

AI SLOPCRAFT GUIDE | ARAM ARMSTRONG | RAD STUDIO



A GUIDE TO A I S L O P C R A F T



A lifecycle + intensity + provenance map for AI tools compared to jeans

📄 AI TEXT | 🖼️ AI IMAGES | 🎵 AI MUSIC | 🎬 AI VIDEOS

Key💡: Not all AI use is equal. || Not all ⚡electricity or 💧water is equal.

🪄 THE HOOK

- 👖 1 pair of fast-fashion jeans (worn ~1 year) ≈
- 📖 decades of text-AI thinking
- 🖼️ thousands of AI images
- 🎵 hundreds-thousands of AI songs
- 🎬 only 3-10 minutes of AI video

(**quality, ethics, and discernment matters greatly in both clothes and AI*)

🖼️ THE FRAMING

- 🤖 We argue about AI like it's a singular object. It's not. It's a system.
- ⬆️ AI has upstream costs (⚡ electricity, 💧 cooling water, 🧱 hardware) and
- ⬇️ downstream effects (🧠 attention, 🗣️ culture, ⌚ durability).
- 👤 The question is not "use or don't."
- 📈 The question is: does VALUE rise faster than COST and where do the costs land?

————— BASELINE —————

UNAVOIDABLE AI INFRASTRUCTURE (*ambient, mostly non-optional, possibly non-consensual*)

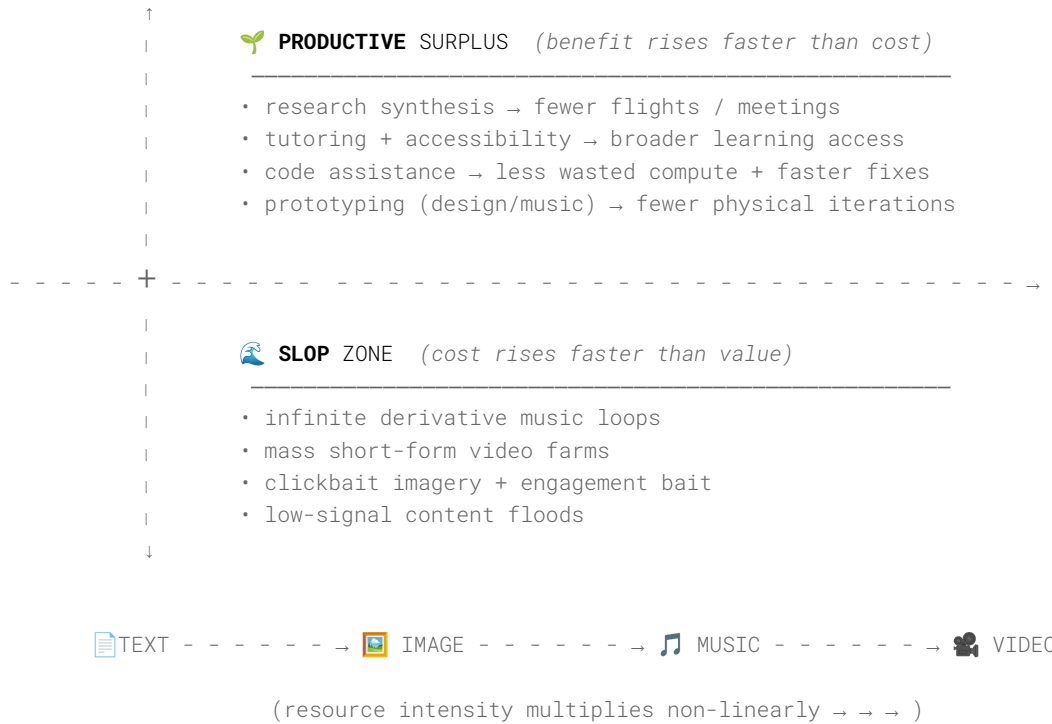
- | | | | |
|------------------|-----------------|-----------------|----------------|
| 🔍 search | 📍 navigation | ♿ accessibility | ✉ autocomplete |
| 🛡 spam filtering | 🎙 transcription | 📊 optimization | |

runs whether you opt in or not

individual agency: **LOW**

system design leverage: **HIGH**

📈 NET VALUE LANDSCAPE



❌ THE MISSING LAYER: ⌚ PHASE + 🏠 PLACE + ⚡ POWER + 💧 WATER

$$AI \text{ IMPACT} \approx (MODALITY) \times (PHASE) \times (POWER \text{ SOURCE}) \times (COOLING / WATER \text{ PATHWAY})$$

⌚ PHASE: 🏭 TRAINING MODELS (🔧 factory-build burn) 📄 USING LLMs (💻 metered burn)

⚡ POWER: ☀️/💧/💧 cleaner grids vs ⚒️/🔥 fossil grids vs 🏠 on-site turbines
(same compute, different carbon + pollution)

💧 WATER: 💧 evaporative cooling (consumes water)
💧 air / dry cooling (low direct water)
♻️ reclaimed / recycled water (reduces potable demand)

🏠 LOCAL IMPACT: 🌬️ air quality + environmental justice can dominate the ethics in some places

👖 ONE PAIR OF JEANS = ONE “BUDGET TOKEN”

a shared reference unit:

👖 conventional cotton jeans (fast-fashion tier, worn ~1 year)

What does that buy across AI modalities?

📖 TEXT (💧 sips)
≈ 50,000–100,000 minutes
≈ 20–40 years of daily conversational use
≈ thousands of book-length interactions

🖼️ IMAGE (🍷 cups)
≈ 2,000–10,000 images
≈ 200–500 hours of iteration

🎵 MUSIC (🍷 pitchers)
≈ 500–2,000 short tracks
≈ 100–300 hours
≈ several albums of intentional work OR thousands of disposable tracks

🎥 VIDEO (🏊 swimming pools)
≈ 3–10 minutes of high-quality AI video

👗 W A R D R O B E O F O U T P U T

👖 1 pair of jeans ≈

📖 a LIBRARY DRAWER:
hundreds of essays, dozens of books, a lifetime of tutoring + synthesis

🖼️ a STUDIO WALL:
moodboards, posters, character sheets, storyboard panels, brand systems

🎵 a WALK-IN ARCHIVE:
a decade of albums’ worth of sketches... or an infinity-loop of throwaways

🎥 a SHIPPING CONTAINER:
a few minutes of spectacle (and the container’s power + water source matters)

COMPARISON TABLE

(order-of-magnitude intuition, not accounting)

EQUIV TO	TEXT	IMAGE	MUSIC	VIDEO
TEXT	1 unit	~20 images	~5-10 songs	~0.001 min (~0.06 sec)
IMAGE	~50 texts	1 image	~0.5 song	~0.005 min (~0.3 sec)
MUSIC	~200 texts	~2 images	1 song	~0.05 min (~3 sec)
VIDEO	~50,000 text minutes	~10,000 img	~1,000 songs	1 minute

Stress test: ~ 5-minute AI video short ~ 250,000 text minutes
 ~ 50,000 images ~ 5,000 songs

JEANS T I E R S (durability factor)

CHEAP / FAST FASHION JEANS (~\$40-\$60) lifespan ~1 year
 → the "budget token" above (baseline comparisons)

MID-TIER QUALITY JEANS (~\$120-\$180) lifespan ~5 years
 → multiply the AI equivalents by ~5 (more "AI output" per jean's lifetime)

HEIRLOOM OR PREMIUM JEANS (~\$300-\$500+) lifespan 10-20+ years
 → multiply by 10-20 (durability makes the jeans far "cheaper per year")

Moral hinge: longevity.

Fast fashion and disposable AI share the same sin: high throughput, low durability.



WHO'S USING AI? (impact grows stepwise)



ambient users

embedded systems · near-zero marginal impact



conversational

daily thinking · synthesis



heavy creators

images · code · iterative workflows



extreme generators

video · batch media · scale production



THE LEVERS (what to ask, not what to shame)

- 1) **DISPLACEMENT**: does this replace something more resource-intensive?
- 2) **DURABILITY**: will anyone care in a month? a year? a decade?
- 3) **PROVENANCE**: what's powering it – renewables, fossil grid, on-site turbines?
- 4) **WATER PATH**: evaporative cooling, dry cooling, reclaimed water?
- 5) **DEFAULTS**: are platforms incentivizing volume (slop) or signal (craft)?

NOT ALL AI USE IS EQUAL

NOT ALL RESTRAINT IS VIRTUOUS

DESIGN DECIDES



FOOTNOTE

This poster was intentionally rendered using text, symbols, and ASCII graphics to minimize compute, bandwidth, and rendering overhead; a small demonstration that meaningful sensemaking does not require high-energy media.

Also: the numbers here are order-of-magnitude intuition tools (not carbon accounting). The point is comparison + design literacy, not faux precision.



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S L O P C R A F T . E X E



A Heuristic for When to Use AI or When to Craft it Yourself

TEXT | IMAGE | MUSIC | VIDEO | HUMAN CRAFT

10,000 words = 1 pair of jeans
 500 images = 2-3 pairs of jeans
 1 song = Mid-tier jeans
 5-min video short = Full outfit
 2hr AI film = Wardrobe + suitcase

⚡ ENERGY + 💧 WATER COST

Text: low | Image: medium | Music: varies

Video: high | Human: renewable?

💡 WHEN TO USE AI (A SLOPCRAFT COMPASS)

LOCAL MODELS / LIGHT LIFT

Quick summaries | Brainstorming | Tiny agents

MID-TIER CRAFT / DRAFTING

Moodboards | Lo-fi songs | Short edits

FULL-COST CRAFT (use human hands + soul)

Feature films | Essays of meaning | Performances

📊 SLOP INDEX COMPARISON : QUALITY vs COST vs CONTEXT

Model	Type	Cost	Slop	Craft
ChatGPT-3.5	Text	Low	●	♦ Drafting
Claude 2	Text	Med	●	♦ Structure
DeepSeek	Text	Low	●	♦ Translations
Midjourney	Image	Med	●	⚠ Style not soul
Suno / Udio	Music	High	●	🎧 Vibe over voice
Sora	Video	High	●	🚫 Uncanny Slop

⚠ REMEMBER : AI Output ≠ Ethical Input.

Ask: What was this trained on? Who benefits? At what cost?

🧵 THREADS TO HOLD

- Not all jeans are created equal
- Cheap slop ≠ free – someone pays
- Human creativity has latency... and longevity



AI SLOPCRAFT EVAL | ARAM
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S L O P C R A F T S C O R E C A R D

An evaluation tool to help decide when:

- use AI
 - change tools
 - slow down
 - or do it by hand
-

HOW TO USE THIS:

Score each line honestly.

Low score = 🚫 slop gravity.

High score = 🌱 craft momentum.

No shame. Just signal.

① INTENT (Why am I making this?)

- ☐ 1 Filling space / chasing engagement
- ☐ 2 Exploring vaguely / killing time
- ☐ 3 Clarifying an idea
- ☐ 4 Solving a real problem
- ☐ 5 Making something that matters

→ If you circled 1-2: pause.

→ If you circled 4-5: proceed carefully.

② STAGE (Where is this in the lifecycle?)

- ☐ 1 Publishing / broadcasting
- ☐ 2 Polishing for release
- ☐ 3 Drafting / prototyping
- ☐ 4 Learning / training
- ☐ 5 Thinking / sensemaking

→ AI loves 4-5.

→ AI tolerates 3.

→ AI at 1-2 needs restraint.



③ MODALITY (What am I generating?)

- ☐ 1  Video (high spectacle, high cost)
 - ☐ 2  Music (ambiguous, scale-sensitive)
 - ☐ 3  Image (iteration-heavy)
 - ☐ 4  Text (cheap, flexible)
 - ☐ 5  Pure thinking / analysis
- Each step down the list = 10–100× less cost.

④ DURABILITY (How long should this live?)

- ☐ 1 Seconds (scroll bait)
 - ☐ 2 Days (content churn)
 - ☐ 3 Weeks (project artifact)
 - ☐ 4 Years (reference, curriculum, catalog)
 - ☐ 5 Decades (canon, memory, archive)
- Low durability + high cost = classic slop.

⑤ DISPLACEMENT (What does this replace?)

- ☐ 1 Nothing (pure addition)
 - ☐ 2 Other cheap digital content
 - ☐ 3 Some meetings / emails / drafts
 - ☐ 4 Travel / physical prototyping
 - ☐ 5 Major resource-intensive activity
- If it replaces something worse, it earns credit.

⑥ PROVENANCE (Where does the cost land?)

- ☐ 1 Unknown grid, unknown water, unknown impact
 - ☐ 2 Fossil-heavy grid or on-site gas
 - ☐ 3 Mixed grid, unclear cooling
 - ☐ 4 Cleaner grid + water-aware cooling
 - ☐ 5 Renewable-first, locality-conscious
- Same output ≠ same ethics.



7 CONTROL & CARE (How is it made?)

- ☐ 1 One-click, no review, auto-publish
 - ☐ 2 Minimal editing
 - ☐ 3 Iterative prompting
 - ☐ 4 Hybrid workflow (AI + human tools)
 - ☐ 5 Human judgment at every gate
- Craft shows up as friction.

8 SCALE (How many times will this happen?)

- ☐ 1 Mass automation / infinite loop
 - ☐ 2 Batch generation
 - ☐ 3 Regular but bounded use
 - ☐ 4 Occasional, intentional use
 - ☐ 5 Rare, deliberate use
- One prompt is nothing.
- Millions of habits are everything.

 SCORING

Add your numbers:

INTENT ☐
STAGE ☐
MODALITY ☐
DURABILITY ☐

DISPLACEMENT ☐
PROVENANCE ☐
CONTROL ☐
SCALE ☐

TOTAL = ☐ / 40

INTERPRETATION

0-15 SLOP ZONE

- rethink the task
- lower the modality
- or stop entirely

16-25 AMBIGUOUS MIDDLE

- reduce scale
- add human review
- switch tools

26-35 CRAFT ZONE

- AI is likely appropriate
- hybrid workflows shine

36-40 HEIRLOOM MODE

- high care
- high durability
- justified cost

REMEMBER

Think with AI.
Sketch with AI.
Decide with humans.
Publish with care.
Scale only what you'd repair.

FOOTNOTE

This scorecard is not a rulebook.
It's a mirror.

It won't tell you what to make.
It will tell you when to slow down.

"THE MEDIUM IS THE MESSAGE"
MARSHALL MCCLUHAN