

THE STAIR METHOD

# A Beginner's *Guide*

Socio-Technical AI Reflection

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IT University of Copenhagen · April 2026

[www.STAIRmethod.org](http://www.STAIRmethod.org)

# Welcome to STAIR

This guide is your entry point to the STAIR methodology — a simple, structured way to reflect on your use of Generative AI. You don't need to be an AI specialist, IT professional, or project manager. Anyone can use this guide to ask thoughtful questions and explore the role of AI in their context.

STAIR is based on sociotechnical research. It sees AI not just as a digital tool, but as a force that reshapes tasks, decisions, relationships, and values.

## **Talk openly**

Discuss opportunities, doubts, and dilemmas about AI in a participatory way.

## **Reflect on use-cases**

Think critically about specific scenarios or general attitudes toward AI.

## **Align with values**

Connect your AI use with your professional values and goals.

# The 8 sociotechnical principles

These principles were created by a communications department in a major Danish administration. They are universal enough to use in most contexts — or you can develop your own at [www.STAIRmethod.org](http://www.STAIRmethod.org).

01

## Value Creation

AI should demonstrably enhance work — not automate for automation's sake.

02

## Frameworks & Guidelines

Clear rules must guide responsible AI use at every level.

03

## Experimentation & Learning

AI requires continuous learning, testing, and adaptation.

04

## Competence Development

Employees must have the skills to engage critically with AI.

05

## Relationships & Social Aspects

AI must not erode workplace collaboration or bonds.

06

## Responsibility & Autonomy

Humans decide when and how to use AI.

07

## Professionalism & Creativity

AI should support — not replace — professional identity.

08

## Ethical Implications

We consider transparency, bias, and impact on those we serve.

# Principles across dimensions

PRINCIPLE	INDIVIDUAL	GROUP	UNIT / ORGANIZATION
<b>1. It should add value</b>	I perceive that AI adds value to my work.	We share experiences about the value of using AI.	We evaluate and assess the value of AI in our work.
<b>2. Frameworks &amp; guidelines</b>	I know the frameworks and contribute to their development.	We share experiences about using frameworks.	We ensure frameworks are continuously updated and aligned.
<b>3. Experimentation &amp; learning</b>	I have the opportunity to experiment and seek learning.	We share experiences about our experiments with AI.	We ensure that there are learning opportunities.
<b>4. Right competencies</b>	I am aware of whether I have the right competencies.	We help and support each other in building competencies.	We support opportunities to build the right competencies.
<b>5. Relationships &amp; social aspects</b>	I am aware if AI negatively affects relationships.	We create occasions to maintain relationships within the group.	We strengthen relational aspects through professional occasions.
<b>6. Responsibility &amp; autonomy</b>	I determine how I use Generative AI.	We respect each other's autonomy and support each other.	We support that autonomy belongs to those closest to the task.
<b>7. Professionalism &amp; creativity</b>	I feel my professional identity is maintained or strengthened.	We support choices affecting our professionalism and creativity.	We create frameworks to discuss how AI affects professionalism.
<b>8. Ethical implications</b>	I can express my ethical considerations.	We discuss ethical challenges that should be considered.	We incorporate ethical perspectives into our decisions.

## HOW TO FACILITATE A STAIR SESSION

You don't need to be an AI expert, digital strategist, or project manager. Anyone — from a frontline employee to a team lead — can initiate a meaningful conversation about AI.

### Step 1

#### Choose Your Focus

Pick a theme: a general discussion about AI (hopes, worries, opportunities) — or a specific use-case you're considering.

### Step 2

#### Use the STAIR Guide

Use the eight principles as your conversation framework. You don't need to cover all of them — pick the ones that feel most relevant.

### Step 3

#### Facilitate, Don't Control

Your role is to create space for reflection. Be curious, neutral, and open. Let people think aloud. Share the guide in advance.

### Step 4

#### Make It Your Own

Tailor the principles to your context. Co-create your own and adjust the questions to match your team's work and values.

### Step 5

#### Capture Reflections

Note insights, tensions, or questions raised during the session. Feed them back into decisions, policies, or ongoing learning. Use a STAIR board in your preferred project tool as an idea bank.

# Tips for facilitating

The STAIR Master guides the conversation — not as an expert, but as a curious, neutral facilitator. Here's what works.

**Be curious first.** Ask for a description of the use case. Listen before you guide.

**It's a conversation,** not an interrogation. Keep the tone warm and exploratory.

**Use principles as inspiration,** not a checklist. You don't have to go through all of them.

**Stay neutral.** Let participants reflect for themselves — but push with perspectives from the guide.

**Make room for quiet voices.** The best insights often come from the people who speak last.

**Remember:** STAIR is a mindset about building shared, reflective intuition. Simple. Flexible. Empowering.

## PRINCIPLE 1

# Generative AI should add value to the work

It is important to have a clear understanding of the value that Generative AI brings — from benefits to recipients, to benefits for you, your colleagues, and your organisation.

Value might include increased productivity, higher quality, improved well-being, learning and development, or new competencies. One type isn't necessarily better than another — but being conscious of it matters.

## CLARIFICATION QUESTIONS

- Does AI create the desired value for your users, business, or task?
- Is there a risk of losing value as well? Where? Are you willing to take that risk?
- Is the value sustainable? What's the relationship between short-term and long-term value?
- What value does AI create or remove for the employees who work with it?

## PRINCIPLE 2

# We have frameworks and guidelines for our use of AI

Frameworks and guidelines are your ground rules. What's important is that they exist, that you know them, and that you have access to them — they contribute to confidence and security for everyone involved.

They should be adjusted regularly to match evolving knowledge and experience, while complying with legislation and regulations.

### CLARIFICATION QUESTIONS

- Are there guidelines in your organisation for AI use that you need to follow?
- Do you know them and have access to them?
- Is there a need for more specific guidelines for your professional area?
- Are there situations where you would never use Generative AI — specific workflows you don't want to automate?

### PRINCIPLE 3

# We have the opportunity to experiment and learn

Generative AI is changing all the time and fast. It is important that there is continuously the opportunity to try new things, experiment, and learn — so you can adapt along the way.

### CLARIFICATION QUESTIONS

- How do you create a safe learning environment with room to share experiences and learn from mistakes?
- How do you find the right technologies and resources to try them out?
- Do you have a culture that allows — or practical opportunities to — legitimately experiment with AI?
- Can you drop a solution if the learning shows it isn't working?

#### PRINCIPLE 4

## We have the right competencies or the opportunity to build them

Generative AI is a new technology you have to learn. This may mean setting aside time and resources for research, courses, subscriptions, and knowledge sharing.

It can be difficult to know in advance what skills are needed. A new technology can change workflows and create a need for competencies that weren't previously part of the toolbox.

#### CLARIFICATION QUESTIONS

- What competencies do you already have in relation to AI?
- How do you find resources to maintain, practice, or learn?
- How do you get a better understanding of AI's potentials and pitfalls?
- What new competencies does a changed workflow bring? Which skills may be less needed?

## PRINCIPLE 5

# We consider relationships and social aspects

When we change workflows or solve tasks differently, it can affect relationships and social dynamics. AI can reduce, change, or affect knowledge sharing and social aspects of work.

It is important to be aware of these changes. Sometimes you may need to compensate — because a specific use of AI could have an impact here.

### CLARIFICATION QUESTIONS

- Are there working methods or networks you want to preserve?
- Do you get energy, ideas, or sparring in workflows that could be replaced?
- Do you talk about which relationships are valuable in your work — and how to retain them despite changes?

## PRINCIPLE 6

# We maintain responsibility and autonomy in the task

Generative AI can act as a personal assistant — contributing considerations, analyses, and arguments. The challenge is that language models can hallucinate or carry bias, and we may unconsciously delegate our decision-making authority.

It is important to be aware of when AI is the right tool — and whether the individual should have the option not to use it.

## CLARIFICATION QUESTIONS

- Is AI the right tool for this specific task? Are there better alternatives?
- What if someone feels pressured to use AI? Do they have the option not to?
- Who is responsible for the task — and were they involved in the decision to use AI?

## PRINCIPLE 7

# The use supports our professionalism and creativity

AI can summarise, structure, give feedback, or offer new angles. It can realise visual concepts and inspire content — often contributing meaningfully to task-solving.

But it is important that the technology acts as a contributor that strengthens our professionalism and creativity, rather than replacing it.

### CLARIFICATION QUESTIONS

- What is your core professionalism and primary task?
- Does AI support and strengthen that professionalism — or replace it?
- What responsibility do you not want to hand over to AI?
- Does AI inhibit or contribute to creativity in task-solving?

## PRINCIPLE 8

# We consider ethical implications

Generative AI is in many ways opaque and difficult to control. It produces content based on probabilities, trained on material that may not have been authorised for that purpose.

AI can create confusion and insecurity — especially if it's unclear why it's used and for what effect. Transparency and ethical awareness are essential.

### CLARIFICATION QUESTIONS

- Is it clear what AI has contributed to in an end product?
- How do you avoid manipulating users or creating inequality?
- How do you ensure people can distinguish between reality and AI — and stay in control?
- Are there special ethical considerations related to copyright, climate, or other issues?

## GOING DEEPER

# Beyond the Beginner's Guide

This guide uses the eight foundation principles as a ready-made starting point. But the full STAIR method has two steps — and the real power comes from making it your own.

### STEP 1

#### Build Your Own Principles

Together with your team, answer five foundational questions about value, roles, change, well-being, and core values. The answers become your own compass for AI — tailored to your context.

#### Download the Step 1 Guide

A worksheet for the five foundational questions and the STAIR model diagram.

### STEP 2

#### Put Principles into Action

Have regular, structured conversations about AI using your principles. Appoint a STAIR Master. Capture reflections. Build a shared intuition over time — grounded in values, not just efficiency.

#### Explore the full method

See how both steps work together at [www.STAIRmethod.org/how-it-works](http://www.STAIRmethod.org/how-it-works)

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