

AI Prompting Starter Kit

A practical guide to writing better prompts --
from fundamentals to ready-to-use business templates.

Prompt Engineering

Business Templates

GPT-4o / Claude

4

Core
Techniques

30+

Ready-to-Use
Templates

8

Business
Domains

Contents

01

The case for structured prompting in business

02

Role | Context | Task | Format | Constraints

03

Zero-shot, Few-shot, Chain-of-Thought, Role-based

04

30+ templates across 8 domains

05

Iterative refinement, prompt chaining, output control

06

What to avoid and how to fix it

07

GPT-4o vs Claude vs Gemini -- when to use what

01 Why Prompting Matters

The single biggest lever on AI output quality is the quality of your input.

Modern large language models are extraordinarily capable -- but they don't read minds. The same model that produces a vague, unhelpful response to a poorly worded question can produce publication-ready content, precise analysis, or working code when given a well-structured prompt. The difference is prompting skill.

This isn't about tricking the AI. It's about communicating clearly -- the same skill that makes you effective with people makes you effective with AI. The techniques in this guide apply equally to GPT-4o, Claude, Gemini, and any other frontier model.

[SPEED]

Speed

Reduce back-and-forth. A well-structured prompt gets the right answer on the first try.

[QUALITY]

Quality

Specificity drives quality. Vague prompts produce average outputs; precise prompts produce exceptional ones.

[CONSISTENCY]

Consistency

Repeatable prompt templates give consistent results across your team, every time.

>> Rule of thumb: if you wouldn't give the same instruction to a new employee on their first day and expect a good result, don't give it to the AI. Provide context, examples, and a clear goal.

02 Anatomy of a Good Prompt

Every high-performing prompt shares the same five ingredients.

R**Role**

Tell the AI who it is. 'You are a senior financial analyst' activates relevant knowledge and tone.

C**Context**

Give background. Industry, audience, existing constraints, what's already been tried.

T**Task**

State the specific action clearly. Use action verbs: write, analyze, summarize, compare, extract.

F**Format**

Specify the output shape. Bullet list, table, paragraph, JSON, numbered steps, executive summary.

C**Constraints**

Set boundaries. Word count, reading level, tone (formal/casual), what NOT to include.

FULL PROMPT (ROLE + CONTEXT + TASK + FORMAT + CONSTRAINTS)

You are a senior HR business partner specialising in performance management. [ROLE]

Our company of 200 employees is moving from annual reviews to quarterly check-ins. Managers have mixed levels of experience with structured feedback. [CONTEXT]

Write a one-page manager guide explaining how to run an effective 30-minute quarterly check-in conversation. [TASK]

Format as: a brief intro paragraph, then 5 numbered steps, each with a 2-sentence explanation and one example question. [FORMAT]

Tone: practical and direct. Avoid jargon. Maximum 400 words. [CONSTRAINTS]

03 Core Techniques

Four techniques that cover 90% of business use cases.

01

WHEN TO USE

When you need a quick answer and the task is clear.

Ask the model to complete a task with no examples. Works well for well-defined tasks with frontier models.

EXAMPLE

Summarize the following customer support ticket in one sentence, focusing on the core issue:

"I ordered a laptop stand three weeks ago and still haven't received a shipping confirmation. I've emailed twice with no response. Order #48291."

02

WHEN TO USE

When you want a specific format, style, or output pattern.

Provide 2-3 examples of input/output pairs before your actual request. The model learns your pattern.

EXAMPLE

Classify the following customer feedback as: Positive, Neutral, or Negative.

Feedback: "The onboarding was smooth but the dashboard is confusing."
Classification: Neutral

Feedback: "Best decision we ever made -- the team loves it."
Classification: Positive

Feedback: "Response times have been really slow lately."
Classification:

03

WHEN TO USE

For complex reasoning: analysis, decisions, multi-step problems.

Add "Think step by step" or "Walk me through your reasoning" to force the model to reason before answering. Dramatically improves accuracy on complex tasks.

EXAMPLE

We have three vendor proposals for a new CRM: Vendor A costs \$80k/yr with 3-week implementation, Vendor B costs \$55k/yr with 8-week implementation, Vendor C costs \$70k/yr with 5-week implementation. Our team of 4 will lose ~20% productivity during implementation. Each person costs the business \$90k/yr.

Think step by step: calculate the true total first-year cost of each option, then recommend the best choice.

WHEN TO USE

When you need domain expertise, a specific perspective, or a particular voice.

Assign the AI a specific role or persona. This activates relevant vocabulary, framing, and level of detail.

EXAMPLE

You are a CFO presenting to a board of directors who are skeptical about AI investment. Rewrite the following paragraph to address their likely concerns about ROI and implementation risk, without being defensive:

"We want to implement AI in our accounts payable process to reduce manual data entry and speed up invoice processing."

04 Business Prompt Templates

Copy, adapt, and use. Replace [BRACKETED] text with your specifics.

MKT

Marketing & Content

BLOG POST BRIEF

You are a B2B content strategist. Write a 600-word blog post outline for the title "[TITLE]" targeting [AUDIENCE]. Include: a hook introduction, 4 main sections with 2-3 bullet points each, and a call-to-action. Tone: [TONE]. Avoid jargon.

EMAIL SUBJECT LINES

Generate 10 subject line variations for an email promoting [PRODUCT/OFFER] to [AUDIENCE]. Mix approaches: curiosity, urgency, benefit-led, and question-based. Keep each under 50 characters.

SOCIAL MEDIA POSTS

Write 5 LinkedIn posts about [TOPIC] for [COMPANY TYPE]. Each post should: start with a hook, share one specific insight, and end with a question to drive engagement. 150-200 words each.

HR

HR & People

JOB DESCRIPTION

Write a job description for a [ROLE] at a [COMPANY SIZE] [INDUSTRY] company. Include: role summary (2 sentences), 5 key responsibilities, 4 must-have requirements, 3 nice-to-have skills, and a brief company culture paragraph. Tone: professional but human.

PERFORMANCE REVIEW

You are an HR business partner. Draft a balanced performance review for an employee who [DESCRIBE PERFORMANCE: strengths and areas to improve]. Include specific examples where noted: [EXAMPLES]. Format: 3 paragraphs -- achievements, development areas, goals for next period.

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Create 8 structured interview questions for a [ROLE] position, focused on [KEY COMPETENCIES]. For each question include: the question, what good answers look like (2 sentences), and one follow-up probe. Format as a table.

FIN

Finance & Analysis

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Summarize the following financial data in a crisp executive summary for the [LEADERSHIP/BOARD]. Highlight: key performance vs. target, 2 positive trends, 2 areas of concern, and one recommended action. Maximum 200 words. Data: [PASTE DATA]

BUSINESS CASE

Write a one-page business case for investing in [INITIATIVE]. Structure: problem statement (2 sentences), proposed solution, expected benefits (quantified where possible), estimated costs, risks and mitigations, recommendation. Audience: CFO.

SOP DRAFT

Write a Standard Operating Procedure for [PROCESS NAME]. Include: purpose, scope, roles and responsibilities, step-by-step procedure (numbered), common errors and how to avoid them, and a review schedule. Format for a non-technical audience.

MEETING AGENDA

Create a 60-minute meeting agenda for a [MEETING TYPE] with [ATTENDEES]. Goal of the meeting: [GOAL]. Include: time allocations for each item, the decision or outcome needed from each section, and a parking lot section for off-topic items.

PROCESS IMPROVEMENT

Analyze the following process and suggest 5 specific improvements that would reduce time, cost, or error rate. For each suggestion: describe the change, estimated impact (Low/Medium/High), and implementation difficulty. Process: [DESCRIBE PROCESS]

CS

Customer Success

COMPLAINT RESPONSE

You are a senior customer success manager. Write a response to this customer complaint that: acknowledges the issue without being defensive, takes responsibility where appropriate, explains what happened (if known), states the resolution, and offers a goodwill gesture. Complaint: [PASTE COMPLAINT]

RENEWAL PITCH

Write a renewal email for a customer who has been with us for [TIME PERIOD] and uses [FEATURES]. Their main use case is [USE CASE]. Highlight value delivered, new features since they joined, and make a forward-looking case for renewal. Tone: warm, not pushy. 200 words max.

DATA

Data & Reporting

DATA INTERPRETATION

Interpret the following dataset and provide: 3 key insights, 1 surprising or counterintuitive finding, 2 recommended actions based on the data, and 2 questions this data raises that we should investigate further. Dataset: [PASTE DATA OR DESCRIPTION]

DASHBOARD NARRATIVE

Write a 150-word narrative to accompany a [DEPARTMENT] dashboard for [AUDIENCE]. The key metrics to highlight are: [METRICS]. Month compared to: [COMPARISON PERIOD]. Tone: objective and action-oriented.

05 Advanced Patterns

Techniques for when basic prompting isn't enough.

Iterative Refinement

Treat prompting as a conversation. Get a first draft, then ask for specific changes rather than starting over.

- > "Make it 30% shorter without losing the key message."
- > "Rewrite the second paragraph to be more data-driven."
- > "Now write a version for a non-technical audience."
- > "What's missing from this analysis? What should I also consider?"

Prompt Chaining

Break complex tasks into a sequence of smaller prompts, feeding the output of one into the next.

- > Step 1: Extract key data points from a document.
- > Step 2: Analyse trends in those data points.
- > Step 3: Generate recommendations based on the analysis.
- > Step 4: Write an executive summary of the recommendations.

Output Format Control

Be explicit about structure. The model will follow precise formatting instructions reliably.

- > "Return as a JSON array with keys: title, priority, owner, deadline."
- > "Format as a markdown table with columns: Issue | Severity | Fix."
- > "Write in exactly 3 paragraphs. No bullet points."
- > "Use headers H2 and H3 only. Include a TL;DR at the top."

Self-Critique Prompting

Ask the model to critique its own output before you review it. Dramatically improves quality.

- > "Now review what you wrote. What are its three weakest points?"
- > "Rate this output on clarity, accuracy, and usefulness (1-10 each). Explain."
- > "What assumptions did you make that I should verify?"
- > "Rewrite, fixing the weaknesses you identified."

06 Common Mistakes

What to avoid -- and how to fix it.

TOO VAGUE

AVOID

"Write me a marketing email."

DO THIS INSTEAD

"Write a 200-word promotional email for [PRODUCT] targeting [AUDIENCE]. Tone: friendly and urgent. CTA: Book a demo. Subject line options: 3."

NO SPECIFICITY

AVOID

"Make it better."

DO THIS INSTEAD

"The second paragraph is too formal. Rewrite it in a conversational tone, cut it to 3 sentences, and add a specific data point about [METRIC]."

OVERLOADED PROMPT

AVOID

Asking for 5 different things in one prompt.

DO THIS INSTEAD

Break it into a chain: first extract, then analyse, then recommend. One clear goal per prompt.

NO ITERATION

AVOID

Accepting the first output without refinement.

DO THIS INSTEAD

Treat it as a first draft. Ask: 'What's weak about this?' then iterate.

UNDEFINED TONE

AVOID

"Write this professionally." (no example of what professional means)

DO THIS INSTEAD

"Match the tone of this example: [PASTE EXAMPLE]. Write in that style."

07 Model Cheat Sheet

Different models have different strengths. Use the right tool.

GPT-4o by OpenAI

- Complex reasoning & analysis
- Code generation & debugging
- Structured data extraction (JSON)
- Long document processing
- Multimodal tasks (image + text)

>> Most versatile. Excellent at following complex, multi-part instructions. Default choice for most business tasks.

Claude 3.5 Sonnet by Anthropic

- Long-form writing & editing
- Nuanced tone matching
- Handling very long documents
- Careful, measured analysis
- Following detailed instructions

>> Excels at writing tasks and careful reasoning. Very strong on long context. Often preferred for content work.

Gemini 1.5 Pro by Google

- Very long context (1M+ tokens)
- Google Workspace integration
- Real-time web search (with tools)
- Multimodal & video analysis
- Research tasks across large docs

>> Largest context window of any frontier model. Best for tasks requiring entire codebases or document sets.

Keep Practising.

Prompting is a skill -- like writing or presenting.

The more deliberately you practise, the faster you improve.

1. Start every prompt by stating the role and goal.

2. When output disappoints, diagnose which R-C-T-F element was missing.

3. Build a personal prompt library -- save what works.

4. Test the same prompt

t across models. You'll be surprised by the differences.

5. The best prompt engineers are also the best writers.