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# AI Readiness Skills - A Common Minimum Framework for Upskilling Humans

## Abstract:

This paper proposes a framework of a skill-set called "AI Readiness Skills" that every human needs to survive & succeed in the rapidly evolving AI world. The framework addresses four key goals which are common to all humans: staying safe from AI-related threats, rebuilding careers after AI replaces jobs, keeping current jobs as AI becomes more common, and qualifying for new jobs in an AI economy. The framework is built as a three-level pyramid with Digital Citizenship & Internet Maturity (DCIM) skills at the bottom, the Four C's (Critical Thinking, Creativity, Collaboration, and Communication) in the middle, and AI Tools skills at the top. We provide evidence showing why this approach helps develop human abilities that remain valuable alongside advancing AI technologies.

## Table of Contents:


| | |
|---|---|
| 1. Introduction: AI Will Dominate Industries and Humans Must Adapt Fast. | 2 |
| 2. The Objectives Achieved Through AI Readiness Skills | 2 |
| 3. The AI Readiness Skills Framework: The Minimum Set of Skills Needed for Humans to Have a career in the Post-AI World | 2 |
| 4. Understanding the Base Level of Pyramid in Detail: The Foundation of AI Readiness - DCIM Skills | 3 |
| 5. Understanding the Middle Level of Pyramid in Detail: The Core Competencies - Four C's | 6 |
| 6. Understanding the Top Level of Pyramid in Detail: Effective Use of AI Tools for Productivity | 8 |
| 7. Mapping AI Readiness Skills to the Four Objectives | 10 |
| 8. Conclusion: AI Readiness Skills are critical for Every Human | 11 |

# 1. Introduction: AI Will Dominate Industries and Humans Must Adapt Fast.

AI is transforming society and the workforce. From automating complex industrial processes to the growth of personal digital assistants, AI's influence is becoming widespread.[1] The rise of generative AI has gained global attention, with many seeing it as a transformative industrial revolution.[13] This major technology shift requires people to adapt to navigate the changing landscape. To ensure personal safety, maintain career strength, and support professional growth in this new era, people need new skills and abilities.

In response, this paper proposes a structured skill-set called **"AI Readiness Skills"**. This skill-set is the *minimum* a human would need to effectively engage with an AI-driven world, reducing potential threats and taking advantage of new opportunities. In other words, this skill-set defines the *bottomline* of skills needed by humans, not the topline. Therefore it excludes all domain specific skills. The skill-set is organized as a **three-level pyramid**, with foundational **Digital Citizenship & Internet Maturity (DCIM)** Skills at the bottom, essential 21st-century competencies known as the **Four C's (Critical Thinking, Creativity, Collaboration, and Communication)** in the middle, and skills for effective use of **AI Tools** at the top.

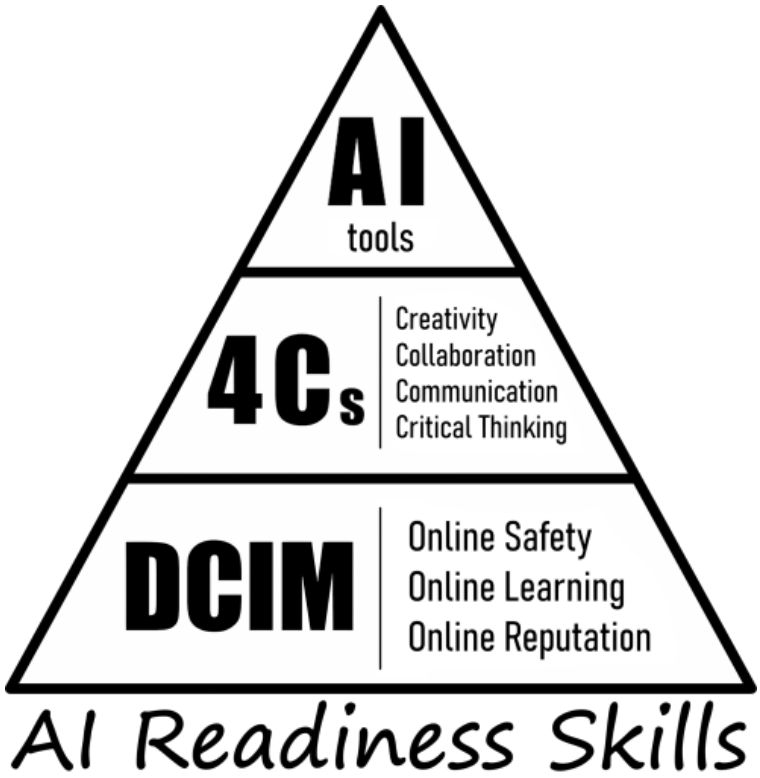
# 2. The Objectives Achieved Through AI Readiness Skills

The paper argues that the proposed "AI Readiness Skills" are critical for every human to achieve four key objectives:

1. Stay safe from online safety threats, worsened due to malicious use of generative AI.
2. Restart a career after losing a job due to AI.
3. Avoid losing an existing job amidst lay-offs driven by AI-adoption by companies.
4. Be eligible for new types of jobs that emerge in the post-AI world.

# 3. The AI Readiness Skills Framework: The Minimum Set of Skills Needed for Humans to Have a career in the Post-AI World

The "AI Readiness Skills" framework is structured as a three-level pyramid, as shown below, visually representing the connected nature of the required skills.




**The base level** of the pyramid is formed by **DCIM Skills** (Digital Citizenship & Internet Maturity). These skills provide the essential foundation for safe and effective engagement in the digital world and are crucial for adaptability as technology changes.

**The middle level** includes the **Four C's** (Critical Thinking, Creativity, Collaboration, and Communication). These widely accepted skills are vital for success in the 21st century and are particularly important for people to effectively use AI and remain relevant in the changing job market.

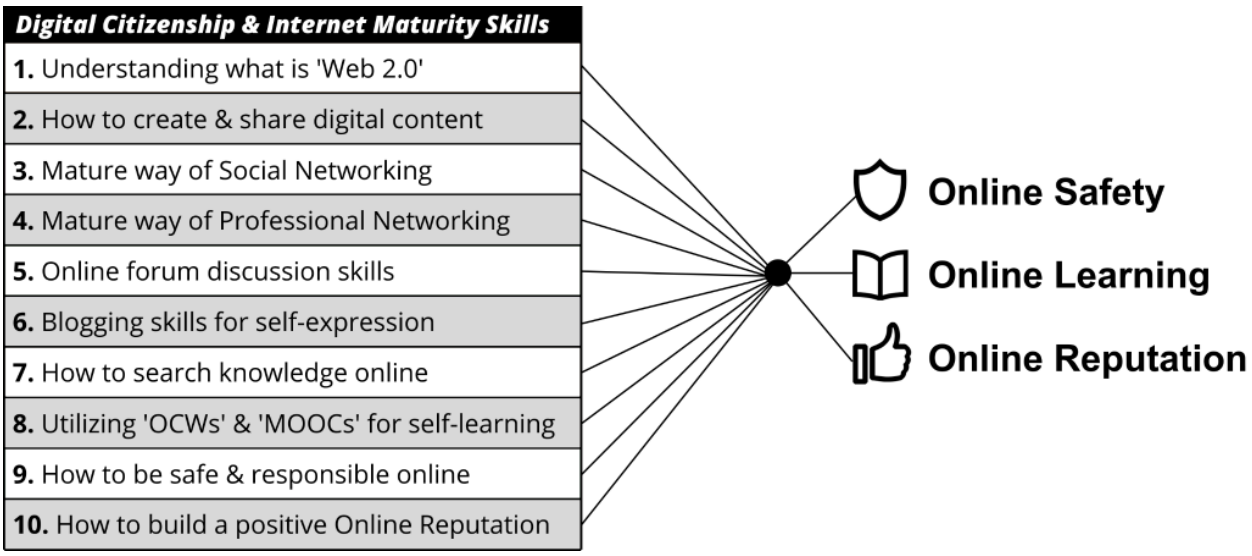
**The top level** of the pyramid focuses on **AI Tools**, representing the practical skills needed to use artificial intelligence to improve productivity and achieve specific goals. Each level builds on the one below, creating a robust and adaptable skill-set for navigating the age of AI.

## 4. Understanding the Base Level of Pyramid in Detail: The Foundation of AI Readiness - DCIM Skills

Digital Citizenship & Internet Maturity (DCIM) skills form the foundation of AI readiness. These skills help people navigate the digital world safely and effectively.[14] As AI becomes

increasingly embedded in online interactions, strong DCIM skills are essential. This skill-set provides the groundwork for higher-level AI readiness skills.

DCIM skills are a collection of ten digital skills which combine to give three major digital competencies - Online Safety, Online Learning, and Online Reputation.




## 4.1 Online Safety Skill:

AI makes online safety more complex. Generative AI enables sophisticated threats like convincing phishing attacks, realistic deepfakes, misinformation, and deceptive content.[13] Cybercriminals can mimic trusted voices and images, making social engineering attacks more persuasive.[21] AI can generate malicious code and bypass security measures, creating new dangers to personal digital security.[22] AI-powered phishing attacks target specific individuals, making detection difficult.[19] Malicious actors can use adversarial prompts to generate harmful content through AI platforms.[13]

The online safety best-practices are well known, including being careful when sharing personal information online, particularly with AI chatbots,[21] using multi-factor authentication, creating strong passwords, and keeping software updated,[21] staying alert to phishing attempts and understanding AI security risks,[19] maintaining healthy skepticism towards online content, and verifying information through reliable sources,[15] etc.

However, the big challenge with humans is that the online safety skills cannot be developed just by reading a list of Do's and Don'ts. They require structured learning about threats and serious practice to avoid them.

## 4.2 Online Learning Skill:

AI is changing job requirements across industries and creating new roles, requiring ongoing skill updates to remain relevant.[7] In the AI landscape, continuous learning is necessary. In the post-AI world, the curricula of schools and colleges, and the books based on them, might never be able to stay updated with the new knowledge and perpetually remain out-dated. The only place anyone can learn relevant knowledge & skills would be the Internet. Professionals must commit to lifelong learning and develop high adaptability.[8] The rapid pace of AI development is enforcing everyone to become an expert self-learner.

Online learning skills include identifying trustworthy information, recognizing credible sources and avoiding misinformation.[14] Digital & media literacy are a subset of online learning skills which enable critical evaluation of online information, assessing underlying biases and understanding content purpose.[16] Developing skepticism towards online claims and using fact-checking resources are crucial for navigating the complex information landscape.[17]

AI is transforming education by offering personalized learning opportunities. Using resources like Open Courseware, MOOCs, and AI-powered learning platforms effectively helps acquire new skills.[25] These platforms often tailor learning experiences to individual needs.[25] Many offer specialized courses in AI-related skills.[8] AI-powered platforms can identify skills gaps and recommend specific learning paths.[25] Developing strategies to manage information overload, filter relevant content, and minimize distractions is essential for successful continuous learning.

## 4.3 Online Reputation Skill:

As the value of a college degree goes to zero in the AI-driven job market, a positive online reputation becomes a significant asset. It represents professional standing and influences perception by potential employers and partners.[40] A strong online reputation builds trust and credibility, making people more attractive to potential employers or clients.[41] A negative online footprint creates career challenges.

Building a professional online presence requires strategic effort.[43] This includes optimizing social media profiles, especially including Linkedin.[46] Sharing thought leadership content, engaging professionally in discussions, and contributing to online communities are crucial.[46] Maintaining consistency across platforms helps create a cohesive digital image.[49] Regularly monitoring online presence helps identify and address negative information.[46] Creating a personal website or portfolio can effectively showcase skills and achievements.[46]

A strong online reputation increases visibility and networking opportunities.[41] By showcasing expertise online, individuals can position themselves as leaders fit to work in an AI-dominated workforce.[46] Employers frequently use online presence to assess candidates.[46] A well-managed

online reputation is most likely the only way to attract career and business opportunities in the AI age. The quality of the online reputation of a person depends upon the quality of the DCIM skills no.1 to no.9 as listed in the graphic shown under section 4 above.

### 4.4 The "Career Insurance" Skills: Combination of Online Learning & Online Reputation Skills

Online learning and reputation management skills together serve as *"career insurance"* in the AI era. If someone loses their job due to automation, strong online learning skills enable quick acquisition of in-demand skills.[8] Well-developed reputation management skills help showcase these new skills to attract opportunities.[40] This combination acts as a safety net, allowing for quick career transitions when facing AI-driven job market changes.[9] The ability to continuously learn and effectively communicate those skills forms a robust mechanism for career resilience.

## 5. Understanding the Middle Level of Pyramid in Detail: The Core Competencies - Four C's

This paper advocates a simple rule of thumb to analyze how safe a job is from being taken over by AI. It's as follows:

**If a job requires *regular* application of *all* of the four C's, it will most likely remain AI-safe. Conversely, if any job can be performed without *frequent* application of *all* of the four C's, it will most likely be done by AI.**

Therefore, on top of the foundational DCIM skills, the middle level of the AI readiness skills pyramid comprises the Four C's: Critical Thinking, Creativity, Collaboration, and Communication. These competencies are essential for success in the 21st century and particularly important in an AI-driven world. Mastering these skills helps people become effective orchestrators rather than mere users of AI tools.

### 5.1 Critical Thinking:

Critical thinking is the ability to analyze information objectively, question assumptions, and evaluate evidence to form sound judgments.[16] In an age where AI generates vast information quickly, critical thinking is essential for evaluating accuracy, reliability, and biases of AI-generated content.[29] Research suggests over-reliance on AI might inhibit critical thinking skills[30], making it crucial to actively cultivate this competency.

Evaluating AI outputs effectively involves questioning data sources, comparing AI insights with human expertise, and identifying patterns or anomalies.[29] Understanding AI's limitations is essential, as it operates by identifying patterns in data and can inherit biases.[29] Human judgment remains indispensable. AI should assist, not replace, human decision-making, especially in situations requiring contextual understanding and ethical considerations.[29] Humans provide the crucial ethical reasoning and contextual awareness that AI often lacks.[31]

## 5.2 Creativity:

In the AI context, creativity mainly includes creative thinking, innovative thinking and problem-solving.[51] While AI can generate content, human creativity remains important for providing vision, imagining solutions, and contextual understanding.[51] AI can assist a creative thinker or catalyze the process of creativity, helping overcome creative blocks and opening new avenues for exploration.[51]

The synergy between human creativity and AI tools offers tremendous innovation potential.[2] AI enhances human creative capabilities by providing fresh perspectives, speeding up idea generation, and handling technical details.[2] This collaboration can lead to previously unattainable innovation levels.[54] By automating routine tasks, AI frees and *forces* human creators to focus on higher-level conceptual aspects.[54]

## 5.3 Communication:

In AI-integrated environments, effective communication takes on greater importance.[1] It bridges humans and AI systems, enabling individuals to convey intentions and objectives to AI models.[1] AI-driven communication tools are transforming how we interact with technology and each other.[2] In workplaces, clear communication fosters problem-solving, reduces misunderstandings, and enhances team productivity.[60] The ability to communicate clearly is critical as humans increasingly interact with AI systems and AI-augmented teams.

This includes communicating effectively with AI tools through precise prompts and with human colleagues in AI-augmented teams.[61] Effective prompting, using natural language with clear instructions and examples, is key to eliciting desired outputs from AI.[64] In AI-augmented teams, communication requires understanding AI capabilities and limitations, coupled with strong interpersonal skills.[12] AI can assist human-to-human communication by clarifying intent, summarizing information, and providing real-time translation.[61]

## 5.4 Collaboration:

In AI-driven workplaces, effective teamwork is paramount.[12] Collaboration is a fundamental human strength that current AI cannot fully replicate.[50] Effective collaboration increases

productivity, improves problem-solving, and creates a cohesive workforce.[60] While AI can perform many tasks autonomously, complex challenges require collaboration between many people and even AI agents.

Successful collaboration involves harnessing complementary strengths.[56] AI contributes by analyzing data, identifying patterns, and automating processes, while humans provide intuition, critical thinking, and emotional intelligence.[54] Building strong working relationships remains crucial. While AI facilitates communication, maintaining genuine connections requires empathy, emotional intelligence, and rapport-building.[43] Transparency and authenticity in all interactions foster a collaborative environment.[43]

### 5.5 Mastering the Four C's: Becoming the "Boss" of AI:

People who master the Four C's are positioned to become the "boss" of AI, using it as an assistant rather than being replaced by it. Critical thinking helps evaluate AI-generated information and direct AI toward meaningful outcomes. Creativity identifies novel applications for AI tools and guides them toward complex challenges. Effective communication ensures clear instructions through well-crafted prompts and seamless collaboration with colleagues. Strong collaboration facilitates productive partnerships between humans, organizations and AI. By integrating these 4C skills, a human can play the role of the leader, dreamer, decision maker, planner, entrepreneur, risk-taker, pioneer, problem solver, troubleshooter, solution designer, or simply, the “boss”.

## 6. Understanding the Top Level of Pyramid in Detail: Effective Use of AI Tools for Productivity

At the top of the AI Readiness Skills pyramid lies the practical ability to use AI tools for enhanced productivity. AI tools are becoming increasingly accessible for tasks from content creation to data analysis and administrative automation. Proficiency with these tools can significantly boost productivity. In today's job market, AI tool familiarity is rapidly becoming a requirement for many roles.[8] This skill is transitioning from specialized to fundamental for the modern workplace.

Tool accessibility alone doesn't guarantee productivity. Real competency requires specific skills beyond basic literacy. Using AI effectively requires a mindset shift—from simply having access to mastering skills that unlock its potential.

## 6.1 Output Clarity – The Prerequisite for Effective AI Interaction

Success with AI begins with "output clarity"—knowing exactly what you want before prompting the tool. Vague prompts yield generic results; ambiguity leads to inaccuracy. Output clarity involves tailoring prompts to tasks—defining tone, audience, or coding language—so AI's effort aligns with your goal.

## 6.2 Choosing the Right AI Tool

The AI landscape includes tools for summarization, task automation, and generative tasks. Selecting the right tool based on task type, speed, cost, or output quality is essential. Like a craftsman selecting tools, users must understand each AI option's strengths to optimize results.

## 6.3 The Art and Science of Prompting

Effective prompting blends articulation with output clarity. Prompts should include context, format, tone, and examples. Techniques like chain-of-thought prompting, defining AI personas, or limiting output scope refine responses. Iterating prompts enhances collaboration and unlocks AI's potential.

## 6.4 Creating Workflows and SOPs

Complex tasks often require multi-step workflows involving multiple AI tools or human input. SOPs and visual workflows ensure consistency, highlight bottlenecks, and improve efficiency. For instance, content creation may involve separate tools for research, drafting, editing, and SEO.

## 6.5 Designing Chains of AI Tools and Agents

Advanced users create chains of AI tools working together. Based on SOPs, each tool performs a specific step. For example, a market research agent may gather data, analyze sentiment, and compile reports using different tools. This strategic linking creates automated systems that handle complex tasks effectively.

These five interlinked skills—clarity, tool selection, prompting, workflows, and toolchains—are essential for AI readiness. As AI evolves, continuous learning will be key to staying productive in an AI-driven world.

# 7. Mapping AI Readiness Skills to the Four Objectives

The "AI Readiness Skills" framework is designed to address four key objectives for navigating the AI age. Here's how each level contributes to achieving these goals.

## 7.1 How AI Readiness skills help achieve the first objective:

Stay safe from the personal safety threats arising due to the inherent problems or the malicious use of generative AI.

This objective is addressed through Online Safety Skills within the DCIM Skills level. These skills equip people with knowledge of digital threats amplified by AI.[13] Understanding how AI creates sophisticated phishing, deepfakes, and malicious content helps people recognize and avoid these threats. These skills include adopting security measures like strong passwords, multi-factor authentication, and information sharing caution, essential for mitigating AI-related safety risks.

## 7.2 How AI Readiness skills help achieve the second objective:

Restart one's career after a job loss caused due to AI.

Career restart capability comes through Online Learning and Online Reputation Management skills within the DCIM Skills level. Online learning skills enable self-directed acquisition of in-demand skills relevant to the evolving job market.[11] Online reputation management skills help build positive digital presence, showcasing new skills to potential employers.[40] This combination acts as "career insurance," enabling adaptation to job market shifts through learning and effective self-presentation.

## 7.3 How AI Readiness skills help achieve the third objective:

Avoid losing one's existing job when companies increase their adoption of AI for automation.

Job retention is achieved through the Four C's and effective AI Tools use. Mastering Critical Thinking, Creativity, Communication, and Collaboration enables performance of tasks less susceptible to automation. These skills involve higher-order cognition, innovation, complex interpersonal interactions, and nuanced understanding—areas where humans excel. Effective AI tool use enhances productivity and allows employees to augment their roles.[3] By leveraging AI to improve efficiency and take on new responsibilities, individuals become more valuable to organizations, reducing job loss risk.

### 7.4 How AI Readiness skills help achieve the fourth objective:

Become eligible for the new kind of Jobs which arise in the post-AI world.

Eligibility for emerging jobs also comes through the Four C's and AI Tools skills. The Four C's are essential for future workforce roles, particularly those involving working alongside AI systems.[7] These skills provide adaptability for evolving job requirements. Proficiency with AI tools is increasingly a prerequisite for new jobs.[7] Understanding how to choose appropriate AI tools and effectively prompt them is crucial for success in the post-AI job market.

| Objective | Relevant Skill Level(s) | Key Skills Within the Level(s) |
|---|---|---|
| 1. Stay safe from personal safety threats | Base Level: DCIM Skills | Online Safety |
| 2. Restart one's career after a job loss caused due to AI | Base Level: DCIM Skills | Online Learning, Online Reputation Management |
| 3. Avoid losing one's existing job when companies increase AI adoption | Middle Level: The Four C's, Top Level: AI Tools | Critical Thinking, Creativity, Communication, Collaboration, Choosing AI Tools, Effective Prompting |
| 4. Become eligible for the new kind of Jobs which arise in the post-AI world | Middle Level: The Four C's, Top Level: AI Tools | Critical Thinking, Creativity, Communication, Collaboration, Choosing AI Tools, Effective Prompting |

# 8. Conclusion: AI Readiness Skills are critical for Every Human

The "AI Readiness Skills" framework—encompassing DCIM skills, the Four C's, and AI tool proficiency—represents the minimum skill set required to thrive in the AI age. These skills are essential for ensuring personal safety against AI-enhanced threats, enabling career restarts after job displacement, preventing job loss from increasing AI adoption, and qualifying for emerging job roles.

AI's transformative impact will continue reshaping our personal and professional lives. Individuals, organizations, and educational institutions must prioritize these AI Readiness Skills. By developing these competencies, we can harness AI's potential while mitigating risks, ensuring a future where humans and AI work together effectively. These skills are not domain-specific but universally necessary for navigating the AI-shaped world.

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# About iMature.in

**iMature.in** is India's pioneer in *'Digital Citizenship & Internet Maturity'* education, with 12 years of thought leadership. Been through incubation at **IIM Bangalore, ISB Hyderabad** & **TISS Mumbai**, the team is working to design the post-AGI education system.

# About Humans Winning AI

Humans Winning AI is a growing community around AI readiness, and aspires to become the world's largest.

# Official Website of 'AI Readiness Skills Mission'

To access all the resources (toolkits etc) we are creating for schools and colleges on 'AI Readiness Skills', please visit **https://aireadinessskills.com**