Is it a person or a machine?

25 minutes · Ages 3 to 5 · AI thinking · Free to print and share

Goal

Children can say that machines follow instructions and learn from examples, and that they are not alive.

Vocabulary

- machine
- instructions
- example
- guess

Materials

- Pictures of everyday things: a dog, a toaster, a robot toy, a baby, a talking speaker, a tree
- Two hoops or mats labelled "alive" and "machine"

Warm-up (5 minutes)

Hold up the robot toy. Ask: "Is it alive? How do you know?" Accept every answer.

Activity

1. Sort the pictures into "alive" and "machine" together. Talk about tricky ones like the talking speaker.
2. Say: "Some machines learned by looking at lots of examples, like you learned what a dog looks like by seeing lots of dogs."
3. Play "Guess my animal": describe an animal with three clues, children guess. Then say: "You guessed from clues. Some computers guess like that too, and sometimes they guess wrong."
4. Make a mistake on purpose: describe a cat and say "dog". Ask the children to catch you.

Talk about it

- Can a machine feel happy or sad?
- Who tells a machine what to do?
- What should we do if a machine gets something wrong?

Check for understanding

Each child places one new picture in the right hoop and says why.

No devices?

The whole lesson is unplugged.

Going further

With a grown-up typing, describe a made-up animal and look at what a drawing tool makes. Is it what we imagined?

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