

Using an AI App - Safety Checklist (for everyday users)

You don't need to understand how AI works to use this checklist. It's designed to help you take simple, practical steps that will help to keep you safe. If you're not confident in using AI, [our free online courses](#) will give you everything you need to do so well and to stay safe.

In this guide, an app means any digital tool you use on your phone, computer, or through a website. This includes things you download, websites you type into, and AI chat tools you talk to. This guide isn't a guarantee that something is safe.

- 1. Check out reviews.** Before you enter personal information or make a payment, check reviews of the app (see below). Apps provided by reputable providers, such as Microsoft, Google, Open AI and Anthropic, are likely to be safer.
- 2. Only use approved AI apps.** If you are part of an organisation, only use the AI that has been approved and follow any guidance issued, to help ensure any risk is minimised.
- 3. Share the minimum when setting up.** Skip optional fields and avoid giving extra details unless essential.
- 4. Don't enter sensitive personal data.** Unless the app specifically needs it, do not enter personal or financial data, such as your address, birth date or bank details. Instead, use generic versions, such as "my town", "a colleague", "John S."
- 5. Turn off unnecessary permissions.** Most apps work fine without access to contacts, location, or microphone.
- 6. Keep your device updated.** Updates fix security holes.
- 7. Use parental controls for children.** Set age limits and block inappropriate apps.

8. **Don't rely on AI for medical, legal, or financial decisions.** Use AI for ideas, not important decisions.
9. **Log out or delete your account if you stop using the app.** Reduces long-term data exposure.
10. **Trust your instincts.** If something feels off, pause, stop using the app, and delete it. If you're unsure, ask someone you trust.

How to check if a specific app is likely to be safe

Here's a prompt you can amend and paste into your AI (such as Copilot) to check if an app is likely to be safe, or not.

*Help me check whether this AI app is safe to use. Here's the **name of the app and what it does**. Please assess it using a safety checklist: who made it, data use, permissions, behaviour, safety features, business model, and any red flags. Also check app-store reviews, user complaints, and any media coverage to see if people have raised concerns about scams, safety issues, privacy problems, or inappropriate behaviour. Use official links, such as developer website, privacy policy, terms, security page, and the official App Store/Google Play listing and evidence-based citations: "If you can't find/verify a link, say so — don't guess.". Split links into: Primary sources (official) vs independent sources (reputable reporting / consumer bodies). Finally, explain what kinds of information is safe or unsafe to enter this app, based on its privacy policy, behaviour, and reputation.*

However, AI cannot give you a definitive “safe/unsafe” verdict. It can only assess risk indicators based on available information and it can make mistakes. Treat this as a screening checklist, then confirm by checking the official developer pages and independent sources before entering any personal, confidential, or payment information.

Using AI Meeting note takers

The guidance above applies to AI meeting note takers but we also have a [free ‘bite size’ 20min online course](#). This provides much more specific guidance on choosing and using these and includes downloads and a policy that you can amend and use in your organisation.

How this checklist was created

This checklist was created using AI and is based on real-world patterns seen in AI apps. It draws on issues identified by consumer protection bodies, app-store investigations, data-protection regulators, and documented user complaints. It’s designed so that almost anyone, regardless of technical knowledge, can quickly judge whether an AI app is likely to be safe.



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