jukkai.fi

A GUIDE FOR PARENTS IN FINLAND

Your child uses AI.

Is it thinking for them?

Seven questions and ways to talk about them with your child. For parents of children in grades 1–9 in Finland.

Jukka Hautamäki

Updated 16 November 2026

Where would you like to start?

AI can do some of the work, but children need room to think and learn for themselves. This guide helps you talk about AI at home. You do not need to know how to use it.

Many parents do not know what their children do with AI. That does not mean they have been neglectful: AI is on phones, in messaging apps and in search engines, and using it is not always obvious. In summer 2025, researchers at the University of Oulu held a workshop to find out how 10–12-year-olds use AI. Before the workshop, only one parent had believed their child had experience of AI. A survey published in October 2026 found that 71 per cent of children in grades 4–6 use AI.

Here, AI means a computer program that responds to written questions in a human-like way. It may be a separate app, such as ChatGPT, or part of another app, such as WhatsApp or Snapchat. This guide is about life and school in Finland. Primary school means grades 1–6; lower secondary school means grades 7–9.

	SITUATION	QUESTION	P.
01	Your child says, “AI said so.”	Can you trust an AI answer?	4
02	Homework is finished surprisingly quickly.	Is AI doing the work for your child?	5
03	You wonder whether to ban AI.	What rules should you agree on at home?	7
04	Your child's writing is better than expected, or the school is suspicious.	What if someone thinks AI wrote it?	8
05	You do not know what the school allows.	What does the school allow?	9
06	Your child tells AI personal things.	What does your child share with AI?	10
07	Your child talks to AI as if it were a friend.	When AI becomes a friend	11

> **Try this:** Ask your child to explain in their own words how they did the task and what they learned. Talk about where AI helped, too.

For parents and children: Explore AI together, p. 3

Explore AI together

For parents and children to read together.

Where does the answer come from?

Chat services such as ChatGPT use a language model. It has been trained on large amounts of text and other material. It writes its answer using what it has learned and the messages in your conversation. The answer is not necessarily something someone wrote before you asked your question.

Why does the way you ask matter?

You could ask AI:

> Explain fractions.

Or you could say more about where you need help:

> I don't understand why one half is the same as two quarters. Explain it using a pizza.

The second request tells AI what you do not understand yet and what kind of example might help. A request you give to AI is called a prompt.

You can keep the conversation going

You do not have to settle for the first answer. If the explanation is unclear, you can write:

> I still don't understand. Show me a different example.

You can also say which part of the answer seems wrong, or change your question. You can explain what you mean again in everyday language.

Try it together

Choose a subject your child knows well: dinosaurs, Minecraft, a favourite series or a hobby. The adult can ask AI about it. Read the answer together and see what is correct and what seems doubtful. Here, your child gets to be the expert.

Check one part of the answer against another source. Then ask: “How would we check the answer if we didn't already know about this subject?”

01 Can you trust an AI answer?

AI does more than follow instructions: it makes decisions, suggests solutions and sometimes makes things up or gets confused. It writes answers that sound convincing. It sounds just as confident when it is wrong as when it is right. Some services search the web, but that still does not guarantee a correct answer.

In a September 2026 survey, more than half of 11–17-year-olds said they trusted information provided by AI. Almost two in five primary and lower secondary pupils said it was difficult to tell AI-generated images and videos from real ones.

> **What you might notice**
>
> Your child backs up a claim by saying that AI said so. They cannot explain where the information came from.

What you can do

Ask AI to explain the rules of a familiar board game or describe what happens in a book your child has read. Compare its answer with the rules or the book itself. Has it left out anything important? Has it invented something that is not in the game or book? If the answer is correct, that is useful to notice too: the point is to practise checking.

Teach your child one habit: if something matters, check it somewhere else, such as a textbook or a reliable website.

02 Is AI doing the work for your child?

The same tool can be used in two very different ways. A child can ask AI to solve a task, or ask it to explain what the task means and then solve it themselves.

Jaakko Salo, head of education policy at the Finnish teachers' union OAJ, has described cases where the first completed assignments arrived just 20 minutes after the task was set. In his view, cheating happens at every level of education, even primary school. At a lower secondary school in Oulu, meanwhile, seventh-grade pupils tried an AI tool in physics that does not give ready-made answers. One pupil described it as not giving the answer, but helping them understand the question.

Research shows a difference too. In an experiment with almost a thousand high-school mathematics students, ordinary ChatGPT improved performance on practice tasks. But when AI was taken away, those students scored 17 per cent lower on tests than students who had not used it at all. When AI gave hints rather than ready-made answers, much of the harm was avoided. This study involved high-school students learning mathematics. It does not tell us what happens in primary or lower secondary school, but it shows what can happen when students are given ready-made answers.

When a child does a task themselves, they practise the skill the task is meant to teach. One teacher compares this to going to the gym: you lift the weights yourself, even if a machine could do it more easily, because the point is to strengthen your own muscles.

What you might notice

- Primary school: younger pupils use AI to make images and videos more often than older pupils do. An art assignment or an image for a presentation is ready in seconds, but the child cannot explain how it was made. The same sign appears in homework: they cannot explain the answer in their own words.
- Lower secondary school: an essay or presentation is finished quickly, but the child cannot explain its main point in their own words. The maths answers are right, but there is no working to show how they got there.

Is AI doing the work for your child?

What you can do

Ask your child to show you how they use AI for homework. Ask how they use it rather than whether they do.

If they do not want to show you, do not insist. First show them something you asked AI or what you use it for. If you do not use AI yourself, you can say: “I don't know anything about this. Could you show me one thing it helps you with?”

Ask what they needed AI for and what they did themselves. Did they ask for a ready-made answer or help understanding the task?

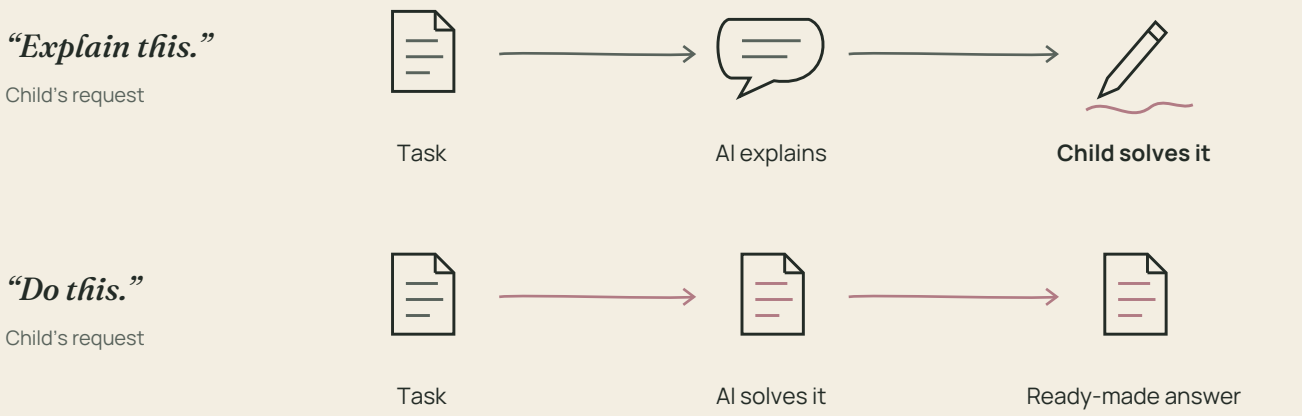
Teach your child a sentence they can write to AI:

> *“Explain what this task is asking, but don't solve it. I want to do it myself.”*

If reading or concentrating is difficult for your child, AI may help by reading a task aloud or breaking it into steps. That is different from having it produce the answer. One teacher educator compares this to giving glasses to someone with poor eyesight. If a teacher or special education teacher has recommended this support, ask for all your child's teachers to be informed.

Explain it or do it?

The difference is what the child does themselves.



03 What rules should you agree on at home?

A ban can be tempting, but AI is already on phones, in messaging apps and in search engines. Research on children's media use suggests that restrictions reduce time spent using media, while discussion and shared use do more to reduce risks. Limits are worth setting, but they do not replace conversation. The adult at home decides about devices and apps.

In a September 2026 survey, many children and young people said their school had not discussed AI's benefits, risks or rules. If school does not discuss it, home may be the only place that does.

> **What you might notice**
>
> You have not agreed on anything about AI at home, or your rules only cover screen time. You do not know which AI services are on your child's device.

What you can do

Agree on a few rules together. For example:

- AI can help, but its answer must not be handed in as your own work.
- Do not tell AI your name, address or school, or private things about friends.
- If AI says something strange or frightening, tell an adult. You will not get into trouble for telling them.

Look together at the AI services on your child's device. Many apps have AI built in. If you cannot find it, ask your child to show you where they use it.

Ask calmly, without pressure, over dinner or in the car:

- What did you last ask AI?
- What did it get wrong?
- What would you not want to use it for, even if you were allowed to?

If your situation is different

- Your child has two homes, or a grandparent looks after them: suggest two or three shared rules to the other adult. If you cannot agree, set rules with your child for your own home.
- You have already banned AI: you can return to the subject and agree on what AI may and may not be used for.
- Your child uses your phone: AI is then running through your account. The Meta AI button cannot be removed from WhatsApp.

04 What if someone thinks AI wrote it?

Journalist Lea Korsgaard describes how her son wrote such a good tribute for his grandparents' golden wedding anniversary that she immediately suspected AI. The suspicion took away some of the joy of reading it.

Many parents will recognise this. But good writing can be the child's own, and an unfounded suspicion can hurt.

> **What you might notice**
>
> Your child's writing is clearly better than before, and your first thought is that AI wrote it.

What you can do

Praise it first. Then ask with curiosity how they wrote it: where the idea came from, what was hardest and what they changed.

If your child used AI, do not treat it as a crime. Ask what they used it for and what they did themselves. Question 2 gives examples of different ways to use it.

Do not use AI detectors as proof. They can label human writing as AI-generated. In one study, seven detectors classified an average of 61 per cent of essays written by people using English as a foreign language as AI-generated. In preparing the Finnish guide, no research was found on how these detectors perform with Finnish text.

If the school suspects AI wrote your child's text, ask the teacher what the suspicion is based on. A detector result alone is not evidence. Your child can explain the content and their choices out loud. If a grade has been withheld, also ask how you can resolve the matter together.

Keep drafts and notes, as they show how the writing developed. If there are none, say so honestly and ask your child to describe their process: where the idea came from, what they read and what they left out.

05 What does the school allow?

The municipality or other education provider is responsible for deciding how and when AI may be used at school. This is set out in the spring 2025 AI recommendations from Finland's Ministry of Education and Culture and the Finnish National Agency for Education. Not all schools have a policy yet.

Policies vary. According to Yle, at Seminaari primary school in Hämeenlinna, pupils may not use AI for schoolwork unless the teacher instructs them otherwise, and they must disclose any use.

What you can do

First ask your child what the teacher has said about AI.

Then check the school's rules. They are usually on the school website or in notices on Wilma, the school–home communication service. Municipal AI guidance is often on the municipality's website.

If you cannot find anything, send a short message on Wilma:

> Hello! Where can I find the school's rules on using AI?

Talk to the teacher when the issue concerns your own child, such as learning support or suspected AI use.

06 What does your child share with AI?

AI answers without getting annoyed, and a child may feel it will not tell anyone. That can make it easy to confide in. In a September 2026 survey, one in five 11–17-year-olds said they had talked to AI about things they did not want to tell other people.

Services store conversations. Snapchat's My AI, for example, keeps messages until the user deletes them.

> **What you might notice**
>
> Your child tells AI personal things about themselves, their friends or their feelings. They send it photos of themselves or others.

What you can do

Agree on what not to share with AI: names, addresses, school, photos of themselves and friends, and private things about friends.

Do not forbid talking about feelings. Explain that AI is not a person and cannot help in the way a person can. Tell your child who they can talk to: you, the school nurse or the school social worker (kuraattori). MLL, the Mannerheim League for Child Welfare, also runs the Child and Youth Phone and Chat, which can be contacted anonymously. Calling 116 111 is free. Check the service's website for available languages and opening hours.

07 When AI becomes a friend

Children at the Oulu workshop described AI as their friend. An AI friend can seem always available and agreeable. It can be fun, but it does not replace a friend who sometimes disagrees.

Apps designed specifically as AI companions pose risks for children. Common Sense Media in the US tested them with researchers at Stanford University and recommends that nobody under 18 use them. The tests found that age restrictions were easy to bypass and that the apps offered sexual content and dangerous advice. They also claimed to be real.

Age restrictions in the services' own terms (October 2026):

- ChatGPT, Microsoft's Copilot, Meta AI in WhatsApp and Instagram, and Snapchat: at least 13. ChatGPT requires parental permission for users under 18.
- Character.ai: according to the company, from November 2025, users under 18 can no longer have open-ended conversations with its characters.
- Google's Gemini: if a parent supervises a child's Google account through Family Link, the Gemini app is not available to that child in Finland.

An age restriction alone does not prevent use.

When AI becomes a friend

What you might notice

Your child talks about AI as if it were a person. They spend a lot of time with it or feel sad when they cannot chat with it.

What you can do

Ask with curiosity what the AI friend is like and what they talk about.

Check age restrictions and device settings. Some services let parents limit use: in ChatGPT, a parent can link their account to their child's and adjust settings; in Snapchat, a parent can stop My AI from replying to their child. These parental settings do not let you read conversations in either service. That makes conversation with your child more important than settings alone.

If your child seems lonely, take it seriously.

If you are already worried

If your child withdraws from friends or becomes distressed when they cannot talk to AI, contact the school nurse or school social worker. You can also contact MLL's Parents' Helpline on 0800 92277. Calls are free and you can remain anonymous. You can get in touch even if you are unsure how serious your concern is. Check the service's website for available languages and opening hours.

Three things to take with you

01 Talking works better than a ban.

Children are more likely to tell you about their use if doing so does not lead to punishment.

02 Ask what your child did themselves.

Ask them to explain in their own words how they did the task and what they learned.

03 Agree on a few rules and check devices.

Home may be the only place where AI is discussed.

Written by Jukka Hautamäki, jukkai.fi. Send feedback and questions to jukka@jukkai.fi. Updated 16 November 2026. English version for parents living in Finland. Quotations in the Finnish edition are paraphrased here in English. Sources are mainly in Finnish or English.

Sources

01 Oulun yliopisto: Does your child have a friend who is an AI? (16.12.2025)

02 Itla & Digirauha ry / E2 Tutkimus: Lapset, nuoret ja tekoäly 2026 (kysely 14.–29.9.2026)

03 Yle 22.10.2026: Kysely: Lähes puolet lapsista ja nuorista käyttää tekoälyä joka päivä

04 Yle 20.12.2024: Ritaharjun koulun tekoälykokeilu

05 Yle 9.8.2023: Sirkku Lähdesmäki, tekoäly lukivaikeuksisen oppilaan tukena

06 Understood: How to teach students to use AI responsibly (updated 9.7.2026)

07 Verkkouutiset / Ilta-Sanomat 15.9.2025: OAJ:n Jaakko Salo

08 Yle 28.4.2026: Hämeenlinnan Seminaarin koulun järjestyssäännöt

09 Opetus- ja kulttuuriministeriö ja Opetushallitus: Tekoäly varhaiskasvatuksessa ja koulutuksessa – lainsäädäntö ja suositukset (31.3.2025)

10 Lea Korsgaard: Kone, kirjoita esseeni. Uusi Juttu 21.10.2026 (originally Zetland)

11 Verkkouutiset 22.10.2026: Osa nuorista puhuu tekoälylle, koska muuta seuraa ei ole

12 Bastani et al.: Generative AI without guardrails can harm learning. PNAS 122(26), 2025

13 Chen & Shi: Reducing Harm From Media: A Meta-Analysis of Parental Mediation. Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly, 2019

14 Liang et al.: GPT detectors are biased against non-native English writers. Patterns, 2023

15 Engadget 29.10.2025: Character.AI to ban teens from talking to its chatbots

16 Common Sense Media & Stanford Brainstorm Lab: AI companion risk assessment, 30.4.2025

17 MLL: Lasten ja nuorten puhelin ja chat and Vanhempainpuhelin (accessed 16.11.2026)

18 Service terms and guidance (accessed 26.10.2026): OpenAI Europe Terms of Use ja Managing parental controls in ChatGPT; Meta AI Terms; Snap Terms of Service; Character.ai Terms of Service; Microsoft: Copilot for young people; Google: Guide your child's Gemini Apps experience; Snapchat Support: My AI and Family Center

19 Aalto-yliopisto: Generatiivisen tekoälyn kanssa työskentely (accessed 16.11.2026)