


USAI's
Global 
Hackathon 
2026

Student-only | Fully Virtual | AI-Focused

Student Guide

Everything You Need Before Build Week

 **June 14 – 21, 2026**

A Global Initiative by the United States Artificial Intelligence Institute (USAI[®])

About the Hackathon

USAII[®] Global AI Hackathon 2026 is not just another student competition — it is a premier, globally-recognized AI innovation experience designed by experts to shape the next generation of builders.

500,000+

Estimated Students Reached

50+

Countries Represented

20,000+

Estimated Registrations

1,200

Total Finalist Teams



What makes this hackathon world-class:

- ▶ Premier global AI hackathon (fully virtual)
- ▶ Focus on ethical & responsible AI
- ▶ Connect with students worldwide
- ▶ Structured tracks, curated resources & mentor guidance
- ▶ Build real-world AI solutions
- ▶ Hands-on experience + portfolio-ready projects



USAII's Global AI Hackathon is not just about technology, it's about responsibility, access, and preparing the next generation to build AI that truly serves society.

- Dr. Milton Mattox, CEO, USAII[®]

Total Prize Pool

US \$15,000+

Award Categories:

Best Design • Best Technical • Best Pitch • Additional awards across tracks

Who Can Participate?

USAI's Global AI Hackathon 2026 is exclusively open to students worldwide.

Eligible Participants

- High School Students (Grades 9–12)
- Undergraduate Students (Bachelor's programs)
- Graduate Students (Master's programs)
- Doctoral Candidates (PhD or equivalent)

Format
Virtual / Online

Key Dates

High School Track (Grades 9–12)
June 14 – 21, 2026

College / Graduate/Doctoral Track
June 14 – 21, 2026

How this Hackathon Works



Your 6 Step Hackathon Journey

Pre register → Register → Form Team → Qualifier → Build & Submit → Results

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| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Pre-register to stay updated with all announcements 2 Register for the Hackathon on Devpost 3 Form a team of 2–5 (you can find teammates on Discord) | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4 Complete a simple qualifier (share your idea + short pitch) 5 Build your AI project and submit it on Devpost 6 Check results and celebrate the winners |
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Participation Options

- ▶ Register solo, and join a team of 2-5 students to participate.
 - ▶ All team members must be from the same category (High School or College/Graduate)
 - ▶ You can team up with students from different schools or countries
 - ▶ Updates and communication will be shared via Discord

Devpost & Discord: Official Hackathon Platforms

Devpost is the official platform for registering, forming teams, reviewing challenges, and submitting your final project with demo links and details. Discord is where you'll stay connected—receive announcements, ask questions, get mentor support, and interact with other participants throughout the hackathon.

No Prior Experience Required

No prior AI knowledge or hackathon experience is required, just curiosity, creativity, and a willingness to learn.

Qualifier, Judging & Rewards

What is the Qualifier?

The qualifier is not an exam — it's a simple starting step to ensure you are ready to begin building your project. You'll submit:

- ▶ Your problem idea
- ▶ A short pitch (1–2 minutes)
- ▶ Your basic solution approach

Judging Criteria

Your project will be evaluated on:

- ▶ Creativity and innovation
- ▶ Problem understanding
- ▶ Effective use of AI
- ▶ Clarity of presentation
- ▶ Teamwork and execution

The Focus is on ideas and impact, not perfection.

Prizes & Recognition

▶ Total Prize Pool: **\$15,000+**

Track-wise Prize Split:

▶ High School Track: **\$6,000**

▶ College / Graduate Track: **\$9,000**

Award Categories Include:

- ▶ Best Design
- ▶ Best Technical Project
- ▶ Best Pitch
- ▶ Additional awards across tracks

Additional Recognition:

- ▶ USAI[®] AI certification scholarships for winning teams



Challenge Tracks

The hackathon is organized into dedicated tracks based on your level, each focused on solving real-world problems using AI.



High School Track (Grades 9–12)

AI for Good in Your World

A 7-day structured sprint focused on:

- ▶ Community challenges
- ▶ Environment and sustainability
- ▶ Real-world problems around you

Designed to help you take your first step into AI problem-solving in a guided and supportive way. You can download the preview brief over [here](#)

Undergraduate Track

AI for Life, Learning & Work

A 1-week build experience where you create AI solutions that:

- ▶ Help people learn better
- ▶ Support career and daily decision-making
- ▶ Improve productivity and everyday life

Focused on building practical, real-world AI tools. You can download the preview brief over [here](#)

Graduate & Doctoral Track

AI for Systems & Society

An advanced 1-week track for deeper innovation in:

- ▶ Public systems and infrastructure
- ▶ Human safety and policy
- ▶ Responsible and ethical AI

Designed for students working on high-impact, large-scale AI solutions. You can download the preview brief over [here](#)

Hackathon Rules & Guidelines

Platforms Used

The hackathon runs on two core platforms to ensure smooth participation worldwide. **Devpost** is the official hub for registration, team formation, project submission, and judging. **Discord** is used for announcements, mentor support, and community interaction. All key sessions, including the opening and awards ceremony, will be streamed live and recorded for flexible access across time zones.

AI Tools & No-Code Options

No advanced coding experience is required. Teams are encouraged to use AI tools, APIs, and no-code or lowcode platforms to quickly build prototypes such as chatbots, automations, dashboards, or simulations. Focus on clearly demonstrating your idea and its impact rather than building complex infrastructure.

Submission Components

All projects must be submitted via Devpost and should include:

- ▶▶ Project description
- ▶▶ Explanation of how the AI system works
- ▶▶ Responsible AI statement
- ▶▶ Disclosure of tools, data sources, and AI usage
- ▶▶ A working prototype or demo
- ▶▶ A 3–5 minute demo video

Team Rules

Teams must consist of **2–5 students**. Members may come from different schools or countries. Teams will compete in the track aligned with the highest education level represented. All work must be created during the hackathon using only public, synthetic, or responsibly simulated data.

Mentorship Expectations

Mentors are available to support teams with idea development, AI design decisions, and presentation guidance. They provide feedback and direction but do not build or code projects. Support is available through scheduled sessions, office hours, and Discord channels.

Responsible AI Expectations

Responsible AI is a core requirement. Each team must identify at least one realistic risk (e.g., bias, misuse, misinformation) and explain how their solution mitigates it. Teams should also demonstrate where human judgment remains part of the system.

Demo & Pitch Tips

Your demo should clearly communicate:

- ▶▶ The problem
- ▶▶ Your AI solution
- ▶▶ How it works (input → processing → output)
- ▶▶ Real-world relevance and impact

Strong demos are simple, structured, and focused on clarity.

What You Can Build

Teams should develop a working prototype that demonstrates their idea. This may include:

- ▶▶ Chatbots or AI assistants
- ▶▶ Workflow automations
- ▶▶ Dashboards or applications
- ▶▶ Simulations or decision-support tools

The goal is not a fully finished product, but a clear and convincing demonstration.

Project Structure

Effective projects:

1. Clearly define the problem
2. Show how AI provides a solution
3. Demonstrate the idea through a simple prototype

Permitted Tools

Teams may use open-source models, commercial AI tools, APIs, and no-code/low-code platforms. Free-tier tools are sufficient. All tools and AI systems used must be disclosed in your submission.

Data Guidelines

Use safe and appropriate data sources such as public datasets, synthetic data, or test inputs. Avoid private or sensitive information, and clearly disclose all data sources used.

Read the detailed Rules and Guidelines over [here](#)

Frequently Asked Questions

1. Do I need prior AI or coding experience?

No. Beginners are welcome — you'll receive guidance, mentorship, and learning resources throughout the hackathon.

2. Can teams choose their challenge?

Yes. Teams will be able to select the challenge that interests them most within their track.

3. What is the time commitment?

High School: 7-day guided sprint

- Day 1: Kickoff, challenge framing, initial build
- Day 2: build, polish, and submission

College & Graduate Track: 1-week build experience

- Days 1–3: build core solution
- Days 4–5: improve and validate
- Days 6–7: demo recording and submission

Yes, participation is completely free.

4. Can I team up with students from other schools or countries?

Yes. Teams can be cross-school and international. If you don't have a team, you can connect with other participants on Discord and form one.

5. Can I use ChatGPT, Claude, Gemini, or other AI tools?

Yes. Teams may use any legally accessible AI tools. You simply need to disclose the tools used in your project submission.

6. Why reveal challenges at kickoff?

Revealing the final challenge details at kickoff ensures:

- fairness for all teams
- equal starting conditions
- ideas developed during the event

7. Do I need paid AI tools to compete?

No. Free tools are completely acceptable. Judges evaluate ideas, reasoning, and impact, not expensive software.

8. Can we use no-code or low-code tools?

Yes. Teams may build solutions using coding, no-code tools, low-code platforms, or prototypes.

9. Do teams present live to judges?

No. Judges evaluate recorded pitch videos and project submissions.

10. Do we need a fully working product?

No. A prototype or demonstration is sufficient.

Many teams submit screen recordings, mock interfaces, or concept demonstrations.

For more Frequently Asked Questions, visit [official FAQs Page](#)

Ready to Build the Future with AI?

Join thousands of students worldwide.

Turn your ideas into real-world solutions.

Showcase your innovation on a global stage.



About USAII[®]

The United States Artificial Intelligence Institute (USAII[®]) is the world's leading Artificial Intelligence certifications provider for aspiring professionals and leaders at any stage of their career, organizations, institutions, academia, or governments, looking to upskill and reskill their expertise in the ever-evolving Artificial Intelligence domain.

**PARTICIPATE
IN THE
HACKATHON**

Register on Devpost

LOCATIONS

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