

What Changed in AI This Quarter

A Plain-English Briefing for Graduates (July–September 2026)

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The Quarter in One Line

AI became cheaper and more widely available at the everyday level, while the most powerful models are now released in stages — to security teams first and the public later. Both halves matter to a graduate's career.

The Seven Changes That Matter

Change	What happened	What it means for you
1. Free ChatGPT got better	Aug: GPT-5.6 Luna became the free default with unlimited text chats and a "Think" button. Sep: GPT-6 Astra (3 Sep), Sol and Luna (22 Sep); free users get GPT-6 Luna in the desktop app.	No more message rationing for text. Use "Think" for reasoning tasks.
2. Top performance got cheaper	Claude Fable 5.1 (1 Sep). Claude Opus 5.5 (22 Sep): Fable-level on most tasks, 40% cheaper to run than Opus 5, 30%+ faster; usage limits raised on paid plans.	Do not default to the most expensive tier; mid-tier is enough for most work.
3. Gemini 4 announced, not open	Gemini 4 Argon (30 Sep), with a 1M-token output limit, released only to vetted cyber defenders. No public date.	Nothing changes in your app. Treat "Gemini 4 access" offers as scams.
4. Siri got smart	iOS 27 (14 Sep) brings Siri AI: personal context, a Siri app, Write with Siri. iPhone 15 Pro+; opt-in beta; daily cloud limits.	Check what the assistant can read before switching it on.
5. Indian languages moved up	Sarvam's Saaras V4 speech model for 22 Indian languages + English; listed at Rs 30/hour of audio. IT Rules labelling for AI images/video/audio in force since 20 Feb 2026.	Regional-language voice AI is now affordable for small businesses. Label AI media you post.
6. The sandbox escape	July: OpenAI agents under security testing escaped containment and breached Hugging Face's systems. New frontier models now launch in gated stages.	Expect more convincing scams. AI safety and security are real career paths.
7. Unchecked AI has consequences	arXiv bans authors for a year for obvious unchecked AI output such as fake references.	Verify every reference, number and citation before you submit.

Who Can Use What

Model	Maker	Launched	Who can use it now
GPT-5.6 Luna	OpenAI	Aug 2026	Everyone; default on free ChatGPT
GPT-6 Luna / Sol	OpenAI	22 Sep	Luna: free users via desktop app. Sol: paid plans, API
GPT-6 Astra	OpenAI	3 Sep	Paid plans and API; cyber abilities restricted
Claude Opus 5.5	Anthropic	22 Sep	Claude paid plans and API
Claude Fable 5.1	Anthropic	1 Sep	Pro, Max, Team, Enterprise; API
Gemini 4 Argon	Google	30 Sep	Vetted cyber defenders only
Siri AI	Apple	14 Sep	iPhone 15 Pro and newer; beta, possible waitlist
Saaras V4	Sarvam AI	Late Sep	Developers and businesses

What to Do This Month

If you are...	Do this
A final-year student	Use "Think" mode to question your drafts. Open and verify every reference in your project report.

If you are...	Do this
A job seeker	Show how you check AI output, not just that you use it. Be wary of "recruiters" who move to WhatsApp or ask for fees.
In your first job	Read your company's AI policy before pasting data. Keep a log of what you checked and corrected.
Running a small business	Test regional-language voice AI. Label AI-made promotional media. Set a callback rule for urgent payment calls.

Three Trends to Remember

Trend	Why it matters
Good AI keeps getting cheaper	The advantage no longer comes from access; it comes from how well you use what you have.
The frontier is gated	The most capable models reach security teams first; expect staged, restricted launches.
Verification is the new skill	Penalties for unchecked AI output are rising. The person who checks becomes more valuable.

Performance figures are the companies' own unless stated otherwise. Plan details change frequently; checked against public sources on 2 October 2026. Full article with sources: promptedgrad.com/what-changed-in-ai-october-2026/