

8 Simple Rules for Getting the Perfect Prompt

An interactive, fill-it-in guide — by John Adewole



**“A prompt is just a conversation
you haven't had yet.”**

This guide has real fillable boxes — build your first prompt as you read.

The Rules, Part One

1

Start With the Goal, Not the Jargon

Say what you actually want, in plain words, before anything else. Describe the outcome like you'd describe it to a friend.

✗ *"Optimise this copy."*

✓ *"Rewrite this so a busy parent understands it in one read."*

2

Brief It Like a New Colleague

A new colleague doesn't know your business or audience unless you tell them. Give the AI the background it has no way of guessing.

✗ *No context, just the task.*

✓ *Who it's for, what's happened so far, what matters here.*

3

Show an Example of "Good"

If you have something close to what you want, a tone, a format, a similar piece of writing, share it. One good example beats several paragraphs of instruction.

✗ *"Make it sound professional."*

✓ *"Like this paragraph here — that tone, please."*

4

Say What You Don't Want, Too

Instructions usually only say what to include. Ruling things out, no jargon, no bullet points, nothing over 200 words, narrows the guesswork fast.

✗ *Only positive instructions.*

✓ *"No jargon, no more than 150 words, don't mention price."*

The Rules, Part Two

5

Ask for the Shape You Actually Need

Do you want a list, a table, a short paragraph, an email? Say so directly, or the AI will guess, and the guess is often wrong for what you needed it for.

✗ *No format mentioned.*

✓ *"Give me this as a 3-row table."*

6

Let It Think Out Loud for Hard Problems

For anything with real complexity, a decision, a calculation, a judgement call, ask it to reason step by step before the final answer. This alone catches a lot of mistakes.

✗ *"Just give me the answer."*

✓ *"Walk me through your thinking first, then answer."*

7

Tell It Who's Reading

The same information lands differently for a child, a board of directors, or a tired parent at 11pm. Naming the audience shapes tone more than almost anything else.

✗ *No audience specified.*

✓ *"Explain this to a 12-year-old."*

8

Treat the First Answer as a Draft

The first response is a starting point, not a verdict. Say exactly what to change rather than starting over. Good prompting is a short conversation, not one perfect message.

✗ *Starting over from scratch each time.*

✓ *"Almost — make the tone warmer and cut it by half."*

Build Your Own Prompt

Fill in each box below. Read it back afterwards — that's your finished prompt.

1. What do you actually want? (Rule 1)

2. What background does it need to know? (Rule 2)

3. Any example of “good” you can point to? (Rule 3)

4-5. What should it avoid, and what format do you need? (Rules 4 & 5)

6-7. How complex is this, and who's it for? (Rules 6 & 7)

Before You Hit Enter

A genuine self-check — tick each one honestly before you send your prompt.

I said what I actually want, in plain words (Rule 1)

I gave it context it couldn't have guessed (Rule 2)

I showed an example of “good” if I had one (Rule 3)

I said what to avoid, not just what to include (Rule 4)

I named the format I need back (Rule 5)

I asked it to think step by step, if this is complex (Rule 6)

I told it who this is for (Rule 7)

I'm ready to treat the first answer as a draft, not a verdict (Rule 8)

All checked? Good. Go send it.