

# OpenAI CEO Sam Altman Says This Will Be the No.1 Most Valuable Skill in the Age of AI



Ask some of the top minds in the field what the future of artificial intelligence will look like, and you'll get wildly different answers.

Some talk about super intelligence, [AI personal assistants for all](#), and [a world free of want](#). Others [warn of the robot apocalypse](#). A few even argue that the [potential of current AI models](#) is [overblown](#). But what just about everyone can agree on is that sometime quite soon, AI will fundamentally change how we live and work.

How should we entrepreneurs best prepare ourselves (and our kids)? That's another question experts haven't been shy about taking a stab at. Many

suggest we hone the fundamentally human skills that machines still struggle to replicate – things like adaptability, empathy, and [interacting with the physical world](#).

But when asked for his opinion on [a recent episode of Adam Grant's Re:Thinking podcast](#), Sam Altman – CEO of OpenAI, the company behind ChatGPT – mentioned a different skill as the most important one to cultivate if you want to thrive in an AI-filled world.

The Man Behind the Wheel of Driverless Trucks

## **Sam Altman: My kid will never be smarter than AI.**

Unsurprisingly for a guy selling AI, Altman agrees with those who see a whole lot of transformative AI in our collective future.

“Eventually, I think the whole economy transforms,” he predicts. But don’t worry too much that [a robot will steal everyone’s jobs](#). “We always find new jobs, even though every time we stare at a new technology, we assume they’re all gonna go away,” he continues.

How to [best prepare](#) for this economic transformation is a conversation he has a personal stake in. Altman’s professional and financial future is clearly assured. But he and his husband [are expecting a child soon](#). What skills does he think his future child needs to focus on to thrive in this AI-filled future?

Not intelligence. “My kid is never gonna grow up being smarter than AI,” he tells Grant.

“There will be a kind of ability we still really value, but it will not be raw, intellectual horsepower to the same degree,” Altman believes. So if sheer IQ isn’t the key to future success, what is? “Figuring out what questions to ask

will be more important than figuring out the answer," he says.

And he doesn't just mean asking AI better questions. "The prompting tricks that a lot of people were using in 2023 are no longer relevant, and some of them are never gonna be necessary again," Altman claims later in the episode.

## Connectors beat collectors?

So what does Altman mean exactly when he says asking questions will be more important than answering them once AI becomes smarter than humans? The answer isn't 100 percent clear, though Grant takes a stab at summarizing what Altman might be trying to say:

"We used to put a premium on how much knowledge you had collected in your brain, and if you were a fact collector, that made you smart and respected. And now I think it's much more valuable to be a connector of dots than a collector of facts that if you can synthesize and recognize patterns, you have an edge."

Back when Altman was in school, the OpenAI CEO responds, teachers tried to ban what they then called "the Google." The thinking was, if you could just look up facts, then why bother memorizing them? Wouldn't we all end up intellectually poorer in the long run?

Clearly, the teachers lost this battle. Thanks to the internet, we just learned "how to do more difficult, more impactful, more interesting things," Altman claims.

He concludes: "I expect AI to be like that too."

## A few questions and a takeaway

Now, looking around at the current moment in global affairs, I think it's fair to ask whether those '90s teachers might have had a point about the internet's potential effect on [our collective intellect](#). I personally am not sure that facts are in greater rather than lesser supply today than back when I first encountered "the Google."

Nor am I sure that the tenor of the discussion or the problems we're solving (or usually [not solving](#)) today are on some higher plane of human achievement. A few minutes on Twitter/X can really make you wonder. Though to be fair to Altman, [AI is already powering incredible scientific](#), if not social, breakthroughs.

You can also find [defenders of rote memorization](#) who point out that it's hard to connect dots you don't recall exist or that you can conceive of only hazily without time-consuming googling.

But putting these objections aside for a moment, Altman is surely right that humans will never beat machines at recalling facts. What research (like this [fun study that pitted AI against 4-year-olds](#)) suggests we still excel at is looking at those facts in an unconventional light or pairing them with other unexpected facts, aka asking questions or connecting dots.

## **The future is creative.**

Another word for this very human ability? Creativity. People ask creative questions about what facts mean and how they might fit together in a way that AI (so far) does not.

Which suggests that if Sam Altman wants his future child to thrive in a world of AI — or if any entrepreneur out there is hoping to prepare themselves or their offspring for the world of the future — focusing on exercising your creativitite muscles is probably one smart way to go.

(If you're looking for concrete advice on how to nurture your or [your kids'](#) inborn [human knack for weirdness](#) and creativity, there is [plenty out there](#).)

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