
12 TERMS YOU WILL ACTUALLY USE

AI vocabulary. Without the fog.

Save this for the next time someone says “agentic.”

Agent

Chooses actions and uses feedback to pursue a goal.

Skill

A reusable procedure the agent loads when relevant.

Specification

Defines the behavior the result must satisfy.

Critic

Identifies potential flaws and improvements.

Adversarial loop

Challenge → revise → recheck. Stop within a budget.

Context engineering

Manages what information reaches the model and when.

Tool calling

Requests an operation that a runtime validates and executes.

Harness

The tools, state, context, permissions, and loop around the model.

Plan

Describes the strategy and sequence for doing the work.

Verifier

Checks specific claims against evidence.

MCP

A standard interface for tools, resources, and prompts.

Eval

A repeatable assessment against defined criteria.

Primary references in the field guide. “Adversarial loop” is an informal pattern.