

# ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

Visual Generation/istock



...apps you didn't know you needed

Voice assistants like *Alexa*, *Bixby*, *Cortana*, *Google Assistant* and *Siri* introduced us to the world of 'artificial intelligence'; they follow verbal instructions and can even respond to you like a real person. They also pack in complex algorithms and neural networks—machine learning and deep learning—that help them evolve with time. These AI assistants collect massive amounts of data to understand different accents and context, and they even “learn” to preempt your requirements and respond to questions in real time.

Now, with the advancements in this area, newer applications for AI are being explored; say—for instance—as a valuable tool for the visually impaired; as a friendly chat bot, health adviser, teacher, transcriber, translator, smart photographer, and more.

## WELLNESS | REPLIKA: MY AI FRIEND



*Replika* is an AI-based mental-wellness chatbot that is built for those struggling with stress, anxiety, depression and loneliness. You can choose your chatbot's looks, gender, and give it a name. *Replika*, in turn, responds like a real person; it remembers your name, likes and dislikes.

You can share your thoughts and apprehensions with the app; it keeps track of your moods and your reasons for feeling the way you do. Over time, this historical data helps it spot triggers and the AI bot even guides you on how to overcome your fears.

*Replika*, which is designed with the help of psychologists, includes various “paid” chat activity packs for specific topics like relationships, self-esteem, procrastination, etc—and you can even get on a voice call to talk to your AI friend. Other notable AI-based wellness chatbots worth trying are *Wysa* and *Youper*.  
Android, iOS | Free

## FOOD | CALORIE MAMA AI



This app is a food tracker and calorie counter that uses image recognition “machine-learning” algorithms to identify different foods, including packaged goods and barcodes. Its algorithms recognise foodstuff from multiple cuisines to automatically provide you with data of your calorie intake.

All you have to do is snap a picture of your food, *Calorie Mama AI* analyses the photo and suggests what the food might be. Once you confirm the dish, it logs your calories, along with nutritional facts like fats, cholesterol, sodium, carbohydrates, proteins, etc.

If your food is not automatically recognised, you can enter its name to manually search for the dish to log it in. *Calorie Mama AI*'s image recognition gets better as you continue to use it.

Other than monitoring your meals, the app lets you maintain a log of your exercise schedule, share your fitness progress with

friends, and you can even subscribe to healthy meal plans. The app even lets you store your own recipes, complete with ingredients to help you track your diet better.  
Android, iOS | Free

## HEALTH | ADA: YOUR HEALTH COMPANION



This AI-based symptom-assessment app combines an exhaustive medical database with ‘intelligent reasoning’ to help users understand health symptoms.

After you register with *Ada*, you need to provide details like your age, height, weight and preexisting health conditions. When you click the “Start symptom assessment” button, *Ada* asks questions about the health issue that you or a family member might be suffering.

Most questions come with multiple-choice answers or require you to provide a yes/no/unsure input. *Ada* taps into a database that comprises thousands of pre-existing conditions to provide you with a detailed, ‘private’ report in PDF format. At the end, it even provides you with guidance about the kind of medical attention you should seek.

The app is not a replacement for professional medical diagnosis, but it provides you with a better understanding of your condition and—perhaps—even helps you answer your doctor's questions during your visit.  
Android, iOS | Free

## VISUAL AID | SEEING AI



*Seeing AI* is a Microsoft research project for people with visual impairments. It uses the handset's camera—rear or front—to narrate whatever it sees.

It has various modes like short text, document, bar code scanner, person, currency, scene, colour and handwriting. For instance, when the people mode is selected, the app will tell you how many faces it can detect along with an approximate distance. When a picture is clicked, it states the person's age, gender, and reads his or her expression.

Similarly, you can use the scene mode to get a description of your surroundings. In text and currency modes, *Seeing AI* quickly reads the text—English, Spanish, German, French, Dutch and Japanese—and the value of the currency notes out loud. A user can also use the Share feature to choose images (in *Mail*, *Photos* and *Twitter*) to let *Seeing AI* describe the picture.

That said, the app is a work-in-progress; still, the overall effort is very impressive.  
iOS | Free

## PHOTO EDITING | PICAI



Many smartphone cameras come with scene-recognition capabilities, but you still have to manually apply filters to the picture. *Picai* uses deep learning technology to identify objects in a scene, and automatically recommends photo filters for it.

When you launch the app for the first time, it asks you about your preferences to understand if you prefer vibrant or natural colours, soft images or sharp lines, etc. It uses these inputs to pick—from 100+ professional filters—the right ones for you.

Later, before you shoot a picture from within the app, it identifies the scene and previews two filters in a split-screen view. All you have to do is choose the filter you like and adjust the “filter strength”.

In camera view, you also get options to set a timer, add blur and disable the watermark before you click the picture. Finally, you can save a full-resolution version of the photo to your phone, and share it with friends.

Android, iOS | Free

## PHOTO EDITING | MAKARON



*Makaron* is yet another image-editing app that uses AI to identify objects—people, animals, cars, etc—in the foreground, and separate them from the background. You can import pictures from the phone gallery or use its in-built camera to click a photo.

The app takes a few seconds to find all the objects in the scene and labels them for easy selection or removal. You can then tap on the object or background to select and apply an artistic filter, introduce blur, and adjust the brightness, contrast and saturation.

*Makaron* even lets you apply one filter to the subject and another to the background.

You can also take the subject and place it over a different background; plus, you get a blend tool to adjust lighting and colour of the subject to make the final composite image look authentic.  
Android, iOS | Free

## PRODUCTIVITY | OTTER VOICE NOTES



*Otter* is a voice-recorder that allows you to transcribe notes, meetings, interviews and lectures. It uses AI to filter out noise, understand different English accents, and natural language processing to understand context and spell words correctly.

When you register with the service, you are prompted to submit a short recording of your voice. This “imprint” helps the app differentiate between you and the other speaker(s) near the phone.

*Otter* starts recording when you tap the microphone button and also transcribes the conversation in real time along with searchable keywords.

The final audio track can be saved on your handset, along with the text transcription as a PDF or text file. The entire process is quick. The free plan comes with 600 minutes of transcription per month and unlimited cloud storage.

Android, iOS | Free

## LEARNING | SOCRATIC



*Socratic* uses text and speech recognition AI technology from *Google* to help students with their homework in subjects like English, Biology, Chemistry, Physics, Math and World History.

Simply launch the app, take a picture of the problem, equation, or swipe left and type the question into the text box. The app uses computer vision technology and artificial intelligence to ‘read’ the image and present the solution in a form of pages that you can browse by swiping across the screen.

Search results comprise answers written by in-house educators and from resources like *Wikipedia*, *Khan Academy* and *Crash Course*. These are presented with text, infographics and videos, wherever available.

It should be noted: *Socratic* does not let you save what you find, but it provides a distraction-free environment for study research.  
Android, iOS | Free

## VOICE ASSISTANT

In case you do not want to rely on Apple, Google or Microsoft's assistants, you can install the *Lyra Virtual Assistant* for Android and iOS handsets. This cloud-based service lets you set reminders and alarms; it reads news and weather updates, sends messages, translates to over 70 languages, plays songs

in its built-in music player, helps you find places of interest nearby, and more.

Alternatively, there's the *Robin AI Voice Assistant* (Android only) that is designed to work as a hands-free entertainment service while you drive. Besides sending messages, making hands-free calls and getting

navigation assistance, *Robin* will tell you jokes, ask you riddles, read poetry, play popular podcasts, and even let you post updates to your *Facebook* and *Twitter* accounts. This assistant includes a “Teach Robin” feature that lets you tutor the service to respond to new voice commands.