Australian Government

Department of Industry, Science and Resources

National **Artificial Intelligence Centre**

AI conversation guide for small business

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About this guide

This guide has been created as part of **AI Week 2025** to support small businesses taking their first steps on the AI journey.

It includes real-world use cases and team activities to spark ideas, build skills, and support safe experimentation. It's designed to guide practical conversations about how AI can improve operations and drive growth.

Using this guide, businesses can:

- identify areas where AI could add value or reduce repetitive tasks

- surface concerns or barriers staff may have about using AI

- highlight the skills or training people may need to feel confident using AI

- inform your approach to safe and responsible AI adoption, including how you approach AI adoption with a governance framework.

We value your feedback

Your input helps us improve and deliver resources that matter. Please take a moment to complete our feedback form and share what you found helpful and what else you would like to see included in future guides.

Let's start with the basics

What is AI?

AI refers to computer systems that learn from data to make decisions or generate content. It's used across industries for tasks like predicting trends, creating content and automating processes. AI includes technologies such as machine learning, neural networks, statistical models and generative tools like chatbots.

Types of AI

The most common AI systems that people would be aware of are known as Generative AI systems, such as Chat GPT, Google Gemini, Claude.ai, or Microsoft Co-pilot. But AI is much broader than these well-known platforms.

There are three common types of AI, which include:

- **Machine Learning:** Learns patterns from data to make decisions or prediction
- **Predictive AI:** forecasts future outcomes using historical data
- **Generative AI:** Creates new content like text, images, or code.

To learn the basics and build your understanding, try the Introduction to AI Course available on the website.

How AI can help your business

AI offers a range of practical benefits that can support your team and improve how your business runs. Some of the key advantages include:

- **Saving time** and reducing costs by automating repetitive tasks
- **Improving decision-making** through data-driven insights
- **Enhancing customer experience** with faster, more personalised service
- **Scaling operations** more efficiently as your business grows.

Risks and considerations

AI can offer real value, but like any technology, it comes with risks that need to be managed. Before you implement AI in your business, take time to understand the potential impacts and review the 6 essential practices in the Guidance for AI Adoption.

Start with a conversation

Engaging in meaning conversation about AI with employees in your business can help build understanding and confidence, especially as people begin exploring new tools and ways of working.

It's important to meet people where they're at, so they feel part of change and engaged through-out the process.

Conversation starters

Asking these questions can help you engage your team and explore their confidence, capability and understand any concerns they may have about using AI.

Understand confidence and concerns

- What concerns do you have about using AI?
- Do you feel confident knowing what information is safe to share with AI?
- What skills or training would help you feel more confident using AI?
- Who in the team could help us test something out?

If your team are positive about AI, involve them in identifying where it could add value – such as saving time, improving customer service or streamlining repetitive tasks. Their insights will help build a list of **use cases** to guide your next steps toward adoption.

Exploring opportunities

- Where do we spend the most time on manual or repetitive work?
- Are there tasks that could be done faster or more accurately with AI?
- Could AI help us serve our customers better or offer something new?
- If AI helped us create efficiencies, how could we reinvest that time to improve operations or develop new products or services?

Guided planning activity

To help structure a team planning session, you might like to use the below *activity template* to guide your activity. It's designed to engage your team, capture ideas and document outcomes and actions in a simple, practical way.

AI use case workshop

How to	Time
1. Warm-up **Ask:** What's one task you wish you could automate or improve?	10 minutes
2. Brainstorm In small groups, list business challenges or inefficiencies. **Then ask:** Could AI help? Use sticky notes or a digital board.	20 minutes
3. Use case mapping • For each idea, answer: • What's the problem? • What could be the solution? • What are the expected benefits?	30 minutes
4. Prioritise Use a simple matrix: • Value (High/Medium/Low) • Complexity (Easy/Hard)	15 minutes
5. Choose a tool Which AI tool could support or automate part of the task.	5 minutes
6. Pitch and plan • Each group picks one use case to pitch. • Then outline a small experiment to test it.	10 minutes

Now you are ready to test your use case

Once you have selected and appropriately planned your use case then:

• **Test it:** try the tool with sample data or a real task.

• **Reflect:** what worked? what didn't? what would you need to scale it?

Experiment, Test, Try

Build confidence by getting hands-on with AI tools. Start with a use case from your team discussions or one of the examples below. Open a generative AI platform and explore.

Trying different tools helps you find what fits your business. If your use case involves automation, test tools that can:

- draft emails or reports
- summarise meetings or documents
- respond to customer queries
- create simple workflows
- extract key info from documents such as PDFs.

These examples are a starting point to test, learn, and refine. The goal: see what's possible, what's useful, and what needs more exploration.

Tips!

AI isn't like a search engine – it needs context

AI learns over time. Early results might miss the mark, but that's a cue to refine your questions and provide clearer context.

Define the role – improve the output

Try:

As my *<Analyst/tutor etc>,* Please create *<what would you like to create and why>*

Audience: For *<who> <what do they need>*

Tone: *<Professional/informal, concise, and easy to scan>*.

Experiment safely

Use public or sample data when testing AI. Avoid entering sensitive information like customer or financial data, and always check privacy settings to stay compliant.

Examples to try!

Create a template

Your role:

You are my **template designer**. Create a **one-page reusable template** for weekly team updates with placeholders and example content.

Objective:

Provide a clear structure for team leads to summarise progress, risks, and next steps.

Audience:

Internal team members and stakeholders who need quick, actionable updates.

Tone:

Professional, concise, and easy to scan.

Instructions:

Include the following sections:

- Highlights
- KPIs
- Risks
- Decisions needed
- Next week

Use < > for placeholders.

Add **example content in italics** for each section.

Keep the template to **one page**.

Output:

A formatted template ready for copy-paste into email or document.

Automate a repetitive admin task

Your role:

You are my **admin assistant**. Use **ONLY** the information provided in the "Meeting Transcription" to create a clear, actionable summary.

Objective:

Prepare a **to-do list** with timelines and include the **context of why each task is needed**.

Audience:

Internal team members who need clarity on next steps.

Tone:

Clear, professional, and concise.

Instructions:

- List tasks in order of priority.

- Include **due dates** or timelines for each task.

- Add a short note explaining **why the task matters** (context).

- Flag any **missing information** required to complete the task.

Information to use:

[Paste meeting transcription or notes here]

Summarise meeting notes, emails or reports

Your role:

You are my **report summariser**. Use **ONLY** the information in the provided report to create a concise summary.

Objective:

Summarise the report into:

- 5 main headline bullet points
- Risks
- Decisions needed
- Next actions with owners assigned

Audience:

Leadership team and stakeholders who need quick, accurate insights.

Tone:

Clear, factual, and actionable.

Instructions:

- Keep names accurate and do **not invent details**.
- Present the output in a structured format with headings for each section.
- Ensure next actions include **owner names** exactly as stated in the report.

Information to use:

[Paste the full report text or key excerpts here]

Create content for social media, website or newsletter

Your role:

You are my **content editor**. Use **ONLY** the information provided in the 'Information to use' to create channel-ready content that meets the stated **Objective** and **Audience**.

Objective:

Drive webinar signups and educate buyers.

Audience:

Time-poor small to medium business owners in retail.

Tone:

Clear, friendly, and confident.

Instructions:

Start with a **headline**, then bullet-point facts.

Deliver outputs for:

- 1 blog post
- 3 social media posts
- 3 email subject lines (each with preview text and draft copy).

Information to use:

[Paste your raw notes or messy content here]