

# The 12 mental models

Quick reference from *Artificial Leverage* by Matthew Jefferies

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| <p><b>01</b></p> <h2>The Probabilistic Reasoning Engine</h2> <p>AI is a next-token prediction machine calculating probability distributions. Understanding this transforms how you frame every request and explains why outputs vary.</p> | <p><b>02</b></p> <h2>The Model Selection Matrix</h2> <p>Dozens of frontier models exist. A rapid selection framework helps you pick the right model for the right job every time, matching capability to task.</p>                        |
| <p><b>03</b></p> <h2>The Alignment Stack</h2> <p>Hidden design decisions shape every model's behaviour. Understanding the alignment stack lets you work with model constraints rather than fight them.</p>                                | <p><b>04</b></p> <h2>System 1 and System 2 Thinking</h2> <p>When to activate reasoning mode and when it is expensive overkill. A cost-quality-speed framework for deploying extended thinking strategically.</p>                          |
| <p><b>05</b></p> <h2>AI as the Universal API Layer</h2> <p>Tool use and the Model Context Protocol transform AI from text generation into a connected system that interacts with external software and data sources.</p>                  | <p><b>06</b></p> <h2>The Autonomy Spectrum</h2> <p>A five-level framework for calibrating how much autonomy to grant an AI agent, from simple tool use (Level 1) to full delegation for narrow domains (Level 5).</p>                     |
| <p><b>07</b></p> <h2>AI Perception</h2> <p>Every frontier model now sees images, reads documents, and processes audio natively. Understanding what models can and cannot perceive guides multimodal workflows.</p>                        | <p><b>08</b></p> <h2>Prompts Are Specifications, Not Requests</h2> <p>The single most important shift: define audience, format, constraints, perspective, and quality criteria explicitly. Specifications produce consistent results.</p> |
| <p><b>09</b></p> <h2>The AI Leverage Audit</h2> <p>A four-step framework: map workflow tasks, classify as automate/augment/keep human, prioritise by impact, and design augmented workflows for top opportunities.</p>                    | <p><b>10</b></p> <h2>The Task-Model Matching Framework</h2> <p>Match models to tasks across four dimensions: complexity, stakes, volume, and required guarantees. Enables 90-second selection decisions.</p>                              |
| <p><b>11</b></p> <h2>The Data Sensitivity Classifier</h2> <p>A four-tier classification system for deciding what data goes into which models, plus defences against prompt injection in agentic systems.</p>                              | <p><b>12</b></p> <h2>The Exponential Mindset</h2> <p>AI capability doubles approximately every seven months. A sustainable monthly practice for updating knowledge and workflows as technology accelerates.</p>                           |

These models form an integrated system. Master all 12 and you have the complete toolkit for working with frontier AI.

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