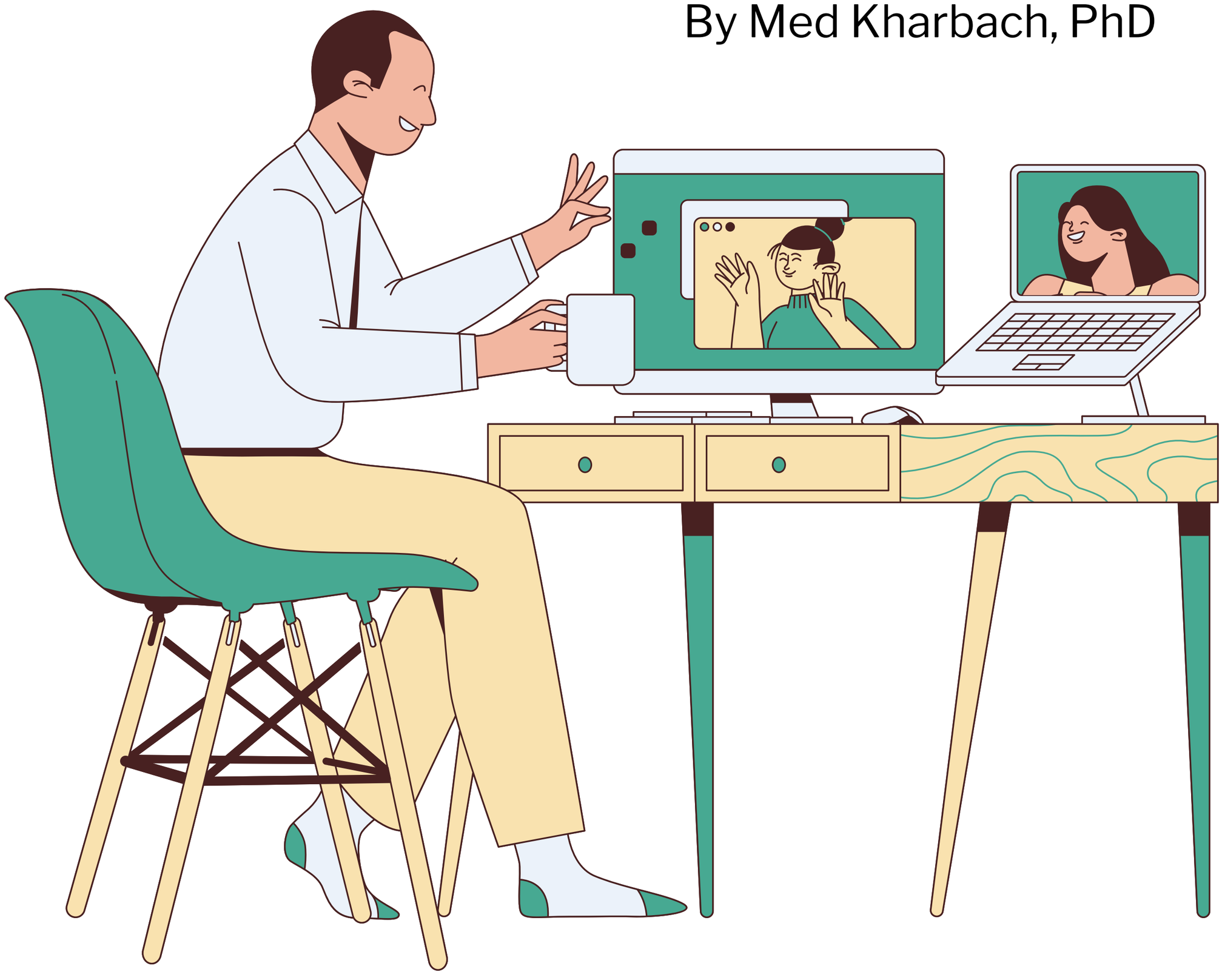
Choosing the Right AI Tool for Your Class

A PRACTICAL FRAMEWORK FOR TEACHERS

By Med Kharbach, PhD



Introduction

Choosing the right AI tool for your classroom can feel overwhelming with so many options available. This guide walks you through a clear, practical process for testing, evaluating, and integrating AI tools with confidence. It's designed with teachers in mind, focusing on what actually works in real classrooms.

Inside, you'll find three core evaluation domains: usability, pedagogy, and ethics. These are broken down into simple checklists. These questions help you quickly spot tools that align with your curriculum, support student learning, and meet privacy and accessibility standards.

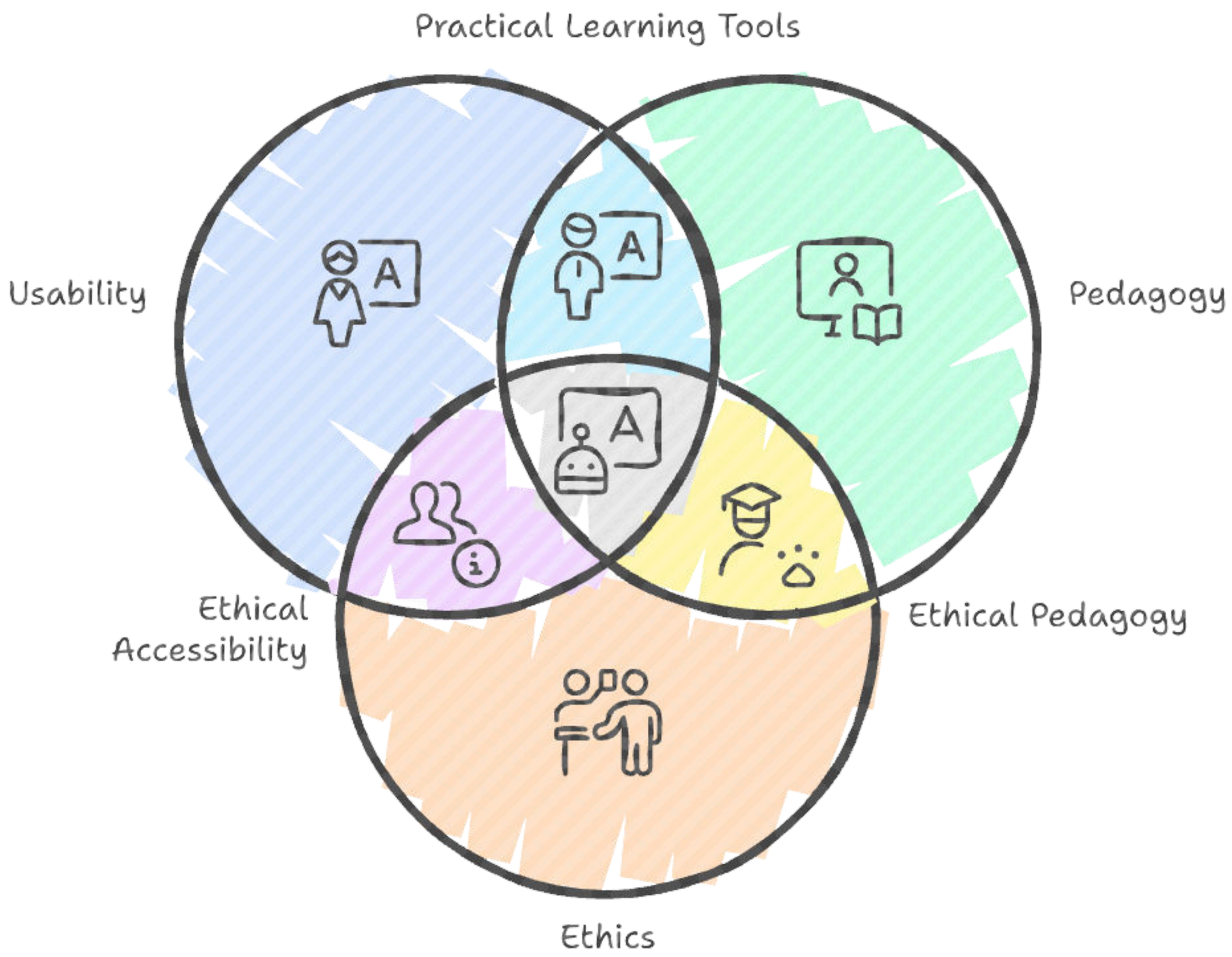
You'll also get practical tips for piloting new tools, collecting feedback, and reflecting on their impact. By the end, you'll have a repeatable process for selecting AI tools that save time, enhance engagement, and fit seamlessly into your teaching practice.

Explore AI tools hands-on before classroom use

Before introducing an AI tool to students, try it yourself first. Step into your students' shoes and see what the experience feels like. Work through a full task as a student would. Notice where you get stuck or confused.

Vetting Educational AI Tools

When vetting AI tools for classroom use, it helps to think in three main domains: Usability, Pedagogy, and Ethics.



This framework keeps your evaluation balanced. Usability checks if the tool is practical and accessible, Pedagogy ensures it supports learning goals, and Ethics addresses privacy and fairness.

Usability

By Usability, I mean looking at the interface, features, logins, and general mechanics that affect how smoothly the tool fits into your workflow and your students' experience. Here are few questions to consider for this kind of evaluation

1. Is the interface clean, intuitive, and easy for students to navigate?

2. Does it require student logins or accounts, and if so, are there options for single sign-on (Google, Microsoft)?

3. Are there distracting ads, pop-ups, or in-app purchases that could disrupt learning?

4. Can students access it on the devices they already have (Chromebooks, tablets, phones)?

5. Does the tool work well across browsers and operating systems?

6. Is it accessible to students with disabilities (screen readers, captions, keyboard navigation)?

7. Are there clear instructions, tutorials, or in-tool guidance available?

8. Is it reliable. Does it load quickly and handle classroom-level traffic without crashing?

9. Does it integrate smoothly with other platforms you use (LMS, Google Classroom, etc.)?

10. Is there a free version or trial so you can test it fully before committing?

Usability Evaluation Checklist

Free Trial

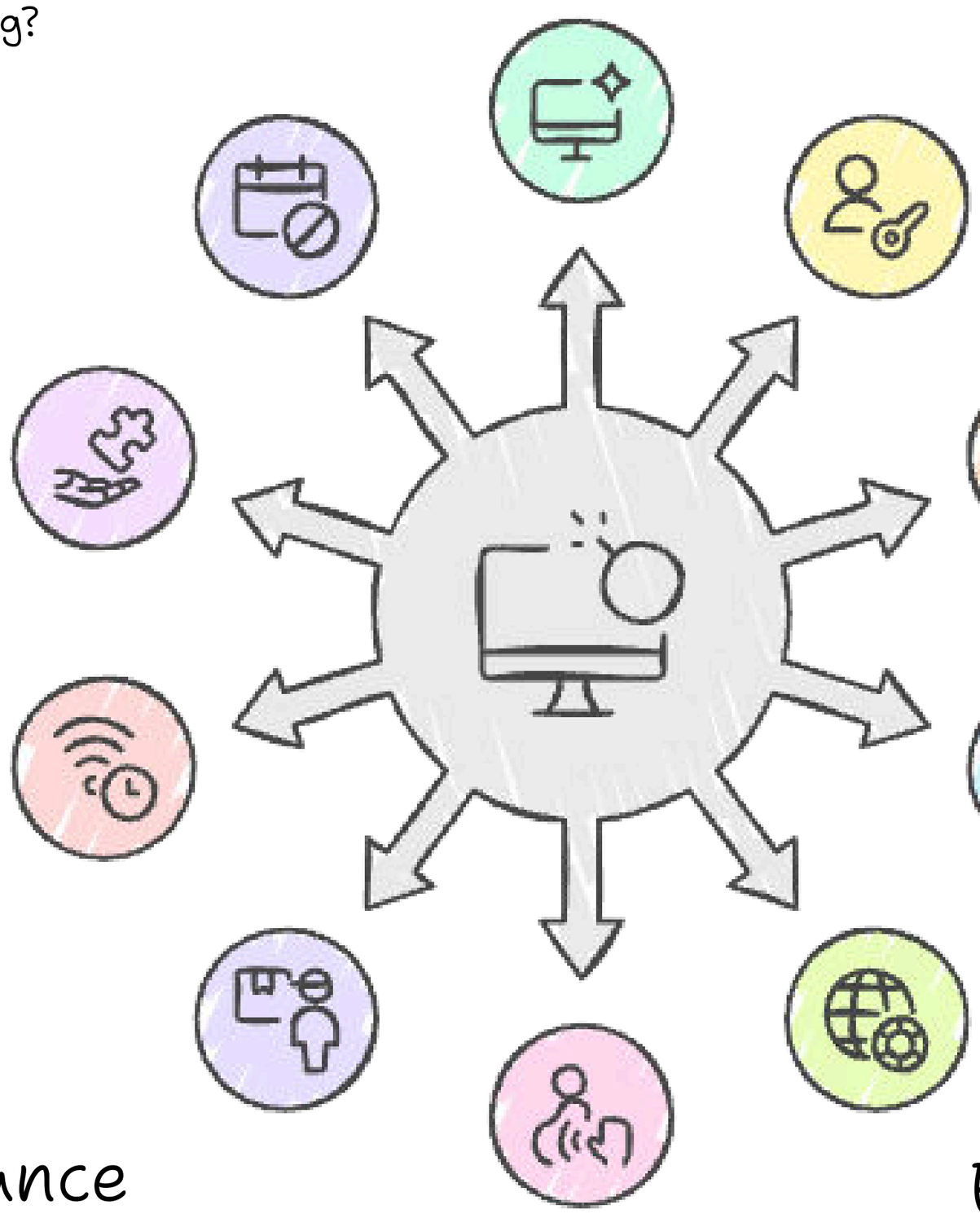
Is there a free version or trial so you can test it fully before committing?

Interface

Is the interface clean, intuitive, and easy for students to navigate?

Login Options

Does it require student logins or accounts, and if so, are there options for single sign-on?



Integration

Does it integrate smoothly with other platforms you use (LMS, Google Classroom, etc.)?

Distraction-free

Are there distracting ads, pop-ups, or in-app purchases that could disrupt learning?

Reliability

Is it reliable? Does it load quickly and handle classroom-level traffic without crashing?

Device Compatibility

Can students access it on the devices they already have (Chromebooks, tablets, phones)?

Guidance Availability

Are there clear instructions, tutorials, or in-tool guidance available?

Accessibility Features

Is it accessible to students with disabilities (screen readers, captions, keyboard navigation)?

Browser Compatibility

Does the tool work well across browsers and operating systems?

Pedagogy

When we talk about Pedagogy, we focus on how the AI tool supports teaching and learning. The goal is to ensure that AI integration is grounded in sound educational principles. Here are some questions to consider for pedagogical evaluation

1. Does the tool align with your curriculum goals and learning outcomes?
2. Does its use help students engage deeply with content, not just complete tasks at a surface level?
3. Does the tool promote critical thinking, creativity, or collaboration rather than rote work?
4. Does it provide immediate feedback to students to guide their learning?
5. Can it record or track student performance for later reflection and analysis?
6. Does it support differentiation, allowing you to adapt lessons for diverse learners?
7. Does it encourage student agency by letting them explore, create, and make choices?
8. Can the tool be integrated into active learning strategies (projects, discussions, problem-solving)?
9. Does it enhance, rather than replace, meaningful teacher–student interaction?
10. Is its use scalable. Can you use it consistently across lessons without overloading students or teachers?

Pedagogical Evaluation Checklist

Curriculum Alignment

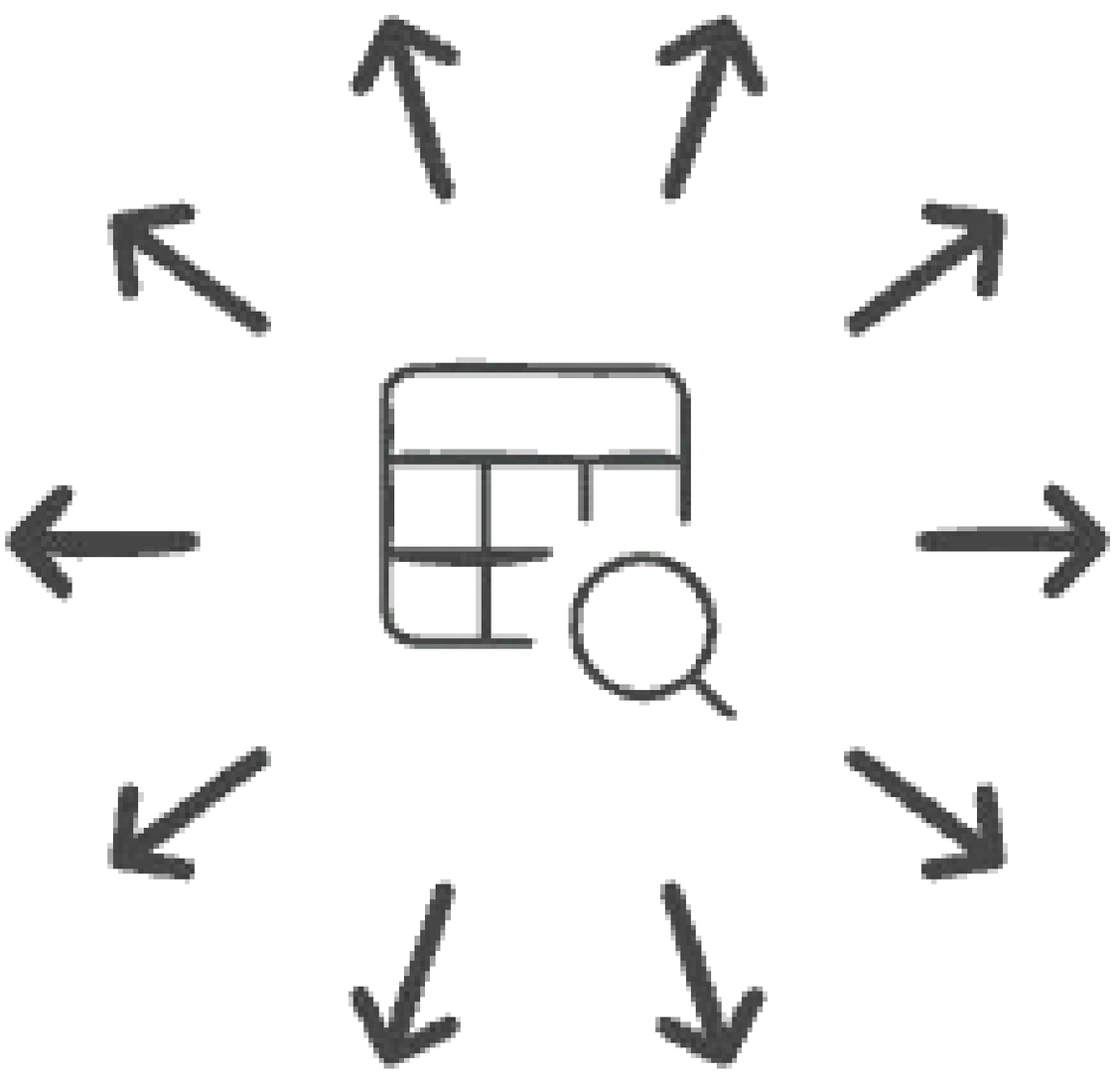
Does the tool align with your curriculum goals and learning outcomes?

Deep Engagement

Does its use help students engage deeply with content, not just complete tasks at a surface level?

Scalability

Is its use scalable. Can you use it consistently across lessons without overloading students or teachers?



Critical Thinking

Does the tool promote critical thinking, creativity, or collaboration rather than rote work?

Interaction

Does it enhance, rather than replace, meaningful teacher–student interaction?

Immediate Feedback

Does it provide immediate feedback to students to guide their learning?

Active Learning Integration

Can the tool be integrated into active learning strategies (projects, discussions, problem-solving)?

Student Agency

Does it encourage student agency by letting them explore, create, and make choices?

Differentiation Support

Does it support differentiation, allowing you to adapt lessons for diverse learners?

Performance Tracking

Can it record or track student performance for later reflection and analysis?

Ethics

A pedagogically sound AI integration cannot stand without ethical grounding. We want to address potential ethical limitations before using a tool and plan how to handle them responsibly. Here are few questions to consider.

1. What kind of data does the tool collect (names, emails, usage patterns, student work)?
2. Are age restrictions clearly stated, and does the tool comply with student privacy laws (COPPA, FERPA, GDPR)?
3. Does the tool use student data to train its models, and if so, is there an opt-out option?
4. Is student data encrypted and stored securely?
5. Does the tool share data with third parties, and if yes, for what purpose?
6. Are terms of service and privacy policies transparent and easy to understand?
7. Is the tool accessible and equitable for all students, including those with disabilities?
8. Does it include options to anonymize or delete student data upon request?
9. Does the company provide clear contacts or support channels for privacy concerns?
10. Could the tool introduce algorithmic bias that disproportionately impacts certain groups of students?

Ethical Evaluation Checklist

Algorithmic Bias

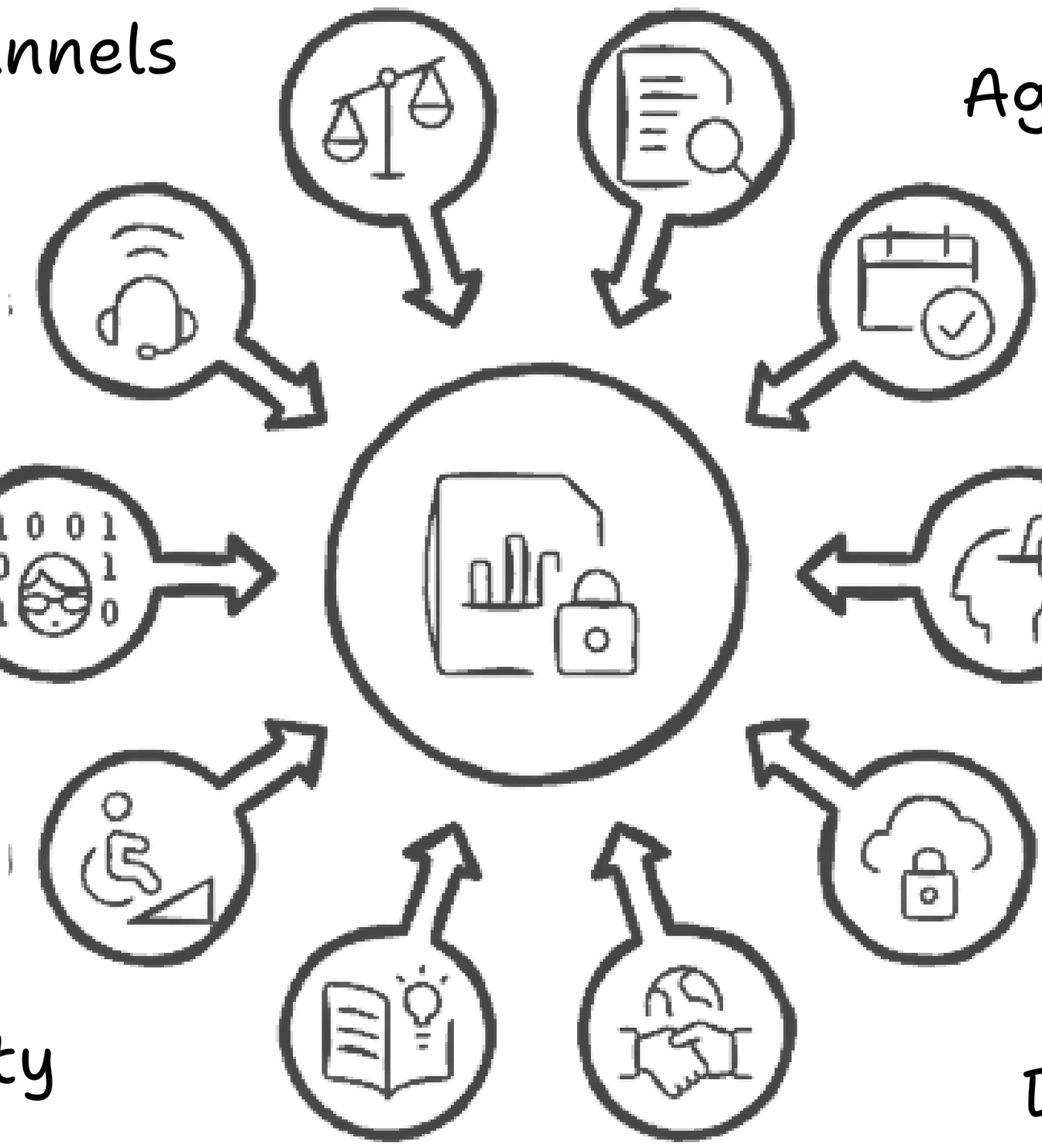
Could the tool introduce algorithmic bias that disproportionately impacts certain groups of students?

Data Collection

What kind of data does the tool collect (names, emails, usage patterns, student work)?

Support Channels

Does the company provide clear contacts or support channels for privacy concerns?



Age Restriction

Are age restrictions clearly stated, and does the tool comply with student privacy laws (COPPA, FERPA, GDPR)?

Anonymity

Does it include options to anonymize or delete student data upon request?

Data Usage

Does the tool use student data to train its models, and if so, is there an opt-out option?

Accessibility

Is the tool accessible and equitable for all students, including those with disabilities?

Data Security

Is student data encrypted and stored securely?

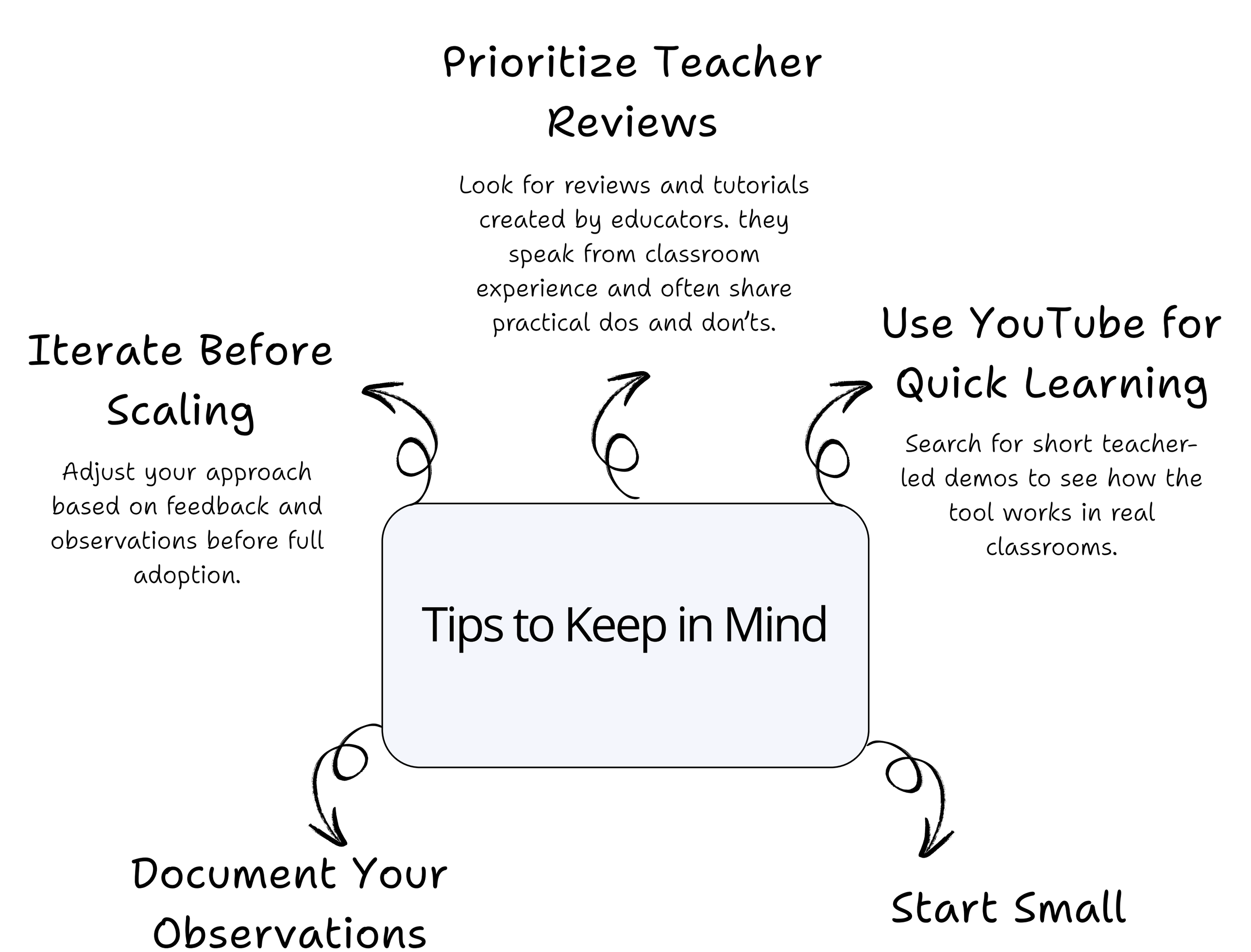
Transparency

Are terms of service and privacy policies transparent and easy to understand?

3rd Party Sharing

Does the tool share data with third parties, and if yes, for what purpose?

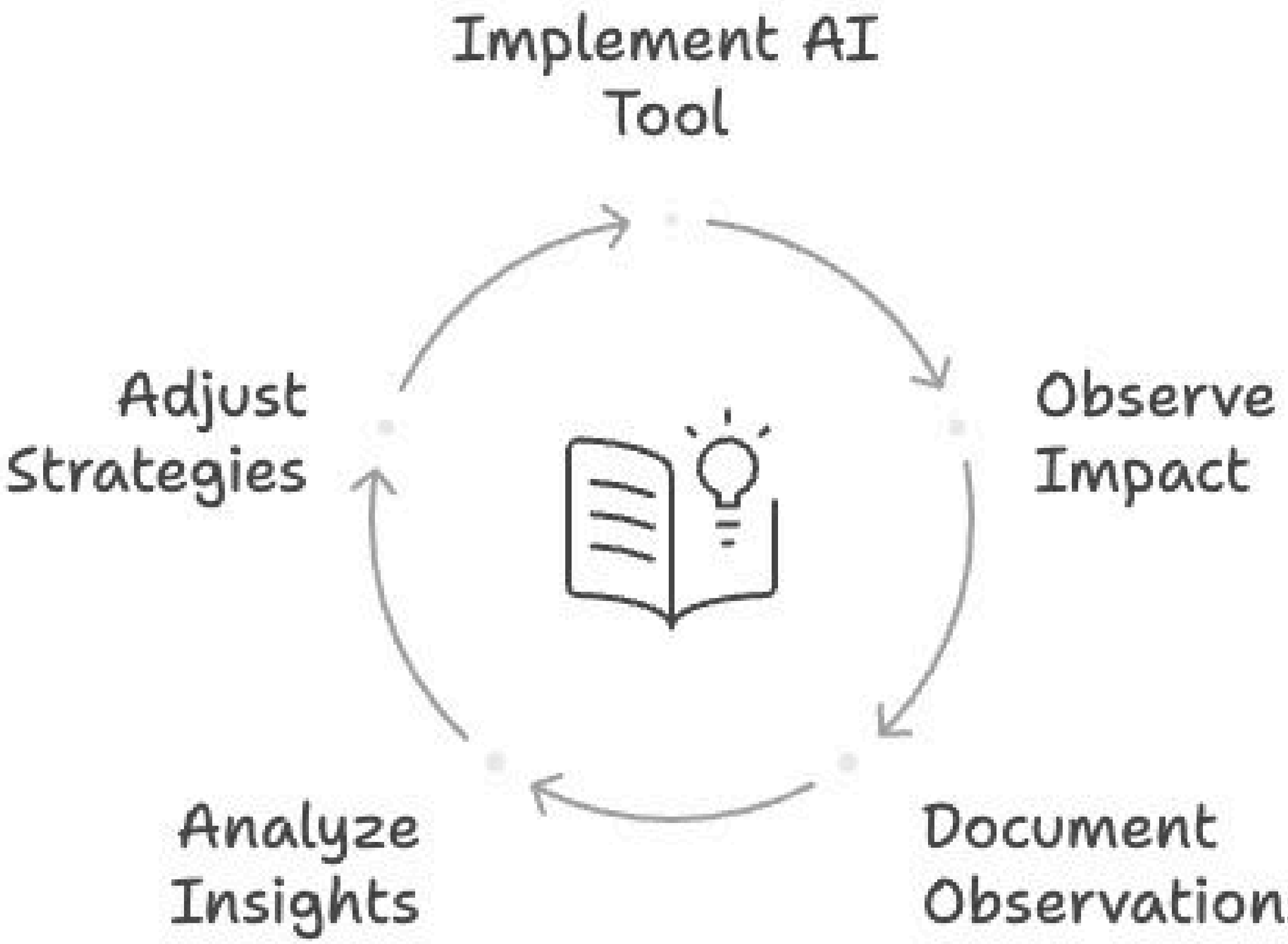
When searching for and trying AI tools, a few practical tips can save you time and headaches:



Reflect

Reflection is an essential part of the AI integration process. As a teacher, keeping a journal or log helps you capture the real impact of the tool on student learning and on your own teaching practice.

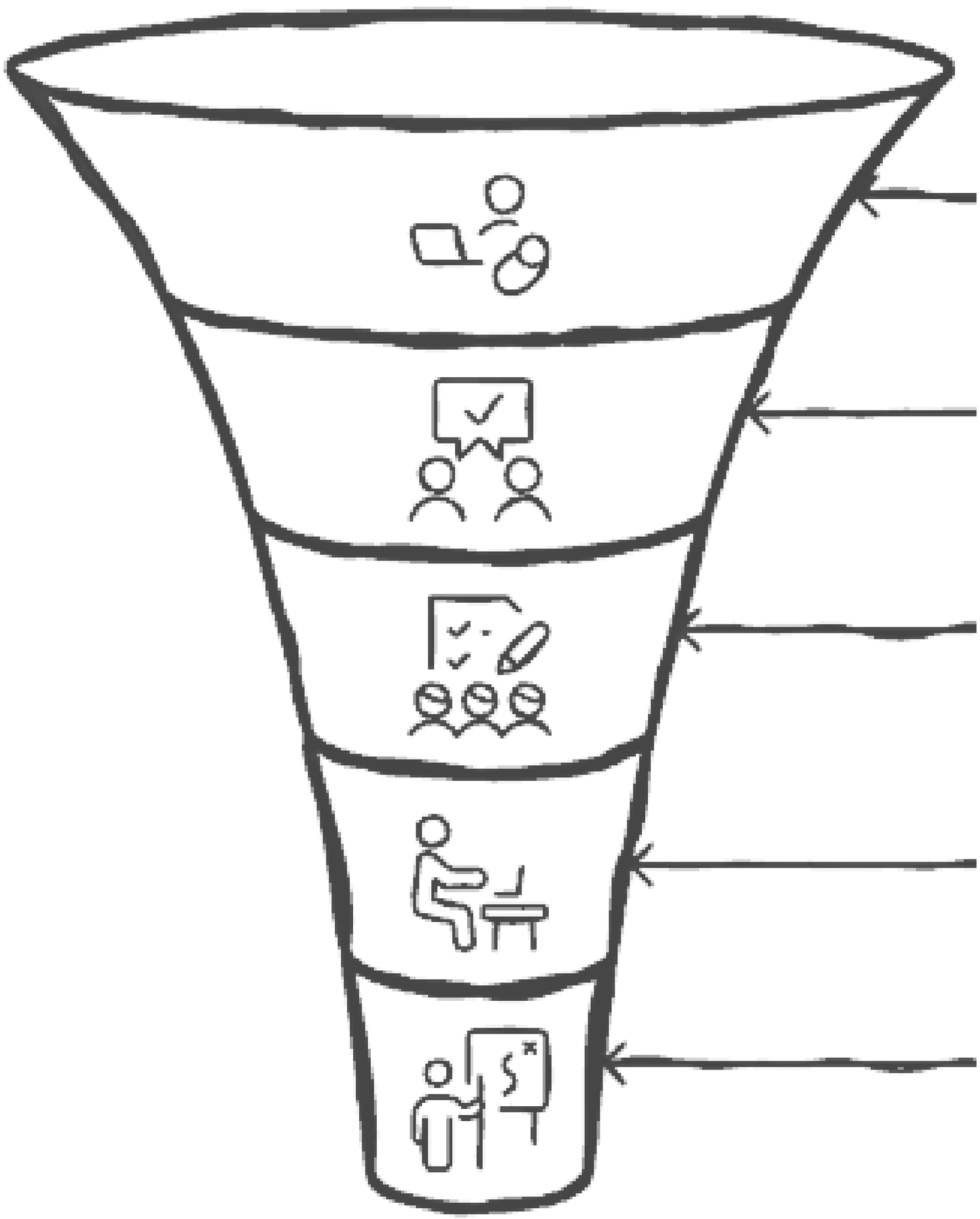
Reflection Cycle in AI Integration



Tips to Keep in Mind

Reflection is a process that spans various steps. The visual below captures some of these steps

Reflection Process



Observe

Observe how students interact with the tool in real time. Look for signs of engagement, confusion, or frustration.

Conduct

Conduct quick formative checks: ask students if the tool helped, enhanced, or disrupted their learning.

Assess

Ask students what they would do differently if the tool had not been used. This can reveal whether it adds real value.

Reflect

Reflect on your own experience: did it save time, improve lesson flow, or create extra work?

Adjust

Adjust your approach and document changes for future lessons.

Sources and Further Readings

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