

AUTOMATION VS AI

AUTOMATION VS AGENTS

What you'll learn:

Understand the differences between standard automations, AI-powered automations, and intelligent agents - with real examples from n8n.

What is an Automation?

- A basic **automation** performs repetitive tasks without human input
- Every automation has:
 - **Trigger** – e.g. form is submitted
 - **Action** – e.g. save the data to Google Sheets
- Example: Someone fills out a form → their name & email go to a spreadsheet

What is an AI Automation?

- Adds a **large language model (LLM)** like GPT-4 into the workflow
- The LLM **analyzes text, categorizes emails, or creates smart replies**
- Example:
 - You receive an email
 - LLM classifies it (payment, service, consultation)
 - The automation replies automatically or routes it to the right inbox
- Saves hours of manual work and gives smarter responses

What is an Agent?

- An **AI agent** is smarter than an automation
- It can **make decisions, use tools, remember past chats, and work autonomously**
- Components include:
 - **Trigger** – user sends a message
 - **LLM (ChatGPT)** – understands the message
 - **Memory** – remembers past conversations
 - **Tools** – like web search (e.g. using Serp API)
- Example: You ask “What’s the latest news about OpenAI?”
 - → The agent searches the web
 - → Finds current articles
 - → Replies with real links and summaries