Literacy

The verification habit is not just about AI. It is the same habit you need to think clearly about anything that gets presented to you as fact — news stories, social media posts, advocacy claims, claims by public officials, things your friends tell you. The skill you build today is broader than AI.

This is a major reason civics standards in Florida and elsewhere include source evaluation. Citizens who cannot evaluate sources cannot reliably tell true from false in public life. They cannot evaluate competing policy claims. They cannot identify when they are being manipulated. They cannot defend their own positions with evidence.

You are not just learning to verify AI today. You are practicing a skill you will use as a citizen for the rest of your life.

What “Reduces, Not Eliminates” Means

Modern AI systems try to reduce hallucination. Some connect to web search and pull in real sources. Some use techniques like “retrieval-augmented generation” that ground responses in real documents. Some are getting better at saying “I do not know” instead of inventing answers.

These improvements are real. They will continue. But none of them eliminate the underlying issue. AI still produces wrong information sometimes, even with all the modern improvements applied. Your verification habit protects you regardless of which AI you are using or how advanced it is.

The habit is not about distrust. It is about not putting more weight on a source than source can carry. AI can carry a lot of weight on language tasks. It cannot carry the weight of “I am sure this is true” — only verification can.

Activity 1: Watch the Verification Demonstration

Your teacher will demonstrate the verification workflow on a real AI response. You will watch them:

1. Get an AI response to a question that contains factual claims
2. Identify the specific claims worth checking
3. Look up real sources to compare the AI claim against

4. Document what they found

As you watch, pay attention to:

- What does the teacher do when the AI claim turns out to be correct?
- What does the teacher do when the AI claim turns out to be wrong?
- How long does verification actually take?
- What sources does the teacher use?

You will discuss after the demonstration.

Activity 2: Your Own Verification (Portfolio Artifact)

Now you will do your own verification. Your teacher will give you (or help you find) an AI response that contains at least one specific factual claim — a date, a quote, a statistic, a historical event detail, a scientific claim, something concrete you can check.

Step 1. Identify the specific claim from the AI response. Write it down exactly as the AI stated it.

Step 2. Plan your verification. What kind of source do you need? Where would you look? Write down your plan before you start searching.

Step 3. Find at least two real sources. Note the URLs, page numbers, or other reference information for each.

Step 4. Compare the AI claim against your sources. Did the AI get it right? Wrong? Partly right? Use specific evidence from the sources.

Step 5. Write your finding. One short paragraph: what was the claim, what did you check it against, what did you find.

Step 6. Add this to your portfolio as your **Source Verification Log entry**.

This is the portfolio artifact for Lesson 2. Use the template below.

Source Verification Log Entry — Template

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SOURCE VERIFICATION LOG

Date: _____
Student: _____

AI Response Source: (e.g., ChatGPT, prepared example, classroom demo)

The Claim Being Verified:
[Write the exact AI claim, in quotes if possible]

Why This Claim Matters:
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[1–2 sentences on why this is worth verifying]

Verification Plan:
What kind of source do I need? Where am I going to look?

Source 1:
- Type: (primary / reputable secondary / official / general reference)
- Reference: (title, URL, page, etc.)
- What this source says about the claim:

Source 2:
- Type:
- Reference:
- What this source says about the claim:

Comparison:
Did the AI claim match the sources? Choose one:
[ ] Fully correct — AI claim matches sources
[ ] Mostly correct — AI claim matches in substance but with small errors
[ ] Partly correct — important pieces match, important pieces do not
[ ] Mostly wrong — AI claim contradicts the sources on important points
[ ] Fully invented — AI claim is not supported by any reliable source

What I Found (one short paragraph):

What I Learned About AI From This Verification:
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Reflection Questions

5 minutes. Write enough to show your thinking.

1. What is one thing you noticed during verification that surprised you?
2. If you found that the AI was wrong, how did you feel? If the AI was right, how did you feel? Why?
3. How long did verification take? Was it worth the time?
4. When in your school work would you actually use the verification workflow? When would you skip it?
5. How is verifying an AI claim similar to (or different from) verifying any other source — a news story, a social media post, something a friend told you?

Self-Check

Before moving on, check whether you can answer these.

1. Why is verifying AI claims important?
2. What is the difference between a primary source and a secondary source?

3. Why do you need at least two independent sources for verification, not just one?

4. Name two kinds of sources that are usually reliable and one kind that is usually not.

5. Is verification just for AI, or for other kinds of information too? Explain.

Looking Ahead

Tomorrow's lesson takes the verification skill you practiced today and applies it to a wider problem: identifying bias and missing context across information sources of all kinds — AI, news, advocacy organizations, social media. The Information Integrity Lab format you will learn in Lesson 3 builds directly on what you did today.

Lesson 3: Media Bias, Claims, and Digital Persuasion

Student Edition

What you will learn today

By the end of this lesson, you should be able to look at the same topic across several different kinds of sources — AI, news, advocacy organizations, social media — and identify what each source is claiming, what evidence it offers, who its audience is, what important context it leaves out, and where bias appears. You should also be able to use this skill on any topic that comes up in your civic and personal life, not just AI.

This is the lesson where the AI verification habit you built in Lesson 2 becomes a broader skill: critical analysis of information from any source.

Bellringer / Warm-Up Options

Your teacher will choose one option.

Use this warm-up sentence for all three options:

> "This new school policy will solve the problem for everyone."

Option A — Fast Start (3 minutes): For the sentence "This new school policy will solve the problem for everyone," write the claim being made. A claim is the idea the sentence is asking you to believe.

Option B — Standard Warm-Up (5 minutes): Answer these three questions about the sentence "This new school policy will solve the problem for everyone":

1. What claim is being made?
2. Who might be the audience for this message? Examples: students, parents, teachers, administrators, school board members, or voters.
3. What important context is missing? Examples: what the policy is, what problem it addresses, who benefits, who disagrees, or what evidence supports it.

Option C — Extended Launch (6-7 minutes): Answer these four questions about the sentence "This new school policy will solve the problem for everyone":

1. What claim is being made?
2. Who might be the audience for this message?

3. What important context is missing?
4. How could two people with different opinions use this sentence in different ways?

Be ready to share one thing you would need to know before trusting the sentence.

Vocabulary

Seven terms today.

Bias. A systematic lean in how something is presented — toward a particular view, group, or interpretation. Bias is not always bad (everyone has perspectives), but unrecognized bias is dangerous because it shapes what we believe without us knowing.

Claim. A statement asserting something to be true. Every source is making claims, even when they don't say "I am claiming."

Evidence. What a source offers to support its claims — data, quotes, references, observations. Strong evidence is verifiable; weak or missing evidence should make you skeptical.

Audience. The people a source is trying to reach. Different audiences get different information, framing, and emphasis. Understanding audience helps you understand why a source says what it says.

Missing context. Information that is left out of a source — sometimes accidentally, sometimes deliberately. What is left out can change the meaning of what is included.

Persuasion. The use of language, framing, evidence, and emotion to move an audience toward a particular view or action. Persuasion is not lying; it is the craft of making a case.

Information Integrity. The degree to which a piece of information is accurate, complete, properly contextualized, and clearly sourced. High-integrity information is honest about what it knows and what it doesn't.

Reading: Information Doesn't Travel Through One Pipe

In Lesson 2, you practiced verifying a single AI claim against real sources. Today's lesson zooms out. Instead of one claim from one source, you will look at the same topic across many different sources — and you will discover that information rarely travels through just one pipe.

A typical topic in the modern world might be discussed: - By an AI service when someone asks about it - In news articles from multiple outlets, each with their own angle - By advocacy organizations on either side of any debate - Across thousands of social media posts, each with limited context - In official government statements from agencies or elected officials - By experts and researchers in technical or academic publications

Each of these sources says something. Each is making claims. Each has its own audience, its own purposes, and its own choices about what to emphasize and what to leave out. None of them is simply "the truth" — they are all interpretations and selections of what could be said about the topic.

The skill you build today is reading across all of those sources at once and seeing the patterns. Where do they agree? Where do they disagree? What does each one emphasize? What does each one leave out? Whose interests are served by each presentation? What would a careful citizen need to know that no single source is telling them?

Information Has Always Been Messy. AI Just Made It Faster.

It is tempting to think that misinformation, bias, and persuasion are new problems caused by AI. They are not. People have always shaped how information is presented to serve their purposes — in newspapers, in pamphlets, in speeches, in books. Bias, framing, and missing context are as old as communication.

What is new is the speed and scale. Information moves around the world in seconds now. AI can produce convincing-sounding content faster than anyone can verify it. Social media spreads claims before they can be evaluated. The ratio of information to verification has gotten worse.

This is not a reason for despair. It is a reason for the verification and analysis skills you are building right now. Citizens who know how to read across sources, identify bias, recognize missing context, and resist persuasion will navigate this environment well. Citizens who do not have these skills get pushed around by whatever information arrives in their feed.

What to Look For in Any Source

When you encounter any piece of information — an AI response, a news article, a social media post, a flyer, a video — six questions help you read it well:

1. What is the claim? Strip away the rhetoric and identify what the source is actually asserting. Sometimes the claim is explicit ("Policy X will cause Y"). Sometimes it is implicit ("Look at this scary photo from a place where Policy X is in effect"). Either way, name the claim before evaluating it.

2. What evidence is offered? Strong sources back up their claims with verifiable evidence — data, citations, quotes from named experts, original documents. Weak sources offer assertion without evidence, vague references ("studies show"), or emotional appeal without backing.

3. What is the source? Who produced this information? What is their track record? What are their incentives? A source from a credentialed expert with no obvious stake is different from a source from an organization that benefits from the claim being true. Both can be useful, but you read them differently.

4. Who is the audience? Whom is this source trying to reach? People who already agree? Skeptics? Decision-makers? The general public? Audience shapes how a source frames its claims, which changes how you should read those claims.

5. What context is missing? What would a careful reader need to know that this source does not tell them? Statistics without comparison? Quotes without context? Events without history? Claims without counter-claims? Missing context is one of the most common ways sources mislead without technically lying.

6. Where is the bias? Every source has a perspective. Sometimes the perspective is upfront and labeled (an opinion column). Sometimes it is hidden behind a neutral-sounding voice. Bias is not always bad — but unrecognized bias is always dangerous.

These six questions are the framework for the **Information Integrity Lab Mini** activity you will do today. Over the rest of this curriculum (and over the years to come), this framework becomes second nature.

What This Has to Do With Civic Life

The reason source evaluation appears in Florida civics standards (and in civics standards across most states and countries) is that being a citizen requires evaluating claims. Voting requires evaluating claims about candidates and issues. Forming opinions on policy requires evaluating claims about consequences. Engaging in public discourse requires distinguishing strong claims from weak ones, your own honest reasoning from your own bias.

Citizens who cannot evaluate sources are citizens who can be pushed around. Citizens who can evaluate sources have agency — they can defend their own positions, challenge claims they doubt, and contribute to public conversation from a position of integrity.

The skill you build today serves you as a student. It also serves you as a citizen, for the rest of your life.

A Note on Bias

It is sometimes uncomfortable to talk about bias in a school setting. Bias has political associations; people get defensive about claims of bias against "their side."

Here is the framing this curriculum uses: every source has bias. Every news outlet, every advocacy organization, every person, every AI service, every government communication, every social media account. The question is not "is this source biased?" — the answer is always yes. The question is "what is the bias, where does it appear, and how does it shape what is being said?"

This question can be asked of sources you agree with and sources you disagree with. The most important place to apply the question is to sources you instinctively trust — because trusted sources can shape your beliefs in ways you may not notice.

This is not about pretending to be neutral. It is about being honest about how every source is positioned, including the ones you like.

Activity 1: Information Integrity Lab Mini (Demonstration)

Your teacher will lead a class demonstration of the Information Integrity Lab Mini using a real topic. As a class, you will look at the same topic across:

- An AI response
- A news article
- An advocacy organization's framing
- A social media post

For each source, the class will work through the six questions: claim, evidence, source, audience, missing context, bias.

Watch how the same topic looks completely different depending on which source you read. That difference is the point.

Activity 2: Your Own Media Analysis (Portfolio Artifact)

Now you will do your own Information Integrity Lab Mini on a topic of your choice (or a topic your teacher assigns). This becomes your **Media Analysis** for the portfolio.

Step 1. Pick (or receive) a topic. Suggested topics for Florida middle schoolers: - Climate impacts in Florida (sea level, hurricanes, water) - Use of phones / social media / AI in schools - Protections for endangered species in your county - Local water quality in your area - A current local zoning or development decision in your community

Step 2. Find at least three sources discussing the topic. Aim for a mix: - One AI response (your teacher will help you get this) - One news article from a recognized news outlet - One advocacy or government source - (Optional) one social media post or community forum discussion

Step 3. For each source, work through the six questions: - What is the claim? - What evidence is offered? - What is the source (who produced this)? - Who is the audience? - What context is missing? - Where is the bias?

Step 4. After analyzing each source separately, write one paragraph (4–6 sentences) on **the pattern across sources.** Where do they agree? Where do they disagree? What does each one emphasize that others leave out? What would a careful citizen need to know that no single source tells them?

Step 5. Add this Media Analysis to your portfolio.

Use the template below.

Media Analysis — Template

```
INFORMATION INTEGRITY LAB MINI — MEDIA ANALYSIS

Date: _____
Student: _____

Topic: _____

Source 1: _____ (type: AI / news / advocacy / social media / official)
- Claim:
- Evidence:
- Source (who produced):
- Audience:
- Missing context:
- Bias:
```



```
Source 2: _____ (type: _____)
- Claim:
- Evidence:
- Source:
- Audience:
- Missing context:
- Bias:

Source 3: _____ (type: _____)
- Claim:
- Evidence:
- Source:
- Audience:
- Missing context:
- Bias:

(Optional) Source 4: _____ (type: _____)
- (Same six questions)

The Pattern Across Sources (one paragraph, 4–6 sentences):
Where do these sources agree? Where do they disagree? What does each emphasize?
What context is missing from all of them? What would a careful citizen need to
know that no single source tells them?
```

Reflection Questions

Take 5 minutes.

1. Which source did you find most surprising? Why?
2. Did any source's bias surprise you? (Including a source you instinctively trusted?)
3. How does this analysis change how you will read information in the future?
4. What is one source on your topic that you wish you could analyze but did not have time to find?
5. How does the verification habit from Lesson 2 connect to the Information Integrity Lab from today's lesson?

Self-Check

1. Define "bias" in your own words.
2. What are the six questions you ask of any source?
3. Why does every source have bias?
4. What does "missing context" mean? Give an example.

5. Why are these skills part of civic literacy, not just AI literacy?

Looking Ahead

Tomorrow's lesson focuses on the personal side of using AI: privacy, ethics, and academic integrity. You will learn how to use AI in ways that protect you and others, and how to be honest about your AI use in your school work. Together with today's lesson on bias and analysis, this gives you the full ethical foundation for using AI well.

Lesson 4: Privacy, Ethics, and Academic Integrity

Student Edition

What you will learn today

By the end of this lesson, you should be able to use AI in ways that protect your privacy and the privacy of people in your life, explain when AI use is and is not appropriate in your school work, and produce a clear AI Use Disclosure that demonstrates you can be honest about how you used AI. You should also understand the difference between getting credentials (grades, completed assignments) and building real capability — and why that difference matters more than it sounds.

Bellringer / Warm-Up Options

Your teacher will choose one option.

Use this rating system:

- **OK to share** = generally safe to type into an approved AI tool.
- **Use caution** = maybe safe only after removing personal details or asking your teacher.
- **Do not share** = too personal, private, or risky to type into an AI tool.

Use this item list:

1. A public article link your teacher gave you
2. Your full name, school, and daily schedule
3. A paragraph you wrote for class
4. A private story a friend told you
5. A question about a vocabulary word

Option A — Fast Start (3 minutes): Choose one item from the list. Mark it **OK to share**, **Use caution**, or **Do not share**. Explain your choice in one sentence.

Option B — Standard Warm-Up (5 minutes): Mark all five items **OK to share**, **Use caution**, or **Do not share**. Then write one sentence explaining your safest choice.

Option C — Extended Launch (6-7 minutes): Mark all five items. Then write one rule that could help a student decide what not to type into an AI tool.

Vocabulary

Six terms today.

Privacy. The state of having information about yourself protected from being shared without your knowledge or consent.

Personal information. Specific details that identify you (or someone else) — full name, address, school, family members' names, financial information, health information, account passwords, photos, location. The kind of information that could let someone find or impersonate you.

Disclosure. Telling people honestly what you did and how you did it. In an academic context, AI use disclosure means clearly explaining where AI helped with your work.

Plagiarism. Presenting someone else's work — or AI-generated work — as your own. A form of academic dishonesty.

Academic integrity. Doing your school work honestly. Following the rules of the assignment. Being truthful about what you produced and how.

Capability. The actual ability to do something well — solve problems, write clearly, understand material, do the work. Different from credentials, which are the documentation that you completed something (grade, certificate, transcript line).

Reading: Using AI Without Becoming Hollow

This lesson is about using AI in ways that strengthen you rather than hollow you out.

Two big ideas matter here. The first is **privacy** — protecting your information and other people's. The second is **integrity** — being honest about your work and not letting AI do the parts of school you are supposed to be doing yourself.

Both ideas are personal. Nobody else can guarantee them for you. They are choices you make every time you sit down to use AI.

Privacy: What Not to Share

When you type into a commercial AI service like ChatGPT, Claude, Gemini, or Copilot, your text usually gets sent to the company's servers. Some companies promise they won't use your data to train their AI; some companies use it for training; the policies vary and change over time. The important fact is that what you type to commercial AI is not private the way a notebook on your desk is private.

This means there are categories of information you should not type into commercial AI services unless you have a specific reason and have thought carefully about it.

Don't share information that identifies you specifically. Your full name, your home address, your phone number, your school, your family's names, your financial information, photos of yourself, your location, your account passwords. None of this needs to be in your AI prompts for the AI to help you with most things. A

prompt that says “explain photosynthesis to a 7th grader” works just as well as a prompt that says “explain photosynthesis to a 7th grader named Maria Garcia who attends Lincoln Middle School in Miami.”

Don’t share information about other people. Your classmates, your teachers, your family members, your friends. They have not given you permission to share their information with a commercial AI service. If you’re getting AI help with a story or essay, refer to people generically (“my classmate,” “a friend,” “a person I know”) rather than by name.

Don’t share information about anyone’s medical, financial, or legal situation. This includes you, your family, and others. AI is not a doctor, lawyer, or financial advisor — and these categories of information are sensitive enough that you don’t want them sitting on commercial servers.

Be careful with school-related information. If your school has confidential information (test materials, assessment data, things teachers have shared with you that aren’t public), don’t type that into AI either.

The simple test: before typing something into AI, ask yourself “would I be comfortable if this text were posted on a public website with my name attached to it?” If yes, you’re probably fine. If no, don’t type it.

When You Use Local AI, Privacy Works Differently

If you use local AI (the kind installed on your own computer using something like Ollama), the privacy properties are very different. The AI runs on your machine. Nothing you type leaves your computer. The conversation is essentially as private as any document on your computer is private.

This is one reason the *Open Source Student* curriculum is built around local AI as the primary path. It’s not just about cost or independence; it’s about being able to think and explore without that thinking being collected and stored on someone else’s server.

If you’re using the optional installation extension for this curriculum, the privacy properties are the strongest available. If you’re using browser-based commercial AI, the privacy expectations are different and more limited — and the rules above about what not to share apply.

Ethics: Using AI Honestly in School Work

The ethics question for AI use in school is not “should I use AI?” Many students will use AI in some form, and schools have a wide range of policies — some allow AI use for specific purposes, some restrict it, some prohibit it. Find out what your school’s policy actually says. Then the real question becomes: **how do I use AI in ways that build my capability rather than hollow it out, within the policy that applies to me?**

Here is the central distinction. Imagine two students working on the same essay assignment.

Student A asks AI to write the essay. The AI produces fluent prose. Student A reads it, makes a few small changes, and submits it as their own work. They get a grade. From outside, this looks like a successful assignment.

Student B writes the essay themselves. They use AI for specific support: getting an explanation of a concept they didn’t fully understand, brainstorming possible thesis statements before choosing one, getting feedback on whether their argument was clear. The writing is theirs. The thinking is theirs. The decisions about what to argue and how to argue it are theirs. They get a grade — comparable to Student A’s grade.

In the moment, the difference between these two students is almost invisible. They both have an essay turned in. They both have a grade.

In the medium and long term, the difference is enormous. Student A has the credential of having completed the assignment but did not actually develop the writing capability the assignment was supposed to develop. Student B has both the credential and the capability. The next assignment, which builds on this one, will be much harder for Student A than for Student B. The test that requires writing skill will reveal the gap. The job that requires the ability to think and write clearly will reveal it more.

This is the **capability vs. credential trap**. Using AI to skip the parts of school that are supposed to develop you produces credentials without capability. The credentials look the same on a transcript; the actual ability they were supposed to represent isn't there.

The escape from the trap is simple: use AI in ways that build you up rather than substitute for you. Use it for understanding, feedback, brainstorming, support — all the things AI is genuinely good for. Don't use it to skip the cognitive work that the assignment exists to develop.

When AI Use Is Clearly Fine, Clearly Not Fine, and Gray

Some uses of AI are clearly fine in any reasonable academic culture:

- Asking AI to explain a concept you don't understand
- Getting AI feedback on your draft writing
- Using AI to generate practice problems for self-study
- Asking AI to help you brainstorm
- Getting AI to check your reasoning on a problem you're working through

Some uses are clearly not fine:

- Having AI write your essay and submitting it as yours
- Using AI to solve problems on a test
- Copying AI answers without understanding them
- Using AI in ways your teacher specifically prohibited

A lot of cases are gray. Asking AI to outline an essay you'll then write — is that brainstorming or outsourcing? Asking AI to "improve" a paragraph you wrote — is that getting feedback or having AI rewrite for you? Using AI to summarize a reading you should have read — is that legitimate help or skipping the work?

The honest answer in gray cases: ask. Your teacher knows what the assignment is supposed to develop. They can tell you whether a specific use is okay for that specific assignment. Asking is always cheaper than guessing wrong.

Disclosure: The Honest Move

When you use AI in your school work in a way that is permitted, you should disclose how. This is not just an ethical preference; it is the practice that makes AI use trustworthy.

A simple AI Use Disclosure looks something like this:

> *AI Use Statement: I used [AI service] to help me brainstorm thesis ideas (generated 5 options, chose option 3). I used AI to evaluate the logic in paragraphs 2 and 4 (revised based on feedback). I used AI to generate practice problems for self-study before this assignment. All writing and analysis is my own work.*

This does several things at once. It tells your teacher exactly how AI helped, so there's no ambiguity. It distinguishes between AI assistance (legitimate) and AI authorship (not your work). It builds the kind of trust that makes ongoing AI use in your school work sustainable.

Hiding AI use that you would have been allowed to disclose is a much bigger violation than original use was. Disclosure is the move that keeps you on the right side of academic integrity rules.

What If You Made a Mistake?

If you used AI in a way you now realize wasn't appropriate — copied something without understanding it, didn't disclose use that should have been disclosed, used AI for something that was prohibited — the right move is to talk to your teacher honestly before they discover it.

This is hard. It feels like getting in trouble for being honest. In practice, teachers respond much better to honest disclosure than to discovery. The student who comes forward and says "I used AI in a way I shouldn't have; I want to fix it" usually faces much smaller consequences than student who hides AI use that gets discovered later.

This is also the practice that builds character. Students who learn to handle their own mistakes honestly become adults who handle their mistakes honestly. The opposite habit — hiding things and hoping they don't get caught — is a character trait that follows students well past their academic years.

Privacy and Ethics Are Civic Skills

This lesson is personal, but its skills are civic. Citizens who protect their privacy understand the broader stakes of data privacy in society. Citizens who use information honestly contribute to a culture of trust. Citizens who can disclose their methods can be trusted in their public claims.

The habits you build in your personal AI use are the habits you bring to your civic life — voting, public discourse, professional work, community participation. The student who learns to use AI ethically becomes the adult who can be trusted with more.

Activity 1: Class Discussion of AI Use Scenarios

Your teacher will present several scenarios of student AI use. As a class, you'll discuss each:

- Was this use appropriate?
- Why or why not?
- If it's a gray area, what would make it clearly appropriate or clearly not?
- How should the student have handled it?

Examples might include: a student who used AI to outline a paper, a student who pasted a homework problem into AI to solve, a student who used AI to translate a passage from a language they're learning, a student who got AI feedback on a draft and then revised heavily.

There are not always single right answers. The point is the discussion, not arriving at a verdict.

Activity 2: Your AI Use Disclosure (Portfolio Artifact)

Now you'll produce your own AI Use Disclosure. This is the portfolio artifact for Lesson 4.

Step 1. Think about the AI use across your work in this curriculum so far — and across your school work generally if you've used AI for that.

Step 2. Write a disclosure that documents: - What AI services you've used - For which kinds of tasks - How you used the AI's output (did you use it directly? as a starting point? for feedback only?) - Confirmation that the substantive work in your assignments is your own

Step 3. Write a short reflection (3–5 sentences) on: - Where AI helped your learning - Where you avoided AI to make sure you developed the skill yourself - One thing you'd do differently next time

Use the template below.

AI Use Disclosure — Template

```
AI USE DISCLOSURE

Student: _____________________
Date: _____________________

AI services used during this curriculum (and for what):
- [AI service]: [purposes — e.g., generating practice problems, brainstorming, getting
feedback on drafts]

For each major piece of school work where I used AI, the specific use:
- [Assignment]: [how AI was used]
- [Assignment]: [how AI was used]

Confirmation: All substantive work in my assignments is my own. Where AI helped,
I used AI assistance as described above and did the writing, analysis, and
reasoning myself. I did not submit AI-generated text as my own writing.

Reflection (3–5 sentences):
Where did AI help my learning?

Where did I avoid AI to make sure I developed the skill myself?

What would I do differently with AI next time?
```

Reflection Questions

1. What is the most uncomfortable boundary in this lesson — the place where you weren't sure what was okay?
2. The capability-vs-credential trap: have you seen it happen to anyone (or to yourself)? What was the consequence?
3. What's one specific way you'll change how you use AI in school based on today's lesson?
4. The reading says "the habits you build in your personal AI use are the habits you bring to your civic life." Do you agree? Why or why not?
5. What's a question about AI ethics you wish you could discuss more?

Self-Check

1. Name three categories of personal information you should not type into commercial AI.
2. What is the difference between credential and capability?
3. What is the simple test for whether something is okay to type into AI?
4. What does an AI Use Disclosure include?
5. If you used AI inappropriately on a past assignment, what is the right move?

Looking Ahead

Tomorrow's lesson is the Civic Tech Mini-Project. You'll apply everything you've learned in Lessons 1–4 to a real local or state issue. The verification, source analysis, and ethical AI use you've practiced this week all come together in one project. Pick an issue in advance if you can — something local that you actually care about.

Lesson 5: Civic Tech Mini-Project

Student Edition

What you will learn today

By the end of this lesson, you will have completed a small-scale civic technology project: you will have picked a real issue in your community or state, researched it using everything you've learned this week (verification, source analysis, ethical AI use), and produced a verified civic artifact — a brief, a letter, or a presentation that documents what you found and why it matters.

This is the capstone of the Florida Pilot Kit. It puts everything together.

Bellringer / Warm-Up Options

Your teacher will choose one option.

For this warm-up, a **real civic issue** means a problem or decision connected to your school, neighborhood, city, county, or state that people could research and try to improve. Examples: traffic near school, school phone policy, water quality, public park safety, bus routes, recycling, library hours, local flooding, or a proposed Florida law.

Option A — Fast Start (3 minutes): Write down one real civic issue people might disagree about or try to improve.

Option B — Standard Warm-Up (5 minutes): Write down one real civic issue, then answer:

1. Who is affected by this issue?
2. What public agency, public official, school board, city, county, or state office might be connected to it?
3. What source could you check first to learn more? Examples: a school board agenda, city or county website, Florida agency page, local news article, or official meeting minutes.

Option C — Extended Launch (6-7 minutes): Write down one real civic issue, then answer:

1. Who is affected by this issue?
2. What public agency, public official, school board, city, county, or state office might be connected to it?
3. What source could you check first to learn more?
4. What would make this issue too broad, too vague, or too hard to research today? How could you narrow it?

This does not have to be your final project topic. It is a quick start for civic thinking.

Vocabulary

Five terms today, focused on civic processes.

Agency. A government office or organization responsible for a specific area — for example, the Florida Department of Education, the Palm Beach County Commission, the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission. Knowing which agency handles which issue is a basic skill of civic participation.

Jurisdiction. The area of authority. A federal agency has federal jurisdiction; a state agency has state jurisdiction; a county or city has local jurisdiction. Asking the right level of government about the right kind of issue is part of doing civic work well.

Policy. The rules or approaches a government uses to address an issue. Different policies produce different outcomes; comparing policies is part of civic analysis.

Public official. Someone elected or appointed to a government role — a city council member, a state representative, a school board member, a sheriff. Public officials are accountable to the people they serve and can be contacted by citizens.

Public records. Documents and information government must make available to the public — meeting minutes, contracts, budgets, agency decisions. Florida has particularly strong public records laws (the "Sunshine Law"), which makes civic research easier here than in many states.

Reading: Putting It All Together

This week you've built a set of skills that, combined, are the foundation of civic technology literacy:

- **Lesson 1:** What AI actually is, what it can do, where it fails
- **Lesson 2:** How to verify AI claims against real sources
- **Lesson 3:** How to read across multiple sources critically, identify bias and missing context
- **Lesson 4:** How to use AI ethically, protect privacy, maintain integrity

Today you use all of those skills on a real issue. Not a hypothetical. Not a textbook case. An actual local or state issue that affects your community.

This is the lesson where the curriculum's purpose becomes concrete. The skills you've built are not just academic exercises. They are what citizens do when they engage seriously with public life. By doing one Civic Tech Mini-Project, you are practicing the actual work of citizenship — research, verification, analysis, communication, action.

Why a Civic Project, Specifically?

Civic literacy is in your Florida standards because Florida (and the country) needs citizens who can engage thoughtfully with public issues. That engagement requires real skills: finding accurate information, evaluating competing claims, understanding how government works, communicating clearly with public officials, being accountable for the positions you take.

The Civic Tech Mini-Project gives you a small, manageable practice of all of these. You won't solve a major civic problem in one class period. You will demonstrate that you can do the work of approaching a civic problem the right way — with evidence, with verification, with respect for sources, with appropriate humility about what you don't know.

Doing this once well makes it possible to do it again, on bigger issues, in higher-stakes contexts, throughout your life.

What Counts as a "Real" Issue

The mini-project asks you to pick a real local or state issue. "Real" means an issue that:

- Actually exists (not hypothetical)
- Affects your community in some way (locally relevant)
- Has identifiable government agencies or officials responsible for some part of it
- Has real sources you can find — government documents, news coverage, advocacy materials, official records

Some examples that work well for Florida middle schoolers:

Local environment / sustainability: - Sea level rise and adaptation in your county - Water quality in a specific local water body (a river, lake, springs) - Endangered species protection in your area - Plastic waste / recycling policy in your city or county

Schools and education: - A current school board policy decision (cell phone use, curriculum adoption, school zoning) - Funding for a specific school program in your district - School safety / mental health support in your district - Library book selection processes in your district

Local government and community: - A current zoning or development decision in your community - Public transportation in your area - A proposed park, recreational facility, or community space - Affordable housing policy in your city or county

State-level civic issues: - A current Florida legislative bill on a topic you care about - A Florida agency's policy on something specific (Florida DEP, Florida DOE, Florida DOT, etc.) - An issue that has shown up in recent Florida legislative sessions

The best topic is one that meets these criteria AND that you have some reason to care about. Engagement is part of the work.

How to Approach the Mini-Project

The five-step structure for the mini-project mirrors the verification and analysis work you've practiced all week.

Step 1: Choose your issue and frame the question. Pick the issue. Then frame it as a specific question rather than a vague topic. "Sea level rise" is too broad. "What is Miami-Dade County doing to adapt its drainage infrastructure to sea level rise, and is the current funding adequate?" is a specific question you can actually research.

Step 2: Identify the responsible agency or official. Who is responsible for this issue at the level of government that matters? For local issues, this is usually a city council, county commission, or city/county department. For state issues, it's typically a Florida agency or the Florida Legislature. Knowing whose job it is to address the issue is fundamental — you can't engage with public issues effectively without knowing the right address for your engagement.

Step 3: Find official sources. Government has lots of public information available — much more than people realize. Florida's Sunshine Law makes this especially true. For your issue, find: official government statements or policy documents, official data (if available), records of agency decisions, current legislation if applicable. Use AI to help you search and organize, but the actual sources need to come from real government and reliable news, not from AI alone.

Step 4: Use AI as a thinking partner — with verification. AI can help you understand a complicated issue, summarize a long policy document, brainstorm what aspects to focus on. Use it. AND verify everything AI tells you against your real sources. Document your AI use with the disclosure practice from Lesson 4.

Step 5: Produce your artifact. Create something concrete that documents what you found and what you think. Three options:

- **Civic Issue Brief** (recommended): a 1–2 page document explaining the issue, summarizing key facts (with cited sources), identifying the responsible agency, and stating your reasoned position on what should happen
- **Letter to a public official:** a formal letter to the relevant official explaining the issue, citing your sources, and stating your position
- **Class presentation:** a 5-minute presentation walking the class through your issue, sources, findings, and position

The portfolio piece for Lesson 5 is the **Civic Issue Brief**, which is the recommended artifact and the form the rubric is calibrated for. If your educator approves the Letter or Presentation alternative for your project, that approved alternative serves the same portfolio purpose; the rubric is adapted to the form chosen.

A Few Notes on Doing This Well

Stay specific. A brief on "education funding in Florida" is too broad to be useful. A brief on "the funding allocation for special education services in [your specific district] for the 2025–2026 school year" is something you can actually engage with.

Cite your sources. Every factual claim in your artifact should have a source. If a fact came from AI and you couldn't verify it from a real source, leave it out — or note it as unverified and explain why you're including it anyway.

Take a position, but defend it. The artifact isn't supposed to be neutral journalism. You can take a position on what you think should happen. But your position should be defensible from your sources, not just an opinion. The difference is whether you can back up what you claim.

Be honest about uncertainty. Not every question has a clear answer. Sometimes the data is contested, sometimes the experts disagree, sometimes you don't have access to all the information. Saying "I don't have enough information to know X" is more honest than pretending certainty you don't have. Civic discourse benefits from people who can be honest about what they don't know.

Acknowledge AI use. Following the disclosure practice from Lesson 4, your artifact should include a brief AI Use Statement noting where AI helped your research, drafting, or thinking. This is the responsible practice.

Activity 1: Issue Selection and Question Framing (10 minutes)

Your teacher will guide a quick group discussion to help you choose your issue. Some students may know exactly what they want to work on; others may need to think it through.

If you don't have an issue in mind, use these questions to find one:

- What's a problem in your community you've heard adults talking about?
- What's a current event in Florida that you've seen in the news?
- What's something at your school or in your school district that you have an opinion about?
- What's an environmental issue specific to where you live?
- What's a local government decision happening right now (zoning, parks, transportation)?

Write down your topic. Then frame it as a specific question — narrow enough that you could actually research it in the time available.

Activity 2: The Mini-Project (40+ minutes)

Now you do the actual project. Work through the five steps from the reading.

Use the Civic Issue Brief template below as your structure.

Civic Issue Brief — Template

```
CIVIC ISSUE BRIEF

Student: _____
Date: _____
Topic: _____

The Question I Researched:
[A specific question, not just a topic]

Why This Issue Matters (locally):
[2–3 sentences on why this issue affects your community]

Responsible Agency or Official:
[Who is responsible for this at the relevant level of government?]

Key Facts (with cited sources):
1. [Fact + source]
2. [Fact + source]
3. [Fact + source]
[etc. – aim for at least 3–5 verified facts]
```



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Different Perspectives on This Issue:
What do supporters of one view say? [+ source if applicable]
What do people who disagree say? [+ source if applicable]
Where do they agree? Where do they disagree?

What I Think Should Happen and Why:
[1 paragraph stating your position with the reasoning]

What I Don't Know (and would want to research more):
[1–2 things you couldn't fully resolve]

AI Use Statement:
[Brief disclosure of how AI helped — research, drafting feedback, organization, etc. — and
confirmation that the writing and analysis are your own]

Sources Cited (full list):
[All sources used, in some consistent format]
```

Activity 3: Class Sharing (10 minutes if time allows)

Several students share their issue and main finding with the class. Listen for:

- What's similar about the issues other students chose?
- What's different about how they approached the research?
- What surprised you about what other students found?

The point isn't to grade each other — it's to see the range of civic issues your classmates care about and the range of approaches to thinking about them.

Reflection Questions

1. What did you learn about your topic that you didn't know before?
2. What was hardest about the mini-project? What did you wish you had more time for?
3. How did the verification habit (Lesson 2) and the source analysis framework (Lesson 3) help you in this project?
4. Did you find yourself changing your initial position based on what you learned? Why or why not?
5. What would you do differently if you did a longer version of this project?

Self-Check

1. What does it mean for an issue to be "real" in the sense this lesson uses?

2. What is the difference between a topic and a researchable question?
3. What is an “agency” in the civic sense?
4. Why do public records matter for civic research?
5. Why does your Civic Issue Brief include an “AI Use Statement”?

What This Pilot Has Built

This is the last lesson of the Florida Pilot Kit. Take a moment to look at what you’ve built.

You can explain what AI actually is — what it does well, where it fails, why hallucination is a structural risk that requires verification.

You have a verification habit. You can take any AI claim, find real sources, compare, document.

You can read across multiple sources critically, identify bias including in sources you trust, and recognize what’s missing from any single account.

You can use AI ethically, protect your privacy, maintain academic integrity, and document your work honestly.

You can apply all of this to a real civic issue, find official sources, identify responsible agencies, and produce documented work that would hold up to scrutiny.

That is the capability. It is real. You will use it for the rest of your life — as a student, as a citizen, eventually as a working adult. The skills are not specific to AI; AI is the entry point. The skills are the durable thing.

Your Portfolio at the End of the Pilot

By now you should have:

1. **AI Concept Map** (from Lesson 1)
2. **Source Verification Log entry** (from Lesson 2)
3. **Media Analysis** (from Lesson 3)
4. **AI Use Disclosure** (from Lesson 4)
5. **Civic Issue Brief** (from this lesson)

Together, these five artifacts demonstrate everything the Pilot Kit teaches. Keep them in your portfolio. They support homeschool documentation, ESA documentation when the family applies for scholarship reimbursement (the actual eligibility/reimbursement determination is made by adults — program reviewers and Scholarship Funding Organizations — not by the artifacts themselves), and your own record of what you accomplished.

Looking Ahead

The Florida Pilot Kit is the introduction. If you want to go deeper:

- *The Open Source Student* (Foundation Edition) covers the technical side of local AI in much more depth — installation, custom assistants, advanced use
- Future curriculum versions (Phase 2, Phase 3) will expand the civic technology work into multi-week and full-year curricula
- The skills you've built apply immediately, in your school work, in your civic life, in any situation where you need to think clearly about information

The pilot is over. The skills are yours.
