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Free guide · 7 min read

AI for students: study smarter, honestly

Twelve prompts that make AI your tutor instead of your ghostwriter: revision plans, explanations that finally click, practice questions and honest feedback on your own work.

The line between help and cheating

Handing in work that AI wrote as your own is cheating almost everywhere, and tutors are good at spotting it. Using AI to understand, practise and improve your own work is usually fine. But every school, college and university sets its own rules.

- Check your course's AI policy first. If it's unclear, ask your tutor. They'd rather be asked.
- If you used AI, say so when your course asks you to.
- Never copy AI text into an assignment. Use it to learn, then write in your own words.
- AI invents facts, quotes and references that look real. Check everything against your course materials.

Understand it

PROMPT 1

Explain it until it clicks

You've read the page three times and it still means nothing.

> Explain **[topic]** to me. I'm studying **[subject]** at **[level, e.g. GCSE / A level / first-year university]**. First explain it simply with an everyday example, then give the proper version using the terms I'll need in the exam. Finish by asking me two questions to check I've understood.

Tip: Reply "simpler" or "give me a different example" as many times as you need. It never gets impatient.

PROMPT 2

Find the gap in your understanding

You think you get it. This is how you find out.

I'm going to explain **[topic]** in my own words. Tell me what I've got right, what I've got wrong, and what I've missed, without just giving me the full answer. Here's my explanation: **[write it out]**.

PROMPT 3

Connect the ideas

You know the topics one by one, but not how they fit together.

I'm studying **[subject]** and these are the topics we've covered: **[list]**. Show me how they connect: which ideas build on which, and the two or three big themes that link them. Lay it out as an outline I could turn into a mind map.

Plan it

PROMPT 4

Build a revision timetable you'll stick to

Exams are coming and you don't know where to start.

Make me a revision timetable. My exams are: **[subject and date for each]**. I can study **[hours]** on weekdays and **[hours]** at weekends, and I can't do **[times you're busy]**. My weakest topics are **[list]**. Use short sessions with breaks, come back to each topic more than once, mix subjects, and keep one free evening a week. Show it as a week-by-week table.

Tip: Be honest about your time. A plan you follow beats a perfect one you don't.

PROMPT 5

Break a big assignment into steps

A 3,000-word deadline feels impossible.

I have a **[type of assignment]** of **[length]** on **[topic]**, due on **[date]**. Today is **[date]**. Break it into small steps with a deadline for each, from understanding the question to proofreading. Tell me what "done" looks like for each step.

Practise it

PROMPT 6

Quiz me

The best way to revise is to be tested. This beats re-reading your notes.

Quiz me on **[topic]** for **[exam/level]**. Ask one question at a time and wait for my answer. Start easy and get harder. If I'm wrong, explain why and ask a similar question later. After ten questions, tell me which areas to revise.

PROMPT 7

Make flashcards from your notes

You have notes, and need something to test yourself with on the bus.

Turn these notes into 20 flashcards, each with a question on the front and a short answer on the back. Cover definitions, causes and effects, and anything I'd need to apply. Here are my notes: **[paste your own notes]**.

PROMPT 8

Practise exam-style questions

You know the content. Now you need exam technique.

Write three exam-style questions on **[topic]** in the style of **[exam board or course, and level]**. After I answer each one, mark it out of **[marks]**, show me what a top answer includes, and tell me exactly where I lost marks.

Tip: Check the mark scheme style against real past papers from your exam board.

Improve your own work

PROMPT 9

Get feedback on a draft

You've written it yourself and want to make it better.

Here's a draft I wrote for this question: **[the question]**. Don't rewrite it. Give me feedback as a tutor would: does it answer the question, is the argument clear, where is the evidence thin, and which paragraphs are confusing? Then tell me the three changes that would improve it most. My draft: **[paste it]**.

Tip: Ask for feedback, not a rewrite. The work stays yours and you learn more.

PROMPT 10

Plan an essay argument

You have the question and a head full of half-ideas.

My essay question is: **[question]**. My rough ideas so far: **[your ideas]**. Ask me questions to sharpen my argument, then help me arrange my own points into a plan: introduction, three or four main points with the evidence I'd need for each, and a conclusion. Don't write the essay.

PROMPT 11

Check your referencing

You've got the sources, and the formatting is a headache.

Format these sources in **[referencing style, e.g. Harvard]**: **[paste the details: author, title, year, publisher or web address]**. Only use the details I've given. If anything needed is missing, tell me what to look up. Don't fill it in.

Look after yourself

PROMPT 12

When it's all too much

You're behind, stressed and don't know what to do first.

I'm feeling overwhelmed. Here's everything I have to do: **[list it all, with deadlines]**. Help me work out what matters most this week, what can wait, and what I should ask for help or an extension on. Then give me one small thing to do in the next 20 minutes.

TALK TO A PERSON, TOO

If stress is getting on top of you, tell a tutor or your student support service. They hear it all the time, and they can do things an AI can't, like giving you more time.

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