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Checklist · 60 min to do

Your first hour with AI

Not techy? Good. This checklist takes you from "I've never tried it" to one real job done, in about an hour, with nothing to install.

Before you start

You don't need to understand how AI works to use it, any more than you need to understand an engine to drive. You need a browser, an email address and one small job you'd like help with.

- A phone, tablet or computer with a web browser
- An email address, to make a free account
- One real job from your week. Something small: a tricky email, a meal plan, a list you keep putting off

WHAT AI IS, IN ONE LINE

An AI chat tool is a program you type to in normal sentences. It writes back. It's very good with words and ideas, and it sometimes gets facts wrong, so you stay in charge.

Minutes 0 to 10: pick one tool and open it

You only need one. They all work in a similar way, and each has a free version.

TOOL	WHERE TO FIND IT	GOOD TO KNOW
ChatGPT	chatgpt.com	The best known. Made by OpenAI
Claude	claude.ai	Known for clear, careful writing. Made by Anthropic
Gemini	gemini.google.com	Made by Google. Handy if you use Gmail and Google Docs

TOOL	WHERE TO FIND IT	GOOD TO KNOW
Copilot	copilot.microsoft.com	Made by Microsoft. Handy if you use Word and Outlook

1. Open one of the websites above. Type the address yourself, so you land on the real one.
2. Make a free account with your email address.
3. Find the box at the bottom of the page. That's where you type. That's the whole tool.

Minutes 10 to 20: say hello and ask for one thing

Type to it the way you'd text a helpful friend. You can't break it, and nobody is marking you.

PROMPT 1

Your very first message

To see how it talks, and that nothing scary happens.

> I'm new to AI and a bit nervous about it. In five short bullet points, tell me what you're good at helping with and what I shouldn't trust you with.

Tip: Read the answer, then type "shorter" or "explain that more simply". Changing the answer is the main skill.

PROMPT 2

Ask about something you know well

To learn how far to trust it. You'll spot what it gets right and wrong.

> Tell me the five most important things a beginner should know about **[a subject you know well]**. Keep each one to two sentences.

Tip: Pick a subject where you're the expert: your job, your town, your hobby.

IT CAN SOUND SURE AND STILL BE WRONG

AI tools write what sounds likely, and that isn't always what's true. Names, numbers, dates, quotes and anything legal, medical or about money need checking somewhere you trust.

Minutes 20 to 40: give it a real job

The trick that changes everything: tell it who it's helping, what you want, and what a good answer looks like. Three sentences is enough.

PROMPT 3

The three-sentence prompt

For any job. This is the pattern to remember.

I'm **[who you are, e.g. a café owner / a parent of two / a new team leader]**.
I need **[what you want, e.g. a polite reply to a customer who wants a refund after 40 days]**.
Make it **[how you want it, e.g. friendly, under 100 words, and firm about our 30-day rule]**.

Tip: The more it knows about your situation, the less generic the answer.

PROMPT 4

Write the email you've been avoiding

You know what you need to say, but not how to say it.

Help me write an email to **[who it's to]**. The situation is: **[what happened, in a sentence or two]**. I want them to **[what you want to happen next]**. Keep it polite, clear and under 120 words. Give me two versions: one warmer, one more direct.

PROMPT 5

Turn a mess into a plan

Your head is full and you don't know where to start.

Here's everything on my mind for this week: **[type your list, in any order]**. Sort it into: do today, do this week, can wait, and not really my job. Then tell me the first small step for each "do today" item.

Tip: Type the list exactly as it is in your head. Messy is fine.

Minutes 40 to 50: improve the answer

The first answer is a first draft. Reply to it, the way you'd give notes to a colleague. These five replies work on almost anything.

- ✓ "Make it shorter."
- ✓ "Make it sound more like me. Here's something I wrote: [paste a few lines]."
- ✓ "Give me three other ways to say that."

- "What have I forgotten?"
- "Explain that as if I'm 12."

PROMPT 6

Get it to ask you questions first

You're not sure what to tell it. This often gives the best results of all.

I want help with **[the job]**. Before you answer, ask me up to five questions, one at a time, so you understand my situation. Then give me your best answer.

Minutes 50 to 60: stay safe and save what worked

- ✗ Don't paste passwords, bank or card details, or your National Insurance number
- ✗ Don't paste other people's private details: customers, patients, pupils, staff
- ✗ Don't paste anything your employer has told you to keep inside the company

- Do take names out, or swap them for "Customer A", before you paste
- Do check your employer's rules on which AI tools you may use for work
- Do check facts, figures and quotes before you rely on them

1. Copy the prompt that worked best into your notes, so you can use it again next week.
2. Write down one more job you'll try it on tomorrow.
3. That's it. You've used AI for something real, which puts you ahead of most people who only read about it.

Make it fit your own job

These prompts are a start. Tell doingit.today a job you do every week, and we'll map it in plain steps, mark the ones AI could help with, and teach you each one in a short lesson.

Free to start. No tech background needed.

Start free at doingit.today

What to try next

- Print the one-page prompt cheat sheet and keep it by your screen.

- [x] Read what never to paste into AI before you use it for work.
- [x] Stuck on a word? The plain-English AI glossary has it.

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