



Exploring Scratch & AI: Possibilities & Pitfalls

In this lesson plan, we will explore the possibilities and pitfalls of AI and face detection, using the Face Sensing blocks in Scratch Lab to create games, interactive stories, and accessible projects. We'll also try out adding playful AI-generated images to Scratch projects, focusing on how to write prompts that produce the desired creative results. Lastly, we'll reflect on exploring both the opportunities and the limitations of these new technologies through topics for classroom discourse.

“We should encourage learners to use ChatGPT and other generative AI tools not to produce the final result, but as a resource throughout their own creative process.” — Professor Mitch Resnick, co-founder of Scratch

Audience: Classroom Teachers, Instructional Technology Specialists, Library Media Specialists, Informal Learning Environments

Time: Approx 5 hours total

- Part 1: What Is AI? Pre-Reading and Context - 15 minutes
- Part 2: Scratch Face Sensing Activities - 150 minutes
- Part 3: Using Generative AI with Scratch - 90 minutes
- Part 4: AI Discussion & Debate Topics - 45 minutes

Objectives (Learners Will):

- Understand the basic definitions of (1) AI, (2) machine learning, and (3) generative AI
- Gain hands-on experience using Face Sensing with Scratch Lab and generative AI with Scratch
- Reflect on ways AI can be integrated into activities in support of creative learning
- Remix and/or adapt classroom prompts for discussing or debating the possibilities or pitfalls of AI
- Communicate and share their projects with their learning community

Materials: In order to get AI-generated image results from Bing Chat, an AI tool we'll be using as part of this lesson, you'll need to sign in to a Microsoft account. If you don't have one, you can create a free account here: <https://account.microsoft.com>.

Standards Aligned (full standards listed on page 11):

CSTA Standards Alignment	ISTE Standards Alignment	CASEL Framework Alignment
<ul style="list-style-type: none">● 1B-AP-09 - Create programs● 1B-AP-10 - Create programs● 1B-AP-12 - Modify, remix, or incorporate● 1B-AP-14 - Observe property rights● 1B-AP-15 - Test and debug a program● 1B-IC-18 - Discuss technologies● 1B-IC-19 - Accessibility and usability● 1B-IC-20 - Seek diverse perspectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● 1.1.d Technology Operations● 1.2.c Intellectual Property● 1.3.b Evaluate Information● 1.3.c Curate Information● 1.4.b Design Constraints● 1.6.a Choose Platforms or Tools● 1.6.b Original and Remixed Works	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Self-Awareness● Social Awareness● Responsible Decision-Making



Part 1: What Is AI? Pre-Reading and Context

Introductory Material (15 minutes)

Context for Educators:

Begin by reading [“AI and Creative Learning: Concerns, Opportunities, and Choices,”](#) a blog post by Mitch Resnick, Professor at MIT and co-founder of Scratch. This post outlines challenges of the technology as well as guiding principles for how AI can support the creative process.

Context for Learners:

Below are three resources that be used to introduce and provide context for for learners:

- [“AI Explained”](#) (2:37 min video) | Common Sense Media
- [“What is AI?”](#) (8 min podcast) | Ken on Ed Tech, discussion with 5th grade students
- [“What is data literacy?”](#) (1:37 min video) | The Algorithm & Data Literacy Project
- [How Chatbots and Large Language Models Work](#) (7:20 min video) | Code.org

Key Concepts

Artificial intelligence (AI) is the umbrella term for computing systems that use data in order to analyze information, make predictions, and generate creative ideas.

Machine Learning is a branch of AI that classifies data it receives from a user in order to generate predictions. The more sophisticated data we feed into a machine learning system, the more sophisticated and accurate the system will be. Examples of Machine Learning include:

- Facial detection (Scratch Face Sensing)
- Product recommendations (Facebook advertisements)
- Email automation and spam filtering (language classification)

Generative AI uses Machine Learning to analyze user prompts and create new content such as text or images based on its best predictions of what the user wants. Examples of Generative AI include:

- ChatGPT – an AI chatbot that uses “natural language processing” to create human-like dialogue. These language models can respond to questions and compose various written content, including articles, social media posts, essays, code, and emails.
- Dall-E – a system that enables users to create new images with text to graphics prompts. Dall-E uses a massive data repository in addition to sophisticated networks in order to develop visual predictions based on data it has been trained on.



Part 2: Scratch Face Sensing Activities

Explore the Face Sensing Blocks (30 minutes)

Scratch Lab is a site where you can engage with experimental blocks, like Face Sensing. With Face Sensing, you can create projects that respond to your eyes, nose, and other parts of your face.

1. To begin, navigate to <https://lab.scratch.mit.edu/face>.
2. Click the “Try it out” button at the top of the page.
3. A new project loads using the default Scratch Cat sprite. Just as in the Scratch editor, users can use this default sprite or choose another from the sprite library.
4. Face Sensing blocks use the device’s camera/webcam. If you haven’t enabled the camera in your browser for the Scratch Lab site, you may be prompted to give permission.

Note: Face Sensing blocks run securely in your browser. Images and data are not stored or shared anywhere. The extension can detect that a face exists, but cannot identify the person.

How do the Face Sensing blocks work? For any given webcam image, the extension can tell whether or not a face is present, and where eyes, ears, a nose, and a mouth are located on that face. The technology underlying Face Sensing blocks is referred to as machine learning.

What exactly does machine learning mean, and how does a machine “learn”? Machine learning models like this one are pre-trained on large amounts of data. In this case, developers provided a learning model with many images of faces. The model then looks for patterns and predicts answers based on what it has already seen.

Experiment 1: Let’s try out the Face Sensing blocks!

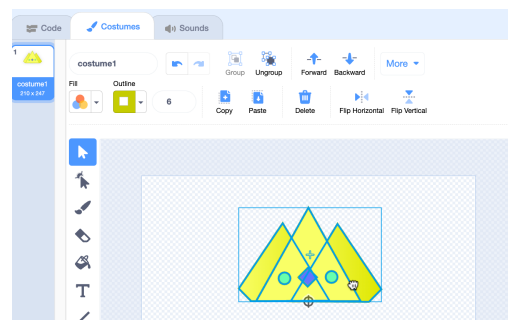
1. Select the “go to nose” block and place it on the script area.
2. Select a forever loop from the Control category and place the “go to nose” block inside it.
3. Select the Events category and add a “when green flag clicked” block to the top of the code stack.
4. Click the green flag to see how this works. Did the sprite stick to your nose and follow it around as you moved?
5. What happens if you add an additional block like “turn clockwise 15 degrees” from the Motion category? What if you choose “go to left ear” from the dropdown menu in the “go to nose” block?





Experiment 2: Let's draw a hat to stick to our head, like a face filter.

1. In the costume Paint Editor, try drawing a funny hat using the brush or shape tools.
2. Add code, or adjust the code you already have, so it sticks to the top of your head.
3. Add another sprite from the sprite menu or draw another sprite and stick it to your ear, or between your eyes... What else can you try?



Take time to make some observations while you experiment:

- Experiment with the placement of the object on the costume in the Paint Editor. What is the difference if the costume is centered versus only one edge is on the centerpoint?
- How does the object appear on your face when you are close to the camera? What happens if you are further from the camera? Do you see any blocks you could use so it scales to match the size of your face?

Can You Fool the AI? (30 minutes)

On a new tab, navigate to the [Face Sensing homepage](#) again and scroll down until you find the Starter Projects section. Click on the "Hat and Glasses" starter project.

What blocks is this program using? What do you think they do?

Click the green flag to start the program. Can the AI find the parts of a face if:

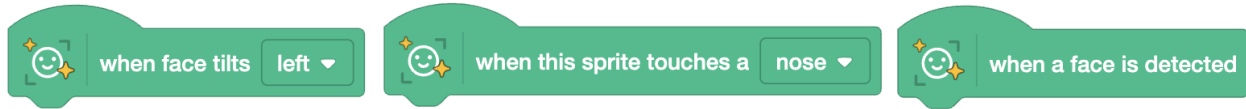
- you are in disguise, your face is covered, or tilted?
- the lighting in the room is very bright or very dark?
- you step out of frame and hold up a drawing of a smiley face? a stuffed animal? your pet? two googly eyes attached to fingertips? or another facelike object in your house?

What variables can you change to try to fool it into thinking it sees a face? What limitations can you find?

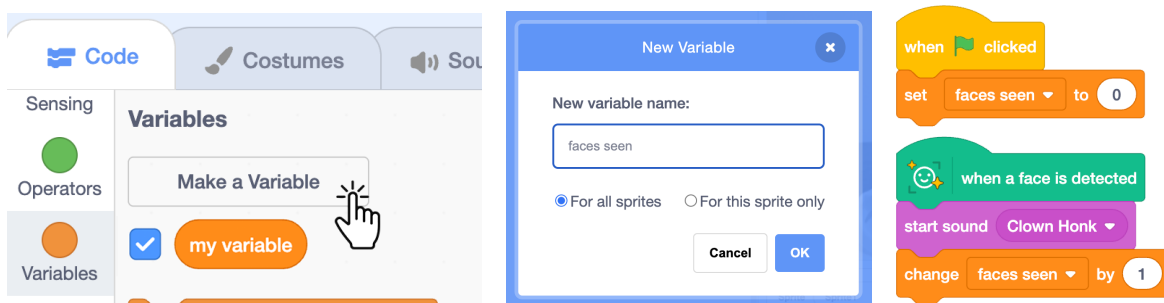
Create a Face Sensing Project (1 hour)



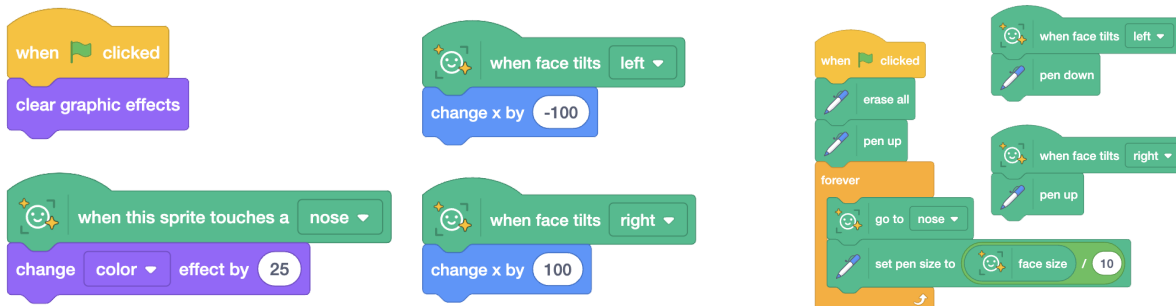
Look at the three Face Sensing hat blocks. (A hat block is a block with a rounded top that starts a script.) Can you make an interactive project, game, or story using one of these?



One option could include using a variable to keep score when a face is detected. Select the Variables category, click the “Make a Variable” button, and enter a name for your variable when the “New Variable” text box appears. Check it on or off in the block palette to show it on the stage.



Other options could include making a sound, changing colors, or displaying information when you touch a sprite with your nose. Or you could change a background or move a sprite when you tilt your head. Consider creating a sound board or a drawing program that allows users to draw with their nose or eyes...The possibilities are endless! What will you create?



Resources:

- [Getting Started Guide](#) (Written Guide) - If you are new to Scratch and just getting started, this resource has helpful information.
- [Scratch Ideas Page](#) (Webpage) - This is a great place to short tutorials and Scratch Coding Cards.

Special Note on Saving Projects



Projects created on Scratch Lab cannot be saved to scratch.mit.edu. They can be saved locally and uploaded to the Scratch Lab project page anytime if users want to continue iterating on their work or share their creations.

To save a project: go to the top menu and choose File > Save to your computer (it will save as .sb3).

To load a project: choose File > Load from your computer.

Classroom Reflection Prompts (15 minutes)

Face Sensing blocks provide a meaningful opportunity to open up conversations with your learners about AI ethics and how these concepts will shape our future. Several classroom reflection prompts:

- What does it recognize as a face? What were you surprised it recognized/did not recognize?
- Why was the technology developed? What do you think it was developed for?
- What if you don't want to be seen?
- Does it appear to treat people of different races, genders, and ages fairly?

Recommended Reading:

- [Exploring a Creative, Safe Introduction to Machine Learning](#) (Scratch Team) - This blog post introduces the Face Sensing blocks and explores the design decisions and inspiration for the project. It can also be used to generate classroom discussion on the ethical implications of AI models.

Share: Gallery Walk (15 minutes)

Scratch Lab projects can't be saved to a Scratch account and can only be saved locally. One way to share projects as a class is to host a gallery walk:

- Learners open their project on their computer or other device.
- Participants can walk around a room, or take turns sharing their screen in a virtual space.
- Another option is to display one project at a time on a large screen at the front of the room.

Scratch Lab does not include a project page, but learners can include recorded instructions in their project or with actual sticky notes next to their screens. The handout below provides a guide for sharing feedback between participants.

Resource:

- [Face Sensing Project Sharing Sheet](#) (Worksheet) - A place where learners can share instructions as well as receive feedback and observations.



Part 3: Using Generative AI with Scratch

Testing Our Prompt Skills with a Chatbot (30 minutes)

Chatbots can generate new ideas that expand our creative process. But generative AI models are only as reliable as the data it has access to and the specificity and context provided in a user's prompt. Let's practice writing prompts that generate positive results. Begin by opening Bing Chat (<https://www.bing.com/new>) and click "Chat Now."

Getting Started

Since we've been talking about faces, let's try entering the prompt: "What is a face?" There are many ways to answer this question. If you asked a person, they likely would have a specific perspective.

- How is the answer different from how you would answer?
- Discuss the results with a partner or as a class/group.
- What if you use a more specific prompt like, "What are the key elements of a face?"

Prompt for Ideation & Creativity

How could a chatbot or image generator be used to support or begin the creative process? Some learners find a blank Scratch project or open-ended project ideas difficult to approach. Try a prompt that generates specific ideas, such as:

- "Help me come up with three creative project ideas for using Face Sensing in Scratch Lab"
- "How do I use a variable in a Scratch game?"
- "Generate an image of an (imaginative background image to upload into Scratch)"

Tips for Writing Prompts

The more specific your prompt is, the more likely you'll get specific responses back. When writing prompts, you might ask the AI to:

- "Write in the voice of a [teenager, five year old, an expert, or critic.]"
- Focus on the goal or purpose: should the response inform, persuade, or entertain?
- Include keywords or phrases related to your topic.
- Stay clear of certain topics or respond within limits: "what are three ideas for...".
- Include source citations that support the information shared and allow for source citation.

Resource:

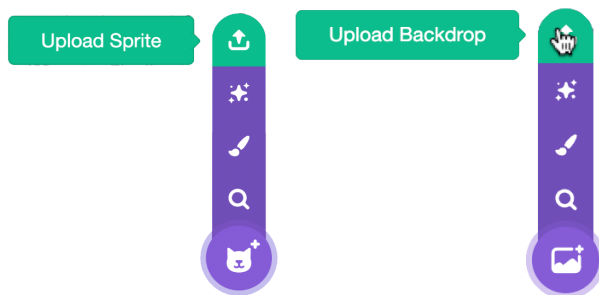
- [Get the best from ChatGPT with these golden prompts](#) (article) | *The New York Times*.

Generating AI Images to Use in Scratch (45 minutes)



Now let's try generating playful AI-generated images that can be added to Scratch projects as sprites or backgrounds. We want to generate new images, versus searching the internet for an image that has already been created. There are a couple of pathways to start this activity:

1. Open [Bing Chat](#). Choose "Chat now." You can generate a text response or an image response. Since you want an image, you need to specify in your prompt to "generate an image of...". **Note:** you must be logged in to a Microsoft account to access image creation.
2. Alternatively, you can navigate to <https://www.bing.com/images/create>. Bing uses "Dall-E," a generative AI system that can create new images from text prompts.
3. Type in an image prompt like "generate an image of a rainbow cat." What are the results?
4. What happens if you specify the art style you want (impressionist, cubism, art deco...)? Adding details increases the chances you'll get a better result. Try adding adjectives or locations or additional objects to your prompt, like "rainbow cat wearing sunglasses sitting on a beach, impressionist."
5. Download one of the generated images.
6. In Scratch, upload the image as a backdrop or as a sprite.



7. Add some code to bring your object to life! Perhaps you want to use blocks from the Looks category to adjust the color, or Motion blocks to move a sprite around the stage.

Getting the image you want will likely take some iterations. AI image generation doesn't need to replace the creative process, but it can become a part of it. The images generated can be a creative starting point. They can be edited inside of Scratch to add or remove elements. Or, you can combine multiple generated images into one.

Resources:

- "[Inside Scratch Lab: AI Image Generation](#)" (Blog Post) by Eric Rosenbaum, Director of Scratch Lab and co-inventor of Makey Makey.
- [Bring Your Drawings Into Scratch](#) (Video Tutorial) and [Bring Your Drawings Into Scratch](#) (Written Guide) has helpful hints for uploading images into Scratch.

Reflection (15 minutes)



Reflect on the generative AI experience using the following discussion prompts:

- How can you adjust the words of the prompt to get the results you want?
- How does AI help us express our ideas?
- How does AI limit our ability to express our ideas?
- Do you think you should credit AI art used in a Scratch project? How would you do that?
- What impact do you think generative AI might have on schools and the way people learn? What about the impact on teachers, doctors, and other professionals?

Part 4: AI Discussion & Debate Topics

Discussion, Debate, or Writing Activity (45 minutes)

We've explored some of the opportunities and the limitations of these new technologies, but it is important to reflect on the possible pitfalls of this emerging technology as well. You could approach this activity as a classroom discussion, debate, or a persuasive writing exercise.

Possible topics and associated prompts include:

Privacy and Surveillance	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• AI systems make predictions, but what happens if the predictions are wrong? If the AI cannot recognize a face during a Face Sensing project the project may not work correctly, but what if the AI identifies a face incorrectly in other situations? What could be the consequences?• What information is used to train AI systems and what happens if people do not want their information included in training data? What are the privacy concerns?
Ethics, Equity, and Access	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• What types of biases might be present in AI text or image generation? Whose perspectives or voices are included in these models and who is excluded?• What regulations might we put in place to protect intellectual property?• How could AI generated work affect the livelihood of artists, writers, researchers, etc.?
Misinformation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• How can you determine if AI chatbot results are facts or misinformation? For instance, if you asked the AI to give you ideas for a Scratch Lab Face Sensing project, could you actually make all of the programs suggested?• How can you verify the information you receive from a chatbot? Does the chatbot program you used provide citations?



Extension Activities

Below are two learning resources you can use with students to explore the social, civic, and ethical implications of AI.

- (1) [The Ethics of Generative AI in the Classroom](#) | Designed by Facing History & Ourselves for 6-9th grades. This resource includes 3 lessons that facilitate classroom discourse on the impact generative AI tools such as ChatGPT and DALL-E have on education.
- (2) [The Algorithm & Data Literacy Project](#) | Designed by Digital Moment in partnership with CCUNESCO and UNESCO. These lessons support a wide range of grades and provide interactive opportunities for students to ask critical questions and generate their own ideas and opinions about the presence of algorithms in our lives and how they influence our decisions and experiences. This site includes a [“Sensing Faces With Scratch Lab”](#) workshop, which focuses on the way humans and machines identify faces via an unplugged activity and exploration of Scratch Lab Face Sensing blocks.

Additional Resources

Activities and Curriculum Guides:

- [Exploring Creative Possibilities with Generative AI in Scratch](#) (slide deck) | Designed by University of Girona for the Scratch Conference 2023.
- [The RAISE Playground](#) (site) | A block-based programming platform developed to support hands-on learning about AI and robotics for learners and beginning programmers.
- [AI + Ethics Curriculum for Middle School](#) (site) | Designed by the MIT Personal Robots group.
- [Teachable Machine](#) (site) | A web-based tool that makes creating machine learning models fast, easy, and accessible to everyone.

Context, Ethics, Policy Guidance:

- [Algorithmic Justice League](#) (site) | Includes “Coded Bias: A Documentary” and much more.
- [A People’s Guide to AI](#) (site) | Allied Media Projects
- [Artificial Intelligence in Education](#) (site) | Developed by ISTE, includes [Tips for School Leaders](#)
- [Does AI Have Creativity and Imagination?](#) (video) | Code.org, middle or high school level
- [“Don’t tell anything to a chatbot you want to keep private”](#) (article) | CNN
- [“Engaging children with AI ethics”](#) (report) | The Alan Turing Institute
- [Hello World Issue 22 Teachine-g & AI](#) (e-magazine) | Raspberry Pi Foundation
- [“How Artificial Intelligence Can Deepen Racial and Economic Inequities”](#) (article) | ACLU
- [Resources to Explore and Use ChatGPT and AI](#) (site) | Common Sense Media

Full List of Standards Aligned



CSTA Standards Alignment

- 1B-AP-09 - Create programs that use variables to store and modify data.
- 1B-AP-10 - Create programs that include sequences, events, loops, and conditionals
- 1B-AP-12 - Modify, remix, or incorporate portions of an existing program into one's own work, to develop something new or add more advanced features.
- 1B-AP-14 - Observe intellectual property rights and give appropriate attribution when creating or remixing programs.
- 1B-AP-15 - Test and debug a program or algorithm to ensure it runs as intended.
- 1B-IC-18 - Discuss computing technologies that have changed the world, and express how those technologies influence, and are influenced by, cultural practices.
- 1B-IC-19 - Brainstorm ways to improve the accessibility and usability of technology products for the diverse needs and wants of users.
- 1B-IC-20 - Seek diverse perspectives for the purpose of improving computational artifacts.

ISTE Standards Alignment

- 1.1d Technology Operations - Understand the fundamental concepts of technology operations...and are able to transfer their knowledge to explore emerging technologies.
- 1.2.c Intellectual Property - Demonstrate an understanding of and respect for the rights and obligations of using and sharing intellectual property.
- 1.3.b Evaluate Information - Evaluate the accuracy, perspective, credibility and relevance of information, media, data or other resources.
- 1.3.c Curate Information - Curate information from digital resources using a variety of tools and methods to create collections of artifacts that demonstrate meaningful connections or conclusions.
- 1.4.b Design Constraints - Select and use digital tools to plan and manage a design process that considers design constraints and calculated risks.
- 1.6.a Choose Platforms or Tools - Choose the appropriate platforms and tools for meeting the desired objectives of their creation or communication.
- 1.6.b Original and Remixed Works - Create original works or responsibly repurpose or remix digital resources into new creations.

CASEL Framework Alignment

- Self-Awareness: The abilities to understand one's own emotions, thoughts, and values and how they influence behavior across contexts.
 - Examining prejudices and biases
 - Experiencing self-efficacy
 - Having a growth mindset
- Social Awareness: The abilities to understand the perspectives of and empathize with others, including those from diverse backgrounds, cultures, & contexts.
 - Identifying diverse social norms, including unjust ones
 - Recognizing situational demands and opportunities
- Responsible Decision-Making: The abilities to make caring and constructive choices about personal behavior and social interactions across diverse situations.
 - Identifying solutions for personal and social problems
 - Learning to make a reasoned judgment after analyzing information, data, facts
 - Evaluating personal, interpersonal, community, and institutional impacts



Tip: If you'd like to translate this guide, [click here to make a copy](#) of this Google doc.