



NO. 03 CHATGPT EDITION

The ChatGPT Prompting Playbook

How to ask better questions and get better results — six ingredients for a great prompt, the follow-ups that fix weak answers, and ready-to-use prompts for everyday tasks.

SIX INGREDIENTS FOR BETTER ANSWERS

You won't need all six every time



INSIDE THIS PLAYBOOK

- | | | | |
|---|------|--|------|
| 01 Getting better results | p. 2 | 02 The anatomy of a good prompt | p. 3 |
| 03 Small changes, better answers | p. 4 | 04 Follow-ups & five techniques | p. 5 |
| 05 Ready-to-use prompts | p. 7 | 06 Mistakes & quick-reference sheet | p. 8 |

SECTION 01 GETTING BETTER RESULTS FROM CHATGPT

It's not just what you ask. **It's how you ask.**

Have you ever asked ChatGPT a question and received an answer that wasn't quite what you wanted? Maybe it was too generic, too complicated, or completely missed the point. That's pretty common, especially when you're getting started.

The thing to understand about ChatGPT is that it doesn't automatically know what you're thinking. It doesn't know your goals, your experience, or what you consider a good answer unless you tell it.

THINK OF IT THIS WAY

"Make me a flyer."

Ask a person this and they'll have a dozen questions.

What's the flyer for?

Who's going to read it?

What should it say?

Serious or fun?

ChatGPT works much the same way. The clearer your instructions, the better chance you'll have of getting something useful. Those instructions are called **prompts**.

A prompt can be a question, an instruction, a description, or even a conversation. You don't need complicated commands or special terminology to write a good one. You just need to give ChatGPT enough information to understand what you're trying to accomplish.

WHAT YOU'LL LEARN IN THIS PLAYBOOK

- ✓ How to create better prompts
- ✓ How to improve disappointing answers
- ✓ How to turn ChatGPT into a more helpful everyday tool
- ✓ How to provide useful context
- ✓ How to avoid common mistakes

SECTION 02 THE ANATOMY OF A GOOD PROMPT

Six ingredients for better answers

You don't need all six ingredients in every prompt. Sometimes a simple question is enough. But when you want something specific, these details can make a big difference.

1 Task

What do you want ChatGPT to do?

Be specific about the assignment. Are you looking for an explanation, an email, a plan, a comparison, or ideas?

2 Context

What does it need to know?

Provide relevant background. Explain your situation, the problem you're trying to solve, and anything you've already tried.

3 Audience

Who is this for?

An explanation for a beginner differs from one for an experienced professional. The same goes for customers, coworkers, or friends.

4 Tone

How should it sound?

Friendly, professional, humorous, conversational, educational, or straightforward? Tell ChatGPT what feels appropriate.

5 Format

How do you want the answer?

Would a short paragraph work best? A step-by-step guide? A comparison table? A checklist?

6 Constraints

What are the boundaries?

Mention word counts, budgets, deadlines, things to include, things to avoid, or other important requirements.

A SIMPLE PROMPT FORMULA

Copy it, fill in the brackets

Help me [TASK].
Here's my situation: [CONTEXT].
This is intended for [AUDIENCE].
Use a [TONE] style and present it as [FORMAT].
Be sure to [REQUIREMENTS OR LIMITATIONS].

REMEMBER

Good prompting isn't about making your instructions longer. It's about making them **clearer**.

SECTION 03 SMALL CHANGES, BETTER ANSWERS

See the difference a better prompt makes

Sometimes adding just a few details can dramatically improve the usefulness of a response.

01 WRITING

BASIC "Write an email to my customers."

BETTER "Write a friendly email to customers who haven't purchased from my business in six months. Let them know we have new services available and invite them to visit our website. Keep it under 150 words and avoid pushy sales language."

02 LEARNING

BASIC "Explain SEO."

BETTER "Explain search engine optimization to someone who owns a small business but has no technical experience. Use everyday examples, explain why it matters, and suggest three simple things I can do to improve my website."

03 PROBLEM-SOLVING

BASIC "My computer is slow. How do I fix it?"

BETTER "My Windows 11 laptop has become noticeably slower over the last two weeks, especially when opening programs. I have already restarted it and checked for updates. Walk me through the most likely causes and help me troubleshoot one step at a time."

04 BRAINSTORMING

BASIC "Give me business ideas."

BETTER "Suggest 10 small business ideas I could start from home with less than \$500. I have experience in customer service and basic computer skills. Focus on ideas I could test part-time before investing more money."

Try it yourself



Choose a question you've asked ChatGPT that produced a disappointing answer. Rewrite it using the six ingredients, then compare the two answers. Which one gives you something you can actually use?

SECTION 04 THE CONVERSATION IS WHERE THE MAGIC HAPPENS

Your first answer doesn't have to be your final answer

One of the biggest mistakes new ChatGPT users make is treating it like a traditional search engine. They ask a question, receive an answer, and stop. But ChatGPT can continue the conversation. You can tell it what you liked, what you didn't like, and what needs to change.

Say you've asked for an article. The information is good, but the writing sounds stiff. You don't need a whole new prompt. Just reply:

That's a little too formal. Make it sound more like a conversation between two friends.

TEN FOLLOW-UP PROMPTS WORTH REMEMBERING

- 1 Explain that in simpler terms.
- 2 Give me a real-world example.
- 3 Make this more specific to my situation.
- 4 Shorten this without losing the important points.
- 5 Expand on the third idea.
- 6 Give me three different approaches.
- 7 Make the tone more natural and conversational.
- 8 What important details am I missing?
- 9 Challenge this idea. What could go wrong?
- 10 Review your answer for mistakes or unsupported claims.

ANOTHER USEFUL TRICK

If ChatGPT seems to misunderstand what you're asking, have it ask *you* questions first.

Before you answer, ask me any important questions that would help you provide a more useful recommendation. Ask them one at a time.

The goal is to develop the answer through conversation, rather than expecting perfection on the first try.

SECTION 05 FIVE PROMPTING TECHNIQUES THAT WORK

Go beyond simple questions

Once you're comfortable giving ChatGPT clear instructions, you can use these techniques to get more targeted responses.

1 Give it a role

Tell ChatGPT what perspective would be useful.

`"Act as an experienced customer service trainer. Help me improve the following response to an unhappy customer."`

A useful point of view — it doesn't make ChatGPT a certified professional or guarantee expert accuracy.

2 Provide an example

Show ChatGPT a sample of the result you're looking for.

`"Here's an example of my writing. Study the tone and sentence structure, then rewrite my new article in a similar style without copying the original."`

Especially helpful for writing, formatting, and creative projects.

3 Ask it to compare options

Instead of asking which is best, explain what matters to you.

`"Compare these three options based on price, ease of use, ongoing costs, and reliability. Show the results in a table and recommend the best fit for my needs."`

4 Ask it to challenge you

ChatGPT can sometimes be too agreeable. Invite criticism.

`"Don't automatically agree with my idea. Identify weak points, hidden costs, risks, and assumptions that might be incorrect. Suggest how to improve it."`

5 Work in stages

For larger projects, don't ask for everything at once.

`"Help me develop a plan for this project. Start with an outline. Once we agree on the direction, we'll work through each section individually."`

This gives you more control over the final result and makes corrections easier along the way.

SECTION 06 READY-TO-USE PROMPTS FOR EVERYDAY TASKS

Copy, customize, and try these

[LIKE THIS] = your details

Learn a New Skill

Teach me the basics of **[TOPIC]**. Assume I'm a beginner. Explain the most important concepts using simple examples. Then create a seven-day learning plan with one small exercise each day.

Improve Your Writing

Review the following text for clarity, grammar, and readability. Make it more natural and engaging while preserving my original meaning and personality. Explain your most important changes.

[PASTE TEXT]

Make a Difficult Decision

Help me decide between **[OPTION A]** and **[OPTION B]**. My priorities are **[PRIORITIES]**, and my biggest concerns are **[CONCERNS]**. Compare the advantages, disadvantages, costs, and risks. Recommend an option and explain why.

Solve a Problem

I'm having trouble with **[PROBLEM]**. Here's what is happening: **[DETAILS]**. I've already tried **[STEPS]**. Help me identify the most likely causes and guide me through troubleshooting one step at a time.

Brainstorm Ideas

Give me 10 creative but practical ideas for **[GOAL]**. My available budget is **[BUDGET]**, and my limitations are **[CONSTRAINTS]**. Avoid generic suggestions. Explain the three ideas you believe have the most potential.

Create a Practical Plan

Help me accomplish **[GOAL]** within **[TIMEFRAME]**. My starting point is **[CURRENT SITUATION]**. Create a realistic action plan with clear priorities, milestones, and specific steps I can begin today.

BONUS TIP

Don't know how to write a prompt? Ask ChatGPT to help.

I want to accomplish **[GOAL]**. Help me write a clear, effective prompt for this task. Ask me questions if you need more information.

SECTION 07 COMMON MISTAKES AND HOW TO AVOID THEM

ChatGPT is helpful, but it isn't perfect

As useful as ChatGPT can be, it can make mistakes. Sometimes it misunderstands your request. Sometimes it gives outdated information. And sometimes it generates an answer that sounds completely confident but turns out to be wrong. That's one reason clear prompts and follow-up questions are so important.

FIVE MISTAKES TO WATCH FOR

- 1 Being too vague.** A short question may leave out the information ChatGPT needs to give you a useful answer. Add context and explain your goals.
- 2 Assuming every answer is correct.** ChatGPT can make up facts, citations, statistics, or other details. Verify important information with reliable sources.
- 3 Asking for too much at once.** Complex projects get confusing when too many instructions are packed into one prompt. Break larger tasks into smaller stages.
- 4 Accepting the first answer.** Treat the initial response as a starting point. Ask for improvements, corrections, or alternate approaches.
- 5 Sharing information you should keep private.** Be careful with passwords, private customer information, financial records, and confidential business details.

PROMPTS THAT ENCOURAGE MORE RELIABLE ANSWERS

"Identify any assumptions you're making and explain what information is missing."

"Separate verified facts from estimates or opinions."

"Use current, reliable sources and provide links so I can verify the information."

"If you don't know something, say so rather than guessing."



Asking ChatGPT to check its own work is useful, but an AI reviewing its own answer can still miss errors. For health, legal, financial, or other important decisions, use ChatGPT to understand the subject and prepare better questions — not as a substitute for qualified professional advice.

QUICK REFERENCE YOUR CHATGPT CHEAT SHEET

Better prompts start here

THE PROMPT FORMULA

I want you to **[TASK]**.
Here's the background: **[CONTEXT]**.
This is for **[AUDIENCE]**.
Use a **[TONE]** style.
Present the result as **[FORMAT]**.
Be sure to **[REQUIREMENTS]**.

FIVE QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF

- ☐ Have I clearly explained what I want?
- ☐ Have I provided enough background?
- ☐ Does ChatGPT know who the result is for?
- ☐ Have I described what a good answer looks like?
- ☐ Have I explained any important limitations?

FIVE FOLLOW-UPS THAT IMPROVE ALMOST ANYTHING

- 1 "Make this more specific."
- 2 "Explain it with an example."
- 3 "Give me a different approach."
- 4 "What am I overlooking?"
- 5 "Check your answer for errors."

The ultimate prompt improvement trick

"Help me turn the following request into a better ChatGPT prompt. Make it clear, specific, and practical. Identify missing details that would improve the result."

Then paste your original request and let ChatGPT help you improve it.

Put what you've learned to work

You don't have to become a prompting expert overnight. Start with something small — ask ChatGPT to explain a subject, improve an email, organize an idea, or help solve an everyday problem. Then try improving the answer with a follow-up. The more you practice explaining what you want, the more useful ChatGPT becomes.

**Frank Deardurff**

SENIOR WEB DEVELOPER & CONSULTANT •
THAT ONE WEB GUY

Nearly 30 years building, fixing and maintaining websites for small businesses in the Terre Haute area.

Questions about this report?

(812) 208-3259

frank@thatonewebguy.com