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Image creation with AI: the models and how to use them well

> AI image tools turn a written description into a picture; describe it precisely, check every detail, respect likeness and copyright, and say it is AI-made.

What it is

An **image model** creates a picture from a written description (a **prompt**), and many can also edit a picture you give them. Reading an image is a different job (see guide 07).

Think of an illustrator who works in seconds, never asks questions and fills every gap with a guess.

Main tools, as their makers describe them (as of November 2026; check the maker's page):

Tool	Strengths the maker describes	Where	Commercial use and IP
ChatGPT Images (OpenAI)	Following instructions, editing, reference photos	ChatGPT, API	Output IP indemnity for Enterprise and API customers
Nano Banana models (Google)	Text in images, editing in conversation, up to 14 reference images	Gemini app, API	Indemnity for unmodified output on paid Workspace and Google Cloud use
Copilot Create, Designer (Microsoft)	Styles, brand kits for work accounts, editing	Microsoft 365 Copilot app, Designer	Designer: personal, non-commercial use; Copyright Commitment for business Copilot customers
Firefly (Adobe)	Images, vectors, partner models	Firefly web, Adobe apps	Own models trained on licensed and public domain content; indemnity for some enterprise customers
Midjourney	Artistic styles, image to video	Website	You own your images; larger businesses need a higher plan
Ideogram	Text and layout, open weights	Web app, API	Commercial licence; see its licensing page
FLUX (Black Forest Labs)	Many styles, accurate text, complex prompts	API, some open weights	Licence per model

Why it matters

- Visuals for slides, posters and intranet pages without stock photos.
- Mistakes are easy to miss: misspelt words, extra fingers, wrong logos.
- Pictures of real people, brands or artists' styles carry legal and trust risks.

How to do it

1. **Check** which image tools your organisation approves, and for what. Never upload confidential material or photos of people unless allowed (see guide 10).
2. **Describe** five things: subject, style, composition (layout, viewpoint, lighting), any exact text, and **aspect ratio** (shape, such as square or wide).
3. **Edit** one change per request rather than starting again.
4. **Keep** the brand consistent with reference images, a brand kit and a saved team prompt (see guide 11).
5. **Review**: a person checks every word, hand, face, logo and number before use.
6. **Label** it AI-generated where people could be misled, and note the tool and prompt.

Example

Before: "A picture for our safety newsletter" gives a generic scene with unreadable signs.

After:

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Subject: a tidy office kitchen with a kettle and a floor sign.
Style: flat, friendly illustration, soft colours.
Composition: kettle left, yellow sign centre-right, eye level,
empty space at the top for a headline.
Text on the sign, exactly: "Wet floor". No people, logos or other text.
Aspect ratio: wide, 16:9.
```

You check the sign, add the headline in your design tool, and caption it "Image created with AI".

Common mistakes

- **Generating a real person, colleague or celebrity.** Fix: do not, unless they agreed in writing and your policy allows it.
- **Copying an artist's style or a competitor's brand.** Fix: describe colours, mood and shapes instead.
- **Trusting text inside the image.** Fix: proofread it, or add text afterwards in a design tool.
- **Assuming you own the result.** Fix: check the terms with your legal team before commercial use.

Try it this week

1. In an approved tool, write a five-part prompt for a slide illustration with no people or logos (6 minutes).
2. Make two single-change edits, such as colour and layout (5 minutes).
3. Check every detail, label it and save the prompt (4 minutes).

Going further

- **Content Credentials** (open standard **C2PA**) attach a record of where a file came from and how it was edited. OpenAI, Adobe Firefly and Microsoft Designer add them.
- **SynthID** is Google's invisible watermark; Google says all images made with the Gemini API carry it, and OpenAI says its images carry it too. Google's checker also covers video and audio.
- **EU AI Act, Article 50** (European Union; general information, not legal advice): from 2 August 2026, deepfake images used at work must be disclosed; see guide 44.
- Screenshots and heavy edits can remove these marks, so their absence proves nothing.
- Indemnity usually covers only paid business plans, unmodified output and correct use.

Key words

- **Image model**: an AI that creates or edits pictures from a written description.
- **Aspect ratio**: an image's shape, such as 1:1 (square) or 16:9 (wide).
- **Content Credentials (C2PA)**: attached information recording how a file was made and changed.
- **Watermark**: a visible or hidden mark showing an image was AI-generated.
- **Indemnity**: a maker's promise to defend you against certain legal claims, under conditions.

Sources

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