every link · the order to take them

Stop paying for AI certificates. Get these 4 free.

Four free AI courses that end in a certificate or a badge, the order to take them in and three prompts that make sure you actually learn something on the way.

THE PROBLEM

Do you need to pay for an AI certificate?

No. Google, the University of Helsinki, IBM and OpenAI all run free AI courses that end in a certificate or a badge you can put on LinkedIn. Take Google's 45-minute course first, then Elements of AI, then IBM SkillsBuild and finish with OpenAI Academy.

I've coached more than 1,000 people into tech roles. The question I hear most is which course to pay for. My answer is usually none of them yet. Start free, prove to yourself you'll finish and only pay once you know exactly what you're paying for.

Before you start, plan it. A certificate you never finish is worth nothing, so give yourself a timetable. Paste this into Claude with your own numbers.

```
I want to earn four free AI certificates and badges in the next [NUMBER] weeks. I
can study for [HOURS] hours a week.

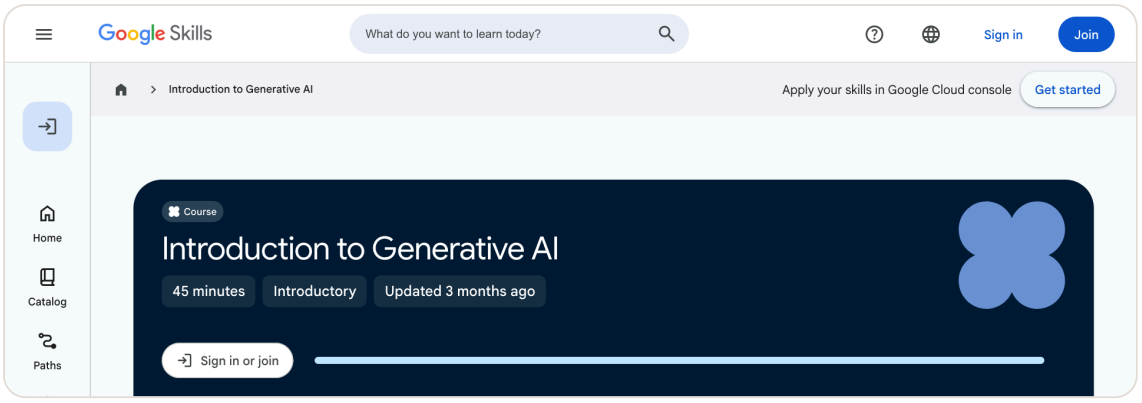
The four are: Google's Introduction to Generative AI, Elements of AI from the
University of Helsinki, IBM SkillsBuild AI Fundamentals and OpenAI Academy.

Make me a week-by-week plan in that order. Put the evenings I'll study next to each
week and tell me what I should be able to explain by the end of each one.
```

COURSE 1 AND 2

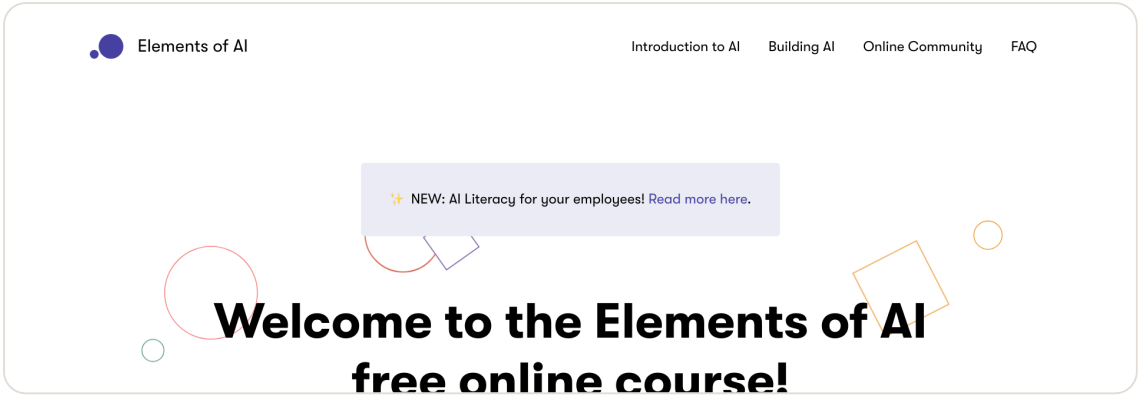
Where should a complete beginner start?

1. Introduction to Generative AI, by Google. It takes about 45 minutes and it's free. It counts towards Google's Generative AI Fundamentals skill badge. Do it tonight, so you've got a win before you've had time to talk yourself out of it. **Open the course**.



Screenshot: Google Skills, Introduction to Generative AI.

2. Elements of AI, by the University of Helsinki. It's made for complete beginners, so there's no code to write. Plan for about 30 hours and you get a free certificate at the end. **elementsofai.com**.

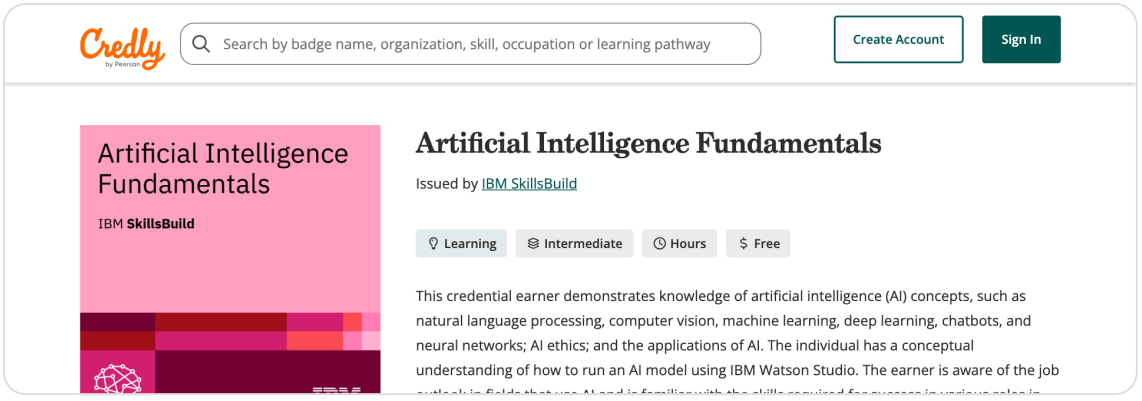


Screenshot: elementsofai.com.

COURSE 3 AND 4

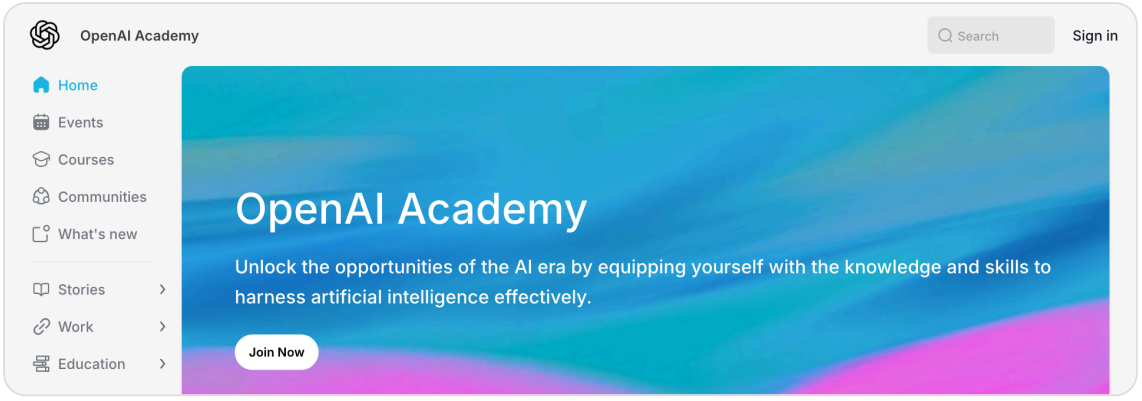
Which free AI badges look good on LinkedIn?

3. AI Fundamentals, by IBM SkillsBuild. Finish the set of courses and pass the final assessment to earn a verified IBM badge on **Credly**, which you can add straight to your LinkedIn profile. **skillsbuild.org**.



Screenshot: IBM SkillsBuild.

4. OpenAI Academy. Free courses on using AI at work. Score 80% or more on the assessment and you get a badge. It isn't a formal OpenAI certification, so don't call it one on your CV. **academy.openai.com**.



Screenshot: OpenAI Academy.

MAKE IT STICK

How do you make sure you actually learned it?

A badge proves you finished. It doesn't prove you understood. After each module, ask Claude to test you before you move on.

```
I've just finished [MODULE NAME] of [COURSE NAME]. Here are my notes: [PASTE YOUR NOTES]

Ask me five questions on it, one at a time. Wait for my answer before the next one. If I get one wrong, explain it with an everyday example and then ask me a harder version.
```

One question at a time. If Claude gives you all five at once, you'll skim them. Make it wait for your answer.

THE TRAP

Collecting badges like stamps. Four certificates and nothing you can explain in an interview is worse than one you really understand. Slow down on the module you found hardest.

HOW I USE IT

When someone I'm coaching asks which AI course to pay for, I send them this list first. I tell them to do Google's course the same evening, so there's a badge on their LinkedIn before the week is out. Then I get them to paste each module's notes into Claude and let it quiz them, because a badge means nothing if you can't explain what's behind it.

SHOW IT OFF

What do you do with the certificate once you've got it?

Put it where people who hire you will see it: the Licences and certifications section of your LinkedIn profile, plus a short post. Claude can write the post so it sounds like you and not like a press release.

```
I've just earned [CERTIFICATE OR BADGE NAME] from [PROVIDER]. Write me a short
LinkedIn post about it.

Say what I learned in plain English, one thing I'll use it for in my work as a [YOUR
JOB] and who else should take it. No hashtags in the middle, no "thrilled to
announce" and keep it under 120 words.
```

1. **Tonight:** open Google's Introduction to Generative AI and finish it.
2. **This week:** paste the planning prompt into Claude and put the study evenings in your calendar.
3. **Every module:** run the quiz prompt before you move on.

THE TAKEAWAY

Start the first one tonight.

You've got four free courses, the order to take them in and three prompts to plan, test and show off what you learn. The first one takes 45 minutes.

What this won't do: a free badge won't get you a job on its own. Course details, lengths and badge rules can change, so check each course page before you start.

Free to take, yours to keep. Finish one before you pay for anything.

Sources, opened 30 October 2026: **Google Skills**; **Elements of AI**; **IBM SkillsBuild badge on Credly**; **OpenAI Academy help centre**. Screenshots are the course pages.

Building something of your own? **The Audacity to Build** is my community for people building alongside me, with the systems I actually run. It is opening soon. Join the waitlist at fadeadeniyi.com/waitlist.

Fadé Adeniyi

Fadé & The Machines