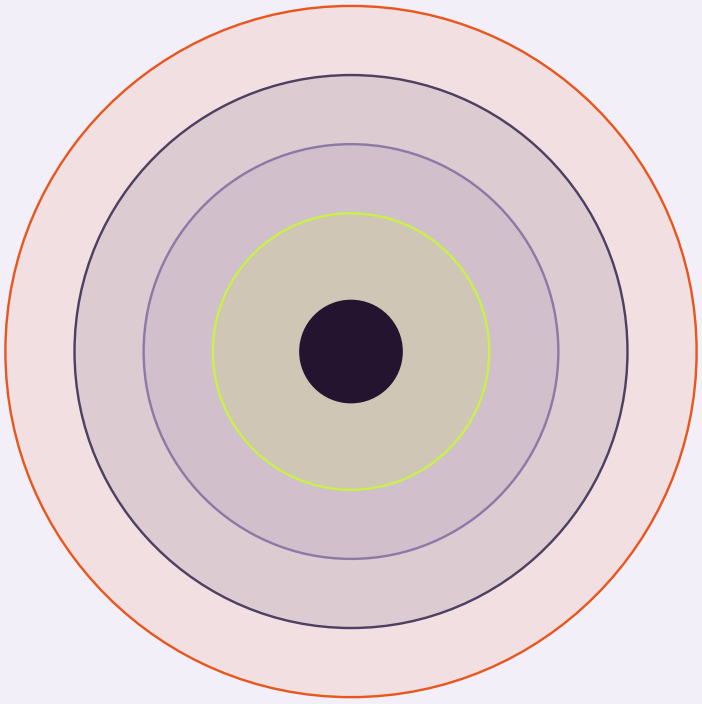


The Singularity Is Nearer: When We Merge with AI

A reading of the book by Ray Kurzweil (2024)

1. ACTION BOOK

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ABOUT THIS EDITION

This is HourLife's reading of The Singularity Is Nearer: When We Merge with AI, in our own words. It is not a substitute for the book.

BEFORE YOU START 01

The book in a minute

Ray Kurzweil is an inventor and futurist who built early reading machines for blind people and has worked on language and AI at Google since 2012. This sequel to The Singularity Is Near (2005) restates his law of accelerating returns: information technologies improve exponentially, because each generation of tools helps build the next. From that curve he keeps two dates he has held for decades: AI that passes a valid Turing test by 2029, and a Singularity around 2045, when people extend their own minds with AI through brain-computer interfaces. Along the way he argues that life is getting better by many long-run measures, that medicine is turning into an information technology, and that jobs will change more than they vanish. He frames the story as six stages of evolution, and closes with chapters on the perils and a dialogue with a sceptic he calls Cassandra. Many researchers dispute his timelines and the idea of a merge, so his dates are best read as one informed forecast among many.

Below are the 9 ideas HourLife readers vote up most, each in our words with a note on what it asks of you, and then the steps that put them to work.

WHAT READERS KEEP

The takeaways

1 HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

Our gut predicts in straight lines, but information technology grows in doublings.

Kurzweil's oldest illustration: thirty linear steps take you thirty paces, while thirty doublings take you past a billion. Early on, an exponential curve looks flat and easy to dismiss. By the time it looks steep, most of the change is already close.

2 HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

Progress speeds itself up, because every generation of tools helps build the next one.

This is his law of accelerating returns. Faster computers design faster chips, better data trains better models, and the gains feed back into the next round. He backs it with a long chart of how much computation a constant dollar buys, running from the earliest computers to today.

3 HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

Kurzweil still dates AI that passes a valid Turing test to 2029, as he first did in 1999.

He made the forecast in The Age of Spiritual Machines, when most experts thought it was decades too early. In this book he argues that large language models show the curve is on time. Others reply that passing a conversation test is not the same as human-level understanding, and estimates for that still range widely.

4 HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

In his picture, the Singularity is not machines replacing us but people extending their minds into the cloud.

Around 2045, he expects brain-computer interfaces, eventually nanobots, to connect the neocortex to computing in the cloud and multiply our intelligence many times over. It is the boldest claim in the book. Many neuroscientists doubt that anything like it is close, and the date is his forecast, not a consensus.

5 HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

Read the long-run data before the news: by many measures, life has been getting better.

A long chapter walks through decades of figures on poverty, literacy, life expectancy, violence and the falling cost of solar power. His point is that news reports events while the slow trends go unreported. The trends are real, though they say nothing on their own about what comes next.

6 HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

Once medicine runs on simulation and data, he argues, it can ride the same curve as computing.

He expects AI-driven drug discovery and simulated biology to speed up research, and talks of longevity escape velocity: the point where science adds more than a year of remaining life expectancy for every year that passes. That idea is speculative, and most researchers on ageing are far more cautious about it.

7 HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

Automation ends particular jobs, but past waves have created kinds of work no one could have named.

He points out that most people once worked on farms, and that many of today's jobs did not exist a few generations ago. He does not wave away the hard transition for people whose work disappears, and he expects the social safety net to grow as abundance does.

8 HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

The same power that can cure disease can be turned to harm, so safety has to keep pace with progress.

A chapter called Peril takes on the risks from nuclear weapons, biotechnology, nanotechnology and AI itself. He stays an optimist, but he argues for serious safety work rather than either stopping research or ignoring the danger. The book ends with a dialogue in which a sceptic, Cassandra, presses him on his case.

9 HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

If we merge with AI, the question of who we are stops being only philosophy.

In the chapter Who Am I? he asks what consciousness is, and whether a person who changes bit by bit, or a digital copy built from their records, is still the same person. He writes about an AI built from his late father's letters and writings. The science here is unsettled, and he says so.

PUT IT TO WORK

Your action book

Do the setup steps once, then keep the habits going. The setup changes your week; the habits keep it changed after the first good one.

The download puts this whole reading and a printable action book in one PDF: the setup checklist, then a page of real calendar days for each habit, starting on the day you choose.

SET UP ONCE

- [ ] Write your own 2029 and 2045 forecasts
- [ ] Find one fifty-year chart
- [ ] Sort your work by curve
- [ ] Book a forecast check-up
- [ ] Plan one goal on two curves

KEEP UP DAILY

- ◯ Ask what happens if it doubles
- ◯ Retest an AI tool on real work
- ◯ Read the sceptic too

30 days · Nov 6 - Dec 5, 2026

Part two, after the reading, prints each of these as a page to fill in by hand.

THE LAST WORD

Before you go

Pick one step from the action book and do it today. An idea from a book starts to count once it changes what one ordinary day looks like.

PART TWO

The action book

Change the setup once, then keep it up. 5 setup actions to do once, and 3 habits to mark each day for 30 days.

Nov 6 - Dec 5, 2026

Print it, or write on it in any PDF app.

SET UP ONCE

The setup checklist

Each of these is done once. Do one a day, and check it off when it is done.

- [ ] SETUP 1

Write your own 2029 and 2045 forecasts

On one page, write what you expect AI to do by 2029 and what you expect life to look like in 2045.

Date the page and keep it somewhere you will find it again.

MY VERSION

DONE ON

- [ ] SETUP 2

Find one fifty-year chart

Pick something you care about, such as child mortality, the cost of solar power or the price of storage.

Find a chart that covers at least fifty years and note whether it runs in a straight line or bends.

MY VERSION

DONE ON

- [ ] SETUP 3

Sort your work by curve

List ten tasks from your normal week.

Mark each one as mostly information (fast-improving tools) or mostly physical and personal, and circle the two you would most like help with.

MY VERSION

DONE ON

- [ ] SETUP 4

Book a forecast check-up

Put a reminder in your calendar for one year from today that says: reread my forecasts.

When it comes, mark what you got right and what moved faster or slower than you thought.

MY VERSION

DONE ON

- [ ] SETUP 5

Plan one goal on two curves

Take a five-year goal that depends on technology, such as a skill, a business or a career move.

Write a version that assumes today's tools stay as they are and one that assumes they double in power twice.

MY VERSION

DONE ON

DAILY HABIT 1 OF 3

Ask what happens if it doubles

When you hear about a new trend or tool, ask what it would look like after three or four doublings.

Nov 6 - Dec 5, 2026 · 30 days · circle each day you do it

SMALLEST VERSION

CUE

WHERE

November 2026

MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN
						1
2	3	4	5	6 ○	7 ○	8 ○
9 ○	10 ○	11 ○	12 ○	13 ○	14 ○	15 ○
16 ○	17 ○	18 ○	19 ○	20 ○	21 ○	22 ○
23 ○	24 ○	25 ○	26 ○	27 ○	28 ○	29 ○
30 ○						

December 2026

MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN
	1 ○	2 ○	3 ○	4 ○	5 ○	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	31			

EACH FRIDAY

WHAT HELPED

WHAT GOT IN THE WAY

ONE CHANGE TO THE SETUP

DAILY HABIT 2 OF 3

Retest an AI tool on real work

Once a week, give a current AI tool one real task from your work and note where it helped and where it failed.

Nov 6 - Dec 5, 2026 · 30 days · circle each day you do it

SMALLEST VERSION

CUE

WHERE

November 2026

MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN
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EACH FRIDAY

WHAT HELPED

WHAT GOT IN THE WAY

ONE CHANGE TO THE SETUP

DAILY HABIT 3 OF 3

Read the sceptic too

For every confident forecast you read about AI, read one serious critic of it.

Nov 6 - Dec 5, 2026 · 30 days · circle each day you do it

SMALLEST VERSION

CUE

WHERE

November 2026

MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN
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December 2026

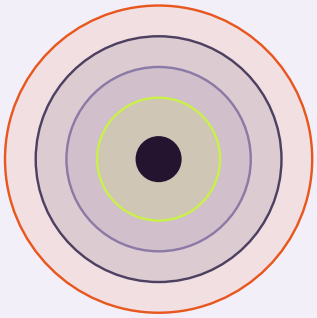
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EACH FRIDAY

WHAT HELPED

WHAT GOT IN THE WAY

ONE CHANGE TO THE SETUP



Think in doublings, not steps, and write your own forecast down before you borrow anyone else's.

HOURLIFE NOTE AFTER RAY KURZWEIL