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Cheat sheet · 3 min read

The one-page AI prompt cheat sheet

Keep it by your screen. A simple recipe for asking, ten replies that make any answer better, and ten starters for everyday jobs. Works in ChatGPT, Claude, Gemini and Copilot.

The recipe: five parts of a good prompt

A prompt is just the message you type. You don't need special words. You need to tell it the five things you'd tell a new colleague.

PART	WHAT TO SAY	EXAMPLE
Who	Who you are, or who it should be	"I run a small dog-grooming business."
What	The job, in one plain sentence	"Write a reminder text for customers who are due a visit."
Why and who for	What it's for and who will read it	"It's for regulars. I want them to book, and not feel nagged."
Details	The facts it can't guess	"We're open Tuesday to Saturday. Booking is by text to this number."
Shape	Length, tone and layout	"Friendly, under 40 words, two versions."

PROMPT 1

The recipe, ready to fill in

Copy this, fill in the brackets, and delete any line you don't need.

I'm **[who you are]**.
I need **[the job, in one sentence]**.
It's for **[who will read or use it]**, and the aim is **[what you want to happen]**.
Things you should know: **[facts, names, dates, rules]**.
Make it **[length]**, in a **[tone]** tone, as **[a list / an email / a table / steps]**.

Tip: You don't need all five every time. Who, What and Shape get you most of the way.

Ten replies that improve any answer

The first answer is a draft. Reply to it. Each of these is a whole message you can send.

WHEN THE ANSWER IS…	REPLY WITH
Too long	"Cut this in half. Keep the most useful parts."
Too formal	"Make it sound like a friendly person wrote it."
Too vague	"Be specific. Give real examples."
Not quite right	"Closer. Change [this part], keep the rest."
Not like you	"Rewrite it in my style. Here's how I write: [paste a few lines]."
Hard to follow	"Explain it as if I'm new to this."
Possibly wrong	"How sure are you? What should I double-check?"
One-sided	"What's the argument against this?"
Unfinished	"What have I missed?"
Good	"Great. Now turn it into [an email / a checklist / a text message]."

Ten starters for everyday jobs

- **Write:** "Draft a reply to this message. I want to say yes, but not until next week: [paste it]."
- **Shorten:** "Sum this up in five bullet points for someone in a hurry: [paste it]."
- **Explain:** "Explain [a topic] in plain English, with one everyday example."
- **Plan:** "Make me a step-by-step plan to [the goal] by [the date]. I have [time] a week."
- **Decide:** "I'm choosing between [A] and [B]. Ask me five questions, then tell me which fits."
- **Check:** "Read this as a critical customer would. What's unclear or missing? [paste it]"
- **Tidy:** "Turn these rough notes into a clear list of actions with owners: [paste them]."
- **Practise:** "Be the interviewer for a [job] role. Ask me one question at a time and give feedback."
- **Compare:** "Put [these options] in a table: cost, time, and who each one suits."
- **Learn:** "Teach me [a skill] in ten minutes. Start by asking what I already know."

PROMPT 2

The one to use when you don't know what to ask

You have a problem, and no idea how to put it.

I want help with **[the problem, in your own words]**. Before you answer, ask me up to five questions, one at a time, so you understand my situation.

Three rules to keep you safe

1. **Nothing private goes in.** No passwords, bank details, or other people's personal information. Swap names for "Customer A".
2. **Check what matters.** AI can be confidently wrong. Check names, numbers, dates, quotes and anything legal, medical or about money.
3. **You're the editor.** Read it before you send it. It goes out under your name, not the AI's.

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