

5 Top Tips for Prompting AI

1. Let the AI write the prompt for you

If you aren't sure how to phrase your request, just describe what you want in plain English and ask:

"I want to [do X]. Can you write a high-quality prompt that will help me get the best result for this?"

It knows its own "language" better than anyone.

2. Give it a "Job Title" and a "Why"

Start your prompt by telling the AI who it is and why it's doing the task.

- ☐ **Instead of:** "Summarize this report."
- ☐ **Try:** "You are expert Policy Analyst. Summarize this report for a member of a voluntary community group, focusing specifically on the local water impacts."

3. Provide "Context"

The AI doesn't know what's in your head. Give it the "Bones" of the project. Mention the target audience, the desired tone (e.g., "concise and provocative"), and any specific constraints (e.g., "keep it under 200 words").

4. Iterate: Treat it like a "Junior Assistant"

Don't expect a perfect result on the first try. If it's too long, say:

"Make it 50% shorter."

If it's too formal, say:

"Rewrite this to sound more like a Slack message."

Polishing the output through conversation is where the best results happen.

5. Add "Friction" for better thinking

To get deeper insights, ask the AI to challenge you. Try adding:

"What am I missing here?"

or

"Play devil's advocate and find the three biggest flaws in this proposal."

This moves the AI from "autopilot" to "sparring partner."

A Quick Reminder

- **Human Review:** You are the author. Always check for "hallucinations" (made-up facts).
- **Data Security:** Don't put sensitive or personal data into the chat.
- **Authentic Voice:** AI helps with the *drafting*, but the *voice* must be yours.

A prompt template that works for almost anything

Copy/paste and fill brackets:

role (optional): You are a [role].

goal: Do [task].

context: Here's what this is for: [why / audience / constraints].

inputs:

☐ data: [paste]

rules:

☐ include: [must-haves]

☐ avoid: [must-nots]

☐ assumptions: if needed, state them explicitly

☐ questions: if critical info is missing, ask up to [N] questions first

output:

☐ format: [bullets/table/JSON]

☐ length: [e.g., ≤200 words]

Taking it further: 3 prompting approaches that make a difference

1) “draft → critique → revise”

“Write a first draft. Then critique it against these criteria. Then produce a revised version.”

Great for writing, strategies, facilitation plans, etc. Easier than trying to create the perfect prompt.

2) “decompose then execute”

“For this task: list the sub-tasks, then do them in order. Keep each section separate.”

Often good for complex requests.

3) “options with trade-offs”

“Give me 3 approaches, each with: when to use, risks, and the smallest first step.”

This is a reliable way to avoid simple answers and keep yourself in the decision-making loop.