

FUTURE JOBS: HUMAN, MACHINE OR TEAM?

AI AND THE FUTURE OF WORK



11–16 years



45–60 min

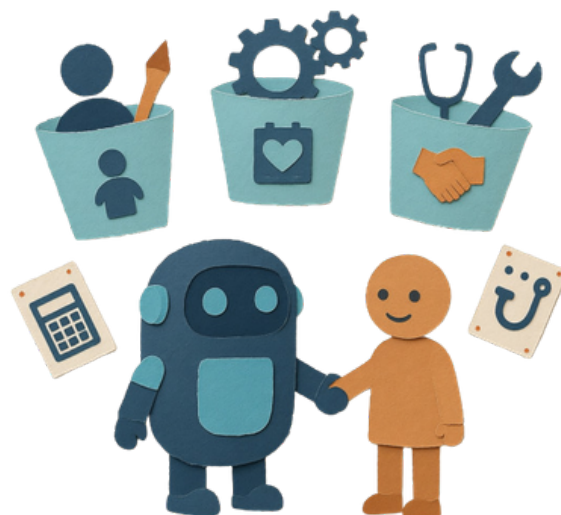


8–30
participants

Card sorting, future
planning and discussion

OVERVIEW

Participants examine tasks from different professions and decide whether they are best performed by a person, an AI-enabled machine or a human-AI team. By redesigning a future job, they discover that AI often changes individual tasks rather than simply replacing entire professions. They also identify the human abilities and new skills likely to remain important in an AI-supported workplace.



LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Participants will:

- distinguish between a profession and the individual tasks within it
- identify tasks that AI and automation may perform effectively
- recognize situations requiring human judgment, empathy, responsibility or physical adaptability
- explore how people and AI systems can complement one another
- understand that technological change can create, transform and reduce different types of work
- identify skills that may be valuable in future workplaces

MATERIALS

- Profession cards
- Task cards for each profession
- Three category signs: HUMAN, MACHINE and HUMAN-AI TEAM
- Scenario or change cards
- Skill cards
- A board, flip chart or large sheet of paper
- Markers
- Paper and pens
- Optional future-job design worksheets

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MATERIALS

Suggested profession cards include:

- teacher
- doctor or nurse
- farmer
- journalist
- artist or designer
- engineer
- conservation scientist
- chef
- translator
- emergency responder
- shop manager
- public-transport planner

Suggested skill cards include:

- creativity
- empathy
- communication
- critical thinking
- digital literacy
- teamwork
- adaptability
- ethical judgment
- technical knowledge
- problem-solving
- data literacy
- practical skills
- cultural understanding
- responsibility

PREPARATION

Select four to six professions that are relevant to the participants' context.

Prepare task cards for each profession. Include a mixture of:

- repetitive tasks
- data-processing tasks
- physical tasks
- creative tasks
- interpersonal tasks
- safety-critical decisions
- tasks involving responsibility and judgment

For example, a teacher's task cards could include:

- marking multiple-choice questions
- explaining a difficult idea in a new way
- preparing practice exercises
- noticing when a student needs support
- recording attendance
- deciding how to respond to a conflict
- checking whether learning materials are accurate
- encouraging a student who has lost confidence

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PREPARATION

Prepare change cards such as:

- The AI system makes a serious mistake.
- Internet access is unavailable.
- The customer or patient refuses AI involvement.
- The task involves confidential information.
- A completely new situation occurs.
- The system works faster but cannot explain its result.
- The technology is too expensive for some workplaces.
- The AI performs differently for different groups of people.

INTRODUCTION

Ask the participants:

- Which jobs already use AI or automated systems?
- Does a job consist of only one task?
- If a machine performs one part of a job, has it replaced the whole profession?
- What can people do that machines may find difficult?
- What can machines do particularly quickly or consistently?

Explain: AI usually affects tasks within jobs. It may automate some activities, assist with others and create new responsibilities. Today, we will decide which tasks should be performed by people, machines or teams combining both.

Clarify that predictions about future employment are uncertain. The purpose is to examine possibilities and choices, not to announce exactly which jobs will exist or disappear.



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INSTRUCTIONS

1) SEPARATE JOBS INTO TASKS

Choose one familiar profession, such as teacher.

Ask participants to list everything a teacher may do during a working day. Record their answers.

Point out the variety of tasks:

- planning
- explaining
- evaluating
- organizing
- listening
- solving conflicts
- creating materials
- making decisions

Explain: When people say that AI will change a job, we need to ask which specific tasks may change.

2) SORT THE FIRST TASK CARDS

Display the three category signs:

- HUMAN
- MACHINE
- HUMAN-AI TEAM

Read one teacher task at a time and ask the group to place it in a category.

For each decision, ask:

- Why is this category appropriate?
- What might a machine do well?
- What might it misunderstand?
- What should the human remain responsible for?
- What would happen if the system made a mistake?

Allow more than one reasonable placement when participants can explain the conditions.

3) INVESTIGATE DIFFERENT PROFESSIONS

Divide participants into small groups. Give each group one profession card and its task cards.

Groups sort the tasks into the three categories.

For tasks assigned to HUMAN-AI TEAM, they must describe the division of responsibility.

For example: An AI system analyses medical images and highlights unusual areas. A qualified doctor examines the images, considers other medical information, discusses the situation with the patient and remains responsible for the diagnosis.

4) TEST THE DECISIONS WITH CHANGE CARDS

Give each group one or two change cards.

For example: The AI system produces a recommendation but cannot explain why.

Groups reconsider their task sorting:

- Should the task remain in the same category?
- Is additional human review needed?
- Should the AI system be used at all?
- Who is responsible for checking the result?
- What backup is needed if the system fails?

Explain that the appropriate division of work depends on the context, risks and people affected.

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INSTRUCTIONS

5) IDENTIFY STRENGTHS AND LIMITATIONS

Ask groups to create two lists.

AI and machines may be effective at:

- processing large amounts of data
- detecting certain patterns
- repeating defined tasks consistently
- operating in dangerous environments
- generating possible drafts or designs
- monitoring systems continuously

People may be especially important for:

- understanding social and cultural context
- building trust
- showing genuine empathy
- making ethical judgments
- responding to unfamiliar situations
- taking responsibility
- setting goals and deciding what matters

Discuss exceptions. People can also perform repetitive analysis, and machines can support creative activities. The categories are not absolute.

6) DESIGN A FUTURE VERSION OF THE PROFESSION

Each group redesigns its profession for approximately ten years in the future.

The group decides:

1. Which tasks remain mainly human?
2. Which tasks are automated?
3. Which tasks involve human-AI collaboration?
4. What new task has appeared?
5. What task has become less important?
6. What new skill do workers need?
7. What rule protects workers, clients or the public?
8. Who remains responsible when something goes wrong?

Groups create a short description or poster titled:

“A Working Day in the Future”

7) CREATE A NEW JOB TITLE

Ask groups to invent one possible future role connected to the profession.

Examples include:

- AI Learning Materials Reviewer
- Human-Robot Care Coordinator
- Digital Authenticity Investigator
- Agricultural Data Technician
- AI Sustainability Auditor
- Virtual Environment Designer
- Algorithmic Fairness Officer
- Wildlife Monitoring Specialist

For each role, groups identify:

- the problem it addresses
- its main responsibilities
- the human abilities it requires
- the technical skills it requires
- how it works with AI

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INSTRUCTIONS

8) BUILD A FUTURE-SKILLS TOOLKIT

Display the skill cards. Give each group five tokens and ask it to invest them in the skills it considers most important for its future profession.

Groups explain their choices.

Conclude that future workers may need combinations of:

- subject knowledge
- practical experience
- human and social abilities
- critical understanding of technology
- willingness to continue learning

DISCUSSION AND REFLECTION

Ask the participants:

- Was it easier to classify a whole profession or its individual tasks?
- Which tasks were most suitable for machines?
- Which tasks required meaningful human involvement?
- When was human-AI collaboration more useful than either working alone?
- Should efficiency always be the most important goal?
- What happens to workers when part of a job is automated?
- Can new technology improve work while also creating new pressures?
- Who benefits financially from automation?
- How can workers participate in decisions about technology?
- Who should be responsible for an AI-assisted decision?
- Which future skills can young people begin developing now?
- What kind of work would you want technology to support rather than replace?

Conclude with the key idea: The future of work is not simply a competition between humans and machines. The important questions are which tasks technology should perform, how benefits are shared and where human judgment, responsibility and relationships must remain central.

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CONNECTION TO ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

AI can affect work by:

- automating particular tasks;
- assisting people with analysis or decision-making;
- generating drafts, designs or recommendations;
- monitoring equipment and processes;
- changing which skills employers need;
- creating new products, services and professions.

A system may perform well at a specific task without possessing the broader abilities required for an entire profession. For example, an AI may detect patterns in medical images but cannot independently provide the complete relationship, contextual judgment and accountability involved in patient care.

The effects of AI on employment will vary between sectors, countries and workplaces. Some tasks may disappear, while others expand or change. New roles may emerge to develop, operate, evaluate and regulate AI systems.

The outcome is influenced not only by technical ability but also by:

- cost
- laws and policies
- workplace decisions
- public acceptance
- access to technology
- safety and reliability
- the value placed on human interaction
- how workers are trained and supported

EASIER VARIATION

Use one profession with six task cards.

For example, for a farmer:

- planting seeds
- checking soil moisture
- identifying signs of plant disease
- repairing equipment
- choosing which crop to grow
- negotiating with buyers

Read each task aloud and let participants move to one of three areas:

- human
- machine
- team

Ask one participant in each area to explain the choice. Emphasize that several answers may be valid under different conditions.

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MORE CHALLENGING VARIATION

Give groups a fictional workplace proposal:

A hospital, school, farm or media organization plans to introduce a new AI system.

Each group represents a different stakeholder:

- workers
- managers
- clients, students or patients
- technology provider
- government or regulator
- local community

Groups consider:

- potential benefits
- risks and errors
- changes to jobs
- training requirements
- privacy and fairness
- responsibility for decisions
- how productivity benefits should be shared
- whether people may request a human alternative

The groups negotiate conditions for introducing the system and produce a short workplace AI agreement.



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FACILITATOR NOTES

- Avoid stating that particular professions will definitely disappear.
- Focus on tasks and working conditions rather than sensational predictions about mass replacement.
- Explain that the same technology may affect workplaces differently depending on resources and local conditions.
- Do not assume that automation always improves work. It can also increase monitoring, workload or insecurity.
- Include professions involving practical, creative, interpersonal and technical abilities.
- Avoid ranking human abilities as universally superior. Focus on suitability for a specific task.
- Treat HUMAN-AI TEAM as meaningful collaboration, not simply a machine making a decision that a person automatically approves.
- Emphasize that human oversight must involve sufficient knowledge, authority and time to challenge the system.
- Include questions about who benefits and who may be disadvantaged.
- Encourage participants to imagine futures shaped by human choices rather than by technology alone.
- Reinforce that learning about AI does not mean every participant must become a programmer.

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KEY WORDS

AUTOMATION

Using technology to perform a task with reduced direct human involvement.

PROFESSION

A type of work involving a collection of different tasks and responsibilities.

TASK

A specific activity performed as part of a job.

HUMAN-AI COLLABORATION

A working arrangement in which people and AI systems contribute different abilities.

AUGMENTATION

Using technology to support or expand what a person can do.

ADAPTABILITY

The ability to respond effectively to change.

DIGITAL LITERACY

The ability to use and evaluate digital technologies critically and responsibly.

ACCOUNTABILITY

Responsibility for decisions and their consequences.

STAKEHOLDER

A person or group affected by or able to influence a decision.