2026 AI Skills Series

DAY 4

AI Image Generation

If You Can Describe It, You Can Create It

Student eBook & Reference Guide

90-Minute Virtual Classroom | Complete with Workbook & Assignments

How to Use This eBook

Welcome to Day 4. So far in this series you have learned to speak to AI (Day 1), produce written content with it (Day 2), and conduct research with it (Day 3). Today you unlock a skill that felt like science fiction just three years ago: creating professional-quality images, artwork, and visual designs using nothing but written descriptions.

You do not need any design experience, artistic talent, or expensive software. If you can describe what you want, you can create it.

🎨 CREATE	✍️ PRACTISE	🎯 APPLY
Learn the S.V.C.L. method	Complete drills in your tools	Complete assignment after class

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Chapter 1: The Visual Revolution

1.1 What Was Not Possible Three Years Ago

In 2022, if you needed a custom illustration, a branded social media graphic, or a concept image for a business pitch, you had two options: hire a professional designer (expensive, slow) or use a stock photo library (generic, unoriginal). Neither option was fast, affordable, or truly customised to your exact vision.

By 2026, AI image generation has fundamentally changed that equation. In under 60 seconds, using nothing but a written description, anyone can now produce:

- A professional product photo or mock-up
- A logo concept or brand identity sketch
- A custom illustration for a presentation or report
- A social media graphic with text, colours, and your brand style
- A concept rendering for architecture, interior design, or fashion
- A realistic portrait, character design, or event poster

1.2 Who Is Using AI Image Generation

AI image generation is not just for artists and designers. In 2026, the most impactful users are professionals who had no design background at all:

- Marketing and communications professionals producing social media content without a designer
- Business owners creating product visuals, pitch deck images, and brand materials
- Teachers and trainers generating custom visual aids and educational illustrations
- Architects and product designers producing rapid concept visualisations
- Writers and bloggers creating custom hero images and cover art for their content

> 🎨 **The New Creative Skill**
> In 2026, the most valuable creative skill is not knowing how to use Photoshop — it is knowing how to describe what you want with precision. This is called 'prompt engineering for visuals,' and it is what this entire session teaches.

1.3 What You Will Produce in This Session

By the end of Day 4, you will have personally created:

- A basic image using a simple prompt — and seen its limitations
- A professional-quality image using the full S.V.C.L. method
- An image that includes text — one of the most useful 2026 capabilities
- A modified version of an existing image using in-painting
- A complete visual asset for your Day 4 assignment — something genuinely useful

Chapter 2: Your Image Generation Toolkit

2.1 The Three Primary Tools

There are dozens of AI image tools available in 2026. For beginners, three stand out as the most accessible, most capable, and most suitable for professional use.

Tool	Best For	Difficulty	Key Strength
Google Gemini	Beginners; quick conversational iteration	⭐ Easiest	Understands conversational follow-up: 'Make it warmer.' 'Remove the background.'
DALL-E 4 (ChatGPT)	Complex instructions; text in images	⭐⭐ Moderate	Best-in-class for following detailed written prompts and adding readable text to images
Midjourney v7	Artistic quality; cinematic visuals	⭐⭐⭐ Advanced	Produces the highest-quality, most visually stunning output — the 'gold standard' for art
Adobe Firefly	Brand-safe commercial use	⭐⭐ Moderate	Trained exclusively on licensed images — safe for commercial projects without IP concerns
Stable Diffusion	Full customisation and control	⭐⭐⭐ Technical	Open-source; free to run locally; most customisable but requires more setup

> ⭐ **Recommendation for Beginners**
> Start your Day 4 practice with Google Gemini. Its conversational interface means you can describe what you want in plain language, see the result, and then just say 'Make it more vibrant' or 'Change the background to a beach.' Once you are comfortable, move to DALL-E 4 for more complex prompts.

2.2 Getting Started in Under 2 Minutes

Google Gemini

1. Go to gemini.google.com and sign in with your Google account.
2. Type your image description in the chat bar.
3. Click the image icon (camera) or simply describe an image — Gemini will detect the intent.
4. When you see the result, continue the conversation to refine it.

DALL-E 4 via ChatGPT

5. Go to chatgpt.com and sign in.

6. In the chat bar, select the DALL-E image generation mode (the image icon).
7. Type your detailed prompt and press enter.
8. Use the edit tool in the output to request specific changes.

Chapter 3: The S.V.C.L. Prompting Formula

3.1 Why Simple Prompts Produce Disappointing Results

If you type 'a coffee shop' into any AI image generator, you will get something — but it will be generic, flat, and unlikely to match your actual vision. The AI fills in every missing detail with its own default assumptions.

The S.V.C.L. Formula solves this. It gives the AI all four dimensions of visual information it needs to produce a result that matches your intent precisely. Think of it as the CO-STAR method (from Day 1) — but for images.

3.2 The Four Elements of S.V.C.L.

	Element	What to Specify	Example
S	**Subject**	What is the main focus of your image?	*"A young Nigerian entrepreneur sitting at a modern desk"*
V	**Visual Style**	What artistic or photographic style?	*"Cinematic photography" or "Minimalist flat design"*
C	**Composition**	Where is the virtual camera positioned?	*"Close-up portrait" or "Wide-angle aerial view"*
L	**Lighting**	What is the mood and light source?	*"Warm golden-hour sunlight" or "Cool neon city glow"*

3.3 S.V.C.L. in Practice — A Full Example

The Basic Version (What Most People Write)

BASIC PROMPT: **Too Simple**

```
"A market in Nigeria."
```

Result: A generic, flat image with no mood, no atmosphere, no specific identity.

The S.V.C.L. Version (Professional Result)

S.V.C.L. PROMPT: Professional Output

```
Subject: A vibrant outdoor market in Lagos, Nigeria, with traders in colourful traditional fabrics displaying fresh vegetables, fabrics, and electronics.Visual Style: Cinematic documentary photography, in the style of National Geographic.Composition: Wide-angle shot at street level, immersive crowd
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> *perspective.Lighting: Bright West African midday sun with sharp shadows, warm and vivid colour tones.*

The second prompt produces a cinematically compelling, specific, and authentic image — not a generic stock photo look.

3.4 Visual Style Reference Guide

'Visual Style' is often the most powerful element of your prompt. Here are the most useful style descriptors, with the type of images they produce:

Style Descriptor	What It Produces	Best Used For
Cinematic photography	Film-quality, dramatic lighting, depth of field	Brand visuals, presentations, hero images
Flat design illustration	Clean, minimal, 2D vector-like graphics	App icons, infographics, digital posters
Watercolour painting	Soft, organic, handcrafted artistic feel	Greeting cards, book illustrations, warm brand identity
Cyberpunk digital art	Neon, futuristic, dark urban atmosphere	Tech presentations, gaming, edgy social content
1970s film photography	Warm, grainy, nostalgic, analog aesthetic	Vintage brand identity, lifestyle content
Minimalist line art	Simple, elegant, monochrome outline drawing	Logos, editorial illustration, subtle decoration
3D render / CGI	Hyper-realistic or stylised 3D object or scene	Product visualisation, architectural concept
Vintage travel poster	Bold flat colours, retro typography and design	Event posters, marketing, playful brand content

Chapter 4: Practice Drills

4.1 Drill 1 — The Basic Prompt (See Its Limits)

Start here to appreciate the difference that detailed prompting makes.

> DRILL 1: **The Basic Prompt — See Its Limitations**
>
> *"A coffee shop."*

Generate this image in your tool. Save or screenshot it. You will compare it to Drill 2's output.

4.2 Drill 2 — The S.V.C.L. Upgrade

Now generate the same scene using the full formula. Notice the difference in quality, mood, and specificity.

DRILL 2: The S.V.C.L. Professional Upgrade

Subject: A cosy, minimalist coffee shop in Tokyo, with wooden furniture, potted plants, and soft jazz ambiance visible in the gestures of customers reading books.Visual Style: Realistic photography, magazine editorial quality.Composition: Wide-angle shot from the street looking in through a large glass window.Lighting: Warm golden morning sun filtering through the windows, soft bokeh background blur.Colour palette: Earth tones, muted greens, and warm amber.

> 🔍 **Compare Side by Side**
>
> Hold up both images and ask yourself: which one would you use in a professional presentation, a client pitch, or social media post? The S.V.C.L. difference is immediately obvious.

4.3 Drill 3 — Adding Text to Images (2026 Capability)

One of the most significant advances in AI image generation in 2025–26 is reliable, readable text inside images. DALL-E 4 handles this best. Use this for posters, social media graphics, certificates, and announcement visuals.

DRILL 3: Text in Image — Vintage Poster

A vintage travel poster for visiting the Planet Mars.Include the bold text 'VISIT THE RED PLANET' in retro all-caps typography at the top of the image.Below the title, include the smaller text: 'Departures from Earth Orbit — 2031'.Style: 1950s American screen print, bold flat colours of red, cream, and black.Composition: Full poster layout, portrait orientation.Featuring: A lone astronaut standing on the Martian surface with Earth visible in the sky behind them.

After generating your poster, try these text iteration prompts:

- "Change the font style to a more modern, bold sans-serif typeface."
- "Add a subtitle at the bottom: 'Book your journey today.'"
- "Change the colour palette to deep blue and silver — make it feel more futuristic."

4.4 Drill 4 — Conversational Iteration (Gemini)

This drill teaches the most beginner-friendly technique: building an image through conversation, just like you would with a human designer.

ITERATION DRILL: Build Progressively in Gemini

Step 1: 'Create an image of a modern home office.'

ITERATION STEP 2: Add Detail

Step 2: 'Make it a corner office with large floor-to-ceiling windows overlooking a city skyline at night.'

ITERATION STEP 3: Refine Further

Step 3: 'Add a warm desk lamp on the left side, a bookshelf filled with books on the right, and a laptop on the desk. Change the ambient lighting to a soft blue and gold evening glow.'

Chapter 5: Advanced Techniques

5.1 In-Painting — The AI Eraser and Editor

In-painting is one of the most powerful advanced features in AI image generation. It allows you to select a specific area of an already-generated image and change only that part, leaving the rest intact. Think of it as a targeted edit tool.

Available in: DALL-E 4 (via the edit tool), Adobe Firefly, Gemini (via the edit feature).

How In-Painting Works

9. Generate your initial image using a prompt.
10. Click the 'Edit' or 'In-paint' button in the tool.
11. Use the brush or selection tool to highlight the specific area you want to change.
12. Type a description of what you want to replace it with.
13. The AI regenerates only that region, blending it seamlessly with the rest of the image.

> ✏️ **In-Painting Use Cases**
> Change someone's outfit, hat, or facial expression. Replace a bland background with a dramatic cityscape. Add objects to a scene. Remove distracting elements. Update product colours in a mock-up. Swap seasons or weather in a landscape.

5.2 Aspect Ratios — Getting the Right Dimensions

Different platforms require different image shapes. Always specify the aspect ratio in your prompt for images you intend to use in a specific context.

Platform/Use	Aspect Ratio	Prompt Instruction
Presentation slide (widescreen)	**16:9**	*"...in a 16:9 widescreen landscape format."*
Instagram post (square)	**1:1**	*"...in a square 1:1 aspect ratio."*
Phone wallpaper / Stories	**9:16**	*"...in a tall 9:16 portrait format for mobile screens."*
LinkedIn / Facebook banner	**4:1**	*"...as a wide horizontal banner in 4:1 format."*
A4 document / Poster	**A4 portrait**	*"...as an A4 portrait document layout."*

YouTube thumbnail	**16:9 (small)**	*Generate at 16:9 with bold text and high contrast for readability at small size*

5.3 Style Consistency — Making a Series of Images

When you need multiple images that all look like they belong together (for a website, a presentation, or a social media series), use these consistency techniques:

- Include a style signature in every prompt in the series: 'same style as my previous prompt — minimalist flat design, navy and gold palette.'
- Use the same lighting descriptor throughout: 'soft natural window light from the left' in every prompt.
- Name a specific photographer, artist, or film as your reference: 'in the visual style of Stanley Kubrick' or 'in the style of a 2024 Apple product launch photo.'
- In Midjourney, use the --sref (style reference) feature by attaching a URL of your reference image.

Chapter 6: Real-World Use Cases

6.1 Business and Professional Use Cases

Presentation Hero Images

PRESENTATION PROMPT: Slide Hero Image

A powerful, conceptual image representing digital transformation in African business.Style: Clean, modern corporate photography.Composition: Wide 16:9 widescreen format, designed to sit behind white overlay text.Lighting: Bright, optimistic, forward-looking — morning light.Elements: A diverse group of young African professionals working with holographic data displays in a modern Lagos office.

Product Mock-ups

PRODUCT PROMPT: Product Visualisation

A premium product mock-up: a sleek, modern smartphone placed on a minimalist white marble surface.The phone screen displays a clean UI dashboard design.Style: Commercial product photography, e-commerce quality.Lighting: Soft studio light from the upper left, subtle shadow.No background objects — pure white surface, high contrast.

6.2 Marketing and Social Media

LinkedIn Post Visual

LINKEDIN PROMPT: Thought Leadership Visual

A professional LinkedIn post image.Size: Square 1:1 format.Background: Gradient from deep navy to electric blue.Text on image: 'The Future of Work is Now' in large, bold white sans-serif font, centred.Smaller text below: '5 AI Skills Every Professional Needs in 2026'Style: Modern tech-industry design aesthetic, clean and confident.

6.3 Personal and Creative Projects

Event Poster

EVENT POSTER: Custom Event Design

A professional event poster for 'The Annual Technology Summit 2026, Lagos'.Include the text: 'TECH SUMMIT 2026' in large bold typography at the top.Subtitle text: 'Building Africa's Digital Future | November 15, Lagos, Nigeria'Style: Contemporary African graphic design, bold and vibrant.Colour

> *palette: Deep green, gold, and white — colours of Nigerian identity.Background: Abstract geometric pattern with subtle map of Africa.*

Chapter 7: Pro Tips and Common Mistakes

7.1 Avoiding the 'Plastic Skin' Problem

When AI generates images of people, they often look unnaturally perfect — flawless skin, glassy eyes, and rigid poses that feel artificial. This is the 'plastic skin' effect. Add these descriptors to any portrait prompt:

- "Film grain, natural skin texture, realistic pores"
- "Candid, unposed, documentary-style photography"
- "Authentic expression, natural imperfections"
- "Shot on 35mm film" or "shot on a Sony A7 camera"

7.2 The 'Negative Prompt' Technique

Many image tools allow you to specify what you do NOT want in the image. Adding negative guidance prevents common problems:

- If your image keeps including objects you didn't want: 'Do not include cars, people, or text in this image.'
- If the style looks off: 'Do not make this look cartoonish, animated, or illustrated.'
- If the image looks cluttered: 'Minimalist. No background clutter. Simple, clean composition only.'

7.3 The 'Mood Board' Technique

Professional designers use mood boards to guide their creative direction. You can replicate this with AI by describing a combination of references:

MOOD BOARD PROMPT: Reference Combination

Style reference: The clean, minimal aesthetics of Apple product photography.Colour reference: The warm, earthy tones of a West African sunset — ochre, terracotta, and deep green.Composition reference: The immersive street-level perspective of Magnum Photos documentary photography.Subject: A young entrepreneur presenting her product at a startup pitch event.

7.4 Common Mistakes and How to Fix Them

❌ Common Mistake	✅ The Fix
Prompt too vague — generic output	Add all four S.V.C.L. elements. Be specific about subject, setting, mood, and composition.
Wrong image shape for platform	Specify aspect ratio: '16:9 widescreen' or 'square 1:1' or 'portrait 9:16'.

People look artificial / plastic	Add 'film grain, natural skin texture, candid, shot on film' to the prompt.
Text in image is unreadable or misspelled	Use DALL-E 4 specifically for text-in-image tasks. Place text in quotes inside the prompt.
Style is inconsistent across multiple images	Repeat your exact style descriptor in every prompt. Use 'same visual style as previous'.
Image is too cluttered	Add 'minimalist', 'clean background', 'simple composition, no clutter' to the prompt.

Chapter 8: Ethics, Copyright, and Responsible Use

8.1 Copyright and Ownership

The legal landscape around AI-generated images is still evolving rapidly in 2026. Here is the current practical guidance:

- Images generated entirely by AI prompts are generally not protected by copyright in most jurisdictions — meaning you cannot prevent others from using them.
- If you add significant human creative input (curation, editing, combining elements), some legal systems may grant partial protection — but this varies by country.
- For commercial use, tools like Adobe Firefly are trained exclusively on licensed images, making them safer choices for brand assets than tools trained on scraped internet data.
- Always check the specific Terms of Service of whichever tool you use for commercial rights.

8.2 Style Mimicry and Living Artists

You can ask AI to generate images 'in the style of' deceased artists like Van Gogh or Picasso without legal concern, as their works are in the public domain. However, generating images in the style of living artists is ethically controversial and increasingly legally challenged.

> ⚖️ **The Responsible Approach**
> Describe a style conceptually rather than naming a living artist: instead of 'in the style of [Living Artist Name]', say 'in the style of contemporary surrealist digital illustration with vibrant colours and dreamlike scenes.' This describes the aesthetic without appropriating a specific living person's creative identity.

8.3 Deepfakes and Misinformation

Never generate realistic images of real, identifiable people — especially politicians, celebrities, or private individuals — in situations that did not occur. This constitutes a deepfake, which:

- Is illegal in many jurisdictions under new AI legislation enacted in 2024-2025
- Can cause serious reputational harm to real people
- Violates the Terms of Service of every major AI image platform
- Can expose you to significant legal liability, including defamation claims

8.4 Transparency and Disclosure

Good professional practice in 2026 includes disclosing when images are AI-generated, particularly in:

- Journalism and news content
- Medical or scientific publications
- Advertising and commercial claims
- Any context where the authenticity of an image is relevant to trust

Chapter 9: Workbook — In-Session Exercises

Complete these exercises during the live session with your AI image tool open.

Exercise 1: The S.V.C.L. Builder

Choose a scene relevant to your work or business. Build a complete S.V.C.L. prompt below before generating the image.

S Subject	*What is the main focus? Who or what is in this image?* Your entry: _____
V Visual Style	*What artistic/photographic style? (See Chapter 3.4 table)* Your entry: _____
C Composition	*Where is the camera? What framing? Wide? Close-up?* Your entry: _____
L Lighting	*What is the mood and light? Golden hour? Studio? Neon?* Your entry: _____

1	**After generating your image, what would you change to improve it? Write your follow-up prompt here:** Your answer: _____

Exercise 2: Before vs After — The S.V.C.L. Comparison

Generate the same subject first with a basic prompt, then with the full S.V.C.L. method.

A	**What subject did you choose for your comparison?** Your answer: _____

B	**Describe the key differences you observed between the basic and S.V.C.L. outputs:** Your answer: _____

	_____

C	**Which style descriptor from Chapter 3.4 had the most dramatic impact on your result?** Your answer: _____ _____ _____

Exercise 3: Text-in-Image Challenge

Use DALL-E 4 to create an image that includes readable, stylised text. Document your experience.

A	**What was your prompt? (Include the exact text you asked AI to display.)** Your answer: _____ _____ _____

B	**Was the text readable and correctly spelled in the first output? If not, what adjustment did you make?** Your answer: _____ _____ _____

Chapter 10: Day 4 Assignment

> 🎨 **Your Visual Content Challenge**
>
> *Complete before Day 5. Estimated time: 25-35 minutes.*

The Task

Create three AI-generated images that you could actually use in your professional life, social media, or business. Each image must be built using the S.V.C.L. method and refined using at least one follow-up instruction.

Image 1: Your 'Dream Vision' Image

Think of a location, scene, or concept that matters to you: a dream office, a future product, a concept for your business, a vision of your city in 2050. Build a full S.V.C.L. prompt and generate it.

14. Write your full S.V.C.L. prompt (all four elements).
15. Generate the image.
16. Apply the homework instruction: 'Change the weather in this image to a rainy evening.'
17. Note what changed and whether you prefer the original or the revised version.

Image 2: A Practical Work Asset

Create something you genuinely need: a social media post visual, a presentation hero image, a product mock-up, or an event poster. Specify the correct aspect ratio for the platform you intend to use it on.

18. Identify the platform and required aspect ratio.
19. Write your S.V.C.L. prompt and include the aspect ratio specification.
20. Generate and refine using at least two follow-up instructions.

Image 3: Text in Image

Create a visual that includes text — a poster, a social media graphic, a certificate concept, or a branded banner. Use DALL-E 4 for best results with text rendering.

21. Decide what text you want displayed in the image.
22. Build your prompt with text in quotation marks: Include the text '[Your Text]' in bold typography...
23. Generate and verify the text is correct, readable, and visually appropriate.

Reflection Questions

1	**Which of your three images surprised you most with how closely it matched your vision?** Your answer: _____
2	**What was the most useful S.V.C.L. element — which one had the biggest impact on your results?** Your answer: _____
3	**Identify one professional situation where you will use AI image generation in the next 30 days.** Your answer: _____

Chapter 11: References & Further Learning

11.1 Core References

- Rombach, R. et al. (2022). High-Resolution Image Synthesis with Latent Diffusion Models. CVPR 2022. Available at: arxiv.org/abs/2112.10752 (foundational paper on stable diffusion)
- OpenAI (2024). DALL-E 3 System Card. Available at: openai.com/research/dall-e-3-system-card
- Adobe (2024). Adobe Firefly Ethics and Content Credentials. Available at: adobe.com/uk/sensei/generative-ai/firefly.html
- World Economic Forum (2024). AI Image Generation: Risks, Benefits, and Governance. Available at: weforum.org
- UK Intellectual Property Office (2023). Artificial Intelligence and Intellectual Property. Available at: gov.uk/government/collections/artificial-intelligence-and-ip

11.2 Tools to Explore

- Google Gemini Image Generation — gemini.google.com
- DALL-E 4 via ChatGPT — chatgpt.com
- Midjourney v7 — midjourney.com
- Adobe Firefly — firefly.adobe.com (recommended for commercial use)
- Canva AI — canva.com (AI image generation integrated into design templates)
- Bing Image Creator — bing.com/create (free DALL-E powered tool)

11.3 Learning AI Image Prompting Further

- PromptHero — prompthero.com (community of AI image prompts to learn from)
- Lexica.art — lexica.art (search engine for AI image prompts)
- r/StableDiffusion on Reddit — active community sharing advanced techniques

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End of Day 4 eBook

Day 5 — AI for Personal Productivity: Your AI-Powered Daily Workflow

2026 AI Learning Roadmap | Created for beginners, designed for results.