

START HERE

How to prompt AI properly.

A practical guide to getting better results from AI tools.

~/GUIDES/001

Start a conversation. Make a plan.
Turn it into a clear brief.



00 / INTRODUCTION

Start with the job.

You do not need to learn a secret language to use AI well. You just need to explain what you want clearly.

Think of an AI assistant as a useful first draft, research aid or project partner. It can work quickly, but it cannot reliably guess the details you have not supplied, and it can still get things wrong.

THE BASIC IDEA

The best prompt is not necessarily the longest one. It is the shortest instruction that gives the model enough information to do the job properly.

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- 01 Build a better prompt**
A simple five-part framework.
- 02 See the difference**
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- 03 Talk your ideas through**
Real discussion and refinement.
- 04 Make a fresh-session brief**
Turn decisions into an actionable prompt.
- 05 Plan, build and check**
Good workflows and verification.
- 06 Keep a cheat sheet**
Prompts you can adapt immediately.

01 / THE FRAMEWORK

Five useful ingredients.

Treat a prompt like a short project brief. You rarely need all five, but the structure helps when a task is not obvious.

01

TASK

Say exactly what you want done.

02

CONTEXT

Give the background that changes the answer.

03

CONSTRAINTS

Set the limits: audience, length, budget or tone.

04

EXAMPLES

Show a reference when the style or format matters.

05

OUTPUT

Specify what a finished answer should look like.

USE IT AS A CHECKLIST

“Write a friendly 100-word introduction (**task**) for a new Swansea café (**context**). Use plain British English (**constraints**), match the attached sample (**example**) and give me two options (**output**).”

02 / BEFORE AND AFTER

Same task. Better brief.

More detail only helps when it is relevant. Here is what changes when you specify the result you actually need.

TOO VAGUE

“Write me a post about my business.”

MORE USEFUL

“Write a short Facebook post for my Swansea web design business. I build bespoke websites rather than relying on prebuilt themes. Use first person, British English and a conversational tone. Keep it under 90 words, avoid exaggerated sales claims and end with one clear invitation to message me.”

WHAT CHANGED?**A****Audience & message**

The model now knows who the post is for and what point it should make.

B**Tone & limits**

You have defined the length, voice and things to leave out.

03 / REAL EXAMPLES

Use cases that matter.

A good prompt describes the actual situation, rather than asking for a generic answer.

WRITING

An email you might actually send

"Help me reply to a customer asking when their order will arrive. I can confirm it ships on Friday, but I cannot promise delivery by Monday. Keep it polite, direct and under 120 words."

PLANNING

Make a task manageable

"I have two hours to prepare a basic business website for review. Break the work into a realistic checklist, prioritise what the client will see first and flag anything that should wait."

LEARNING

Ask for an explanation, not a slogan

"Explain what a DNS record does to someone setting up their first domain. Use one everyday analogy, show an A record versus a CNAME, and mention one common mistake."

TRY THIS

Replace the subject in any example with your own situation. Keep the task, limits and output format; change only the relevant context.

04 / THE CONVERSATION

Talk it through first.

You do not have to arrive with a perfect prompt. For a bigger idea, the discussion is part of the work.

Sometimes a useful result takes a lot of back-and-forth. Explore options, explain what you dislike, challenge assumptions and make decisions together before asking for a finished output.

01 EXPLORE

"I have a rough idea for a website, but I have not settled the features. Help me think it through. What should we discuss first?"

02 ASK & CHALLENGE

"What have I overlooked? What could be simpler? Ask me the questions you need answered before we plan it."

03 DECIDE

"Compare the approaches against my budget and needs. Here is what I like and what I want to avoid..."

04 SUMMARISE

"Recap the decisions we have made, the requirements and any questions we still need to answer."

THE IMPORTANT BIT

Several rounds of discussion are not wasted prompts. They help you discover what you actually want. You still make the decisions; the AI helps you explore and organise them.

05 / CLEAN HANDOFF

Turn chat into a brief.

Once you have talked an idea through, you can ask AI to write a clear prompt for a fresh session or an AI agent.

This is especially useful when a long discussion has become messy, or you want a separate session to carry out the work. The goal is to preserve decisions without dragging every exploratory message along.

ASK YOUR AI TO WRITE THIS FOR YOU

"We have discussed this project in detail. Please turn our conversation into a complete prompt for a **fresh session** to follow. Include the objective, relevant context, decisions already made, requirements, constraints, files or references needed, tasks in priority order and what a successful result looks like. **Do not invent missing details.** List anything I need to confirm before I use it."

A GOOD HANDOFF CONTAINS

01

The goal

What are we trying to achieve, and for whom?

02

Decisions

What have we agreed and what should not change?

03

Instructions

What must the new session do, and in what order?

04

Checks

How will you know the job is actually finished?

Before starting over: Read the generated prompt, correct mistakes and attach the files the new session needs. A new chat may not have the context of your old one.

06 / CONTEXT

Show the relevant pieces.

For involved tasks, the model often needs an existing draft, a file, a screenshot or an example. Do not make it invent what you already know.

DO

Relevant context

Share the goal, your constraints, examples and the exact part you need changed.

AVOID

Context dumping

Do not paste hundreds of unrelated pages when a short extract would answer the question.

A SIMPLE HANDOFF

PROJECT BRIEF / EXAMPLE

Goal: Improve the mobile navigation on my existing website.

Current issue: Menu overlaps the page title below 400px.

Relevant files: Header component and its stylesheet.

Constraints: Keep desktop layout and existing colours.

Done when: Menu opens and closes properly on phone, keyboard and desktop.

PRIVACY FIRST

Remove passwords, access tokens, private customer information and anything sensitive before sharing it with an AI tool. Check the service's data controls and your permission to upload files.

Plan. Build. Check.

When a task has several parts, separate planning from execution. This is especially useful with coding assistants and AI agents.

01

PLAN

Define the goal, dependencies, risks and acceptance criteria.

02

BUILD

Work in small steps. Keep the existing files and requirements in view.

03

TEST

Run checks, inspect the actual result and correct failures.

04

REPORT

Explain what changed, what passed and what still needs a human decision.

WHAT TO ASK AN AGENT

“Work through this in checkpoints. Do not change unrelated files. Test each completed step, keep a summary of unresolved issues and stop when the stated acceptance criteria are met.”

08 / TRUST AND VERIFY

Plausible is not proof.

AI can confidently produce incorrect dates, made-up sources, faulty code and misleading summaries. A polished answer can still be wrong.

FACTS

Check important claims against primary sources, especially prices, laws and current events.

SOURCES

Open citations yourself. Confirm the quoted source actually supports the claim.

CODE

Run it in a safe environment and test normal cases, edge cases and failure paths.

PEOPLE

Check names, personal data and allegations carefully. Do not publish unsupported claims.

A USEFUL QUESTION

“Which parts of this answer are assumptions, uncertain or dependent on up-to-date information? Tell me what I should verify independently.”

09 / TWO READY-TO-USE PROMPTS

Steal the structure.

Replace the words in square brackets. Treat these as starting points, not magic formulas.

SMALL BUSINESS / WRITING

"I run [type of business] in [location].

Write [type of content] about [topic] for [audience]. The main point is [message]. Keep it under [length] and use a [tone] style. Do not invent prices, testimonials or services. Return [format].

Before writing, ask me for any essential details that are missing."

WEBSITE / DEVELOPMENT

"I am working on [project and stack].

I need [specific change] because [current issue]. Relevant files are [files], and the result must preserve [things not to break].

First give me a short plan, then implement the smallest necessary change. Explain how to test it. Do not claim it works unless the tests have actually run."

The one-page checklist.

Keep this page handy for the next time you open ChatGPT, Claude or another AI assistant.

PROMPT FORMULA

TASK + CONTEXT
+ LIMITS + OUTPUT

BEFORE

Know the job

What result do you actually need, and what information would change it?

DURING

Refine specifically

Ask for one clear change at a time, and keep what already works.

AFTER

Verify the result

Read it, test it and check important facts before you use it.

ALWAYS

Protect your data

Remove secrets and sensitive information before sharing.

IF YOU REMEMBER ONE THING

Start with a conversation, not a magic prompt. Refine the idea, summarise the decisions, give the new session a clear brief and verify the result.

END OF GUIDE 001

Better tools. Better habits.

You do not have to know exactly what to ask at the start. Talk an idea through, make a plan, then ask AI to turn your decisions into a fresh-session brief. Check the results yourself before putting them to work.

COMING NEXT

002 **Recognising AI-generated content**

003 **Introduction to AI agents**

004 **Understanding AI harnesses**

005 **Practical AI use cases**

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