

AI Project Kickstart Checklist

Use this checklist to confidently scope, design, and launch your next AI project. Each section helps you validate assumptions, identify risks, and ensure measurable outcomes.

1. Problem Framing

- Define the business problem and success metrics (cost reduction, speed, accuracy, etc.).
- Validate that AI is the appropriate approach for the problem.
- Align stakeholders on desired outcomes, constraints, and risk tolerance.

2. Data Readiness

- Identify all relevant data sources (structured, unstructured, internal, external).
- Assess data quality, labeling consistency, and accessibility.
- Plan for cleaning, enrichment, version control, and refresh cadence.

3. Retrieval & Architecture

- Select the right retrieval approach (vector database, embeddings, keyword search).
- Design the pipeline for chunking, tagging, and data versioning.
- Create an architecture diagram linking data → model → evaluation → output.

4. Model Selection & Evaluation

- Choose a model family (open-source, proprietary, fine-tuned, or API-based).
- Develop an evaluation harness using golden datasets and metrics.
- Track measurable KPIs: accuracy, latency, cost, and satisfaction.

5. Governance & Risk

- Confirm compliance with data privacy, licensing, and security policies.
- Establish human-in-the-loop review processes for critical workflows.
- Monitor model drift, cost anomalies, and performance degradation.

6. Launch Plan (30 / 60 / 90)

- 30 Days — Proof of concept: validate ROI and collect feedback.
- 60 Days — Integrate evaluation, refine prompts, improve reliability.
- 90 Days — Deploy pilot with observability, alerts, and continuous improvement.

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