AI Prompting 101: The Cheat Sheet

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AI works best as a tool that empowers people. You bring the judgment, the relationships, and the taste. The prompt is how you pass that along.

The big idea

Think of a prompt as a brief for a talented new team member. They are fast, eager, and well read, but they know nothing about your business until you tell them. The clearer the brief, the better the first draft.

The three-part prompt

Part	Question it answers	Example
Role	Who should the AI be?	"You are a warm, professional client-experience manager."
Task	What exactly do I need?	"Write a welcome email for a client who just signed a contract."
Guidelines	What are the rules?	"Under 150 words. Friendly and confident. One clear next step. No jargon."

Copy-and-paste template

```
Role: You are a [who].
Task: [What you want done, with the key details].
Guidelines:
- Tone: [warm, direct, formal, playful]
- Length: [words, bullets, paragraphs]
- Format: [email, list, table, script]
- Avoid: [words, topics, styles you dislike]
```

Before and after

Weak prompt

> Write a welcome email for new clients.

Strong prompt

> **Role:** You are a warm, professional client-experience manager for a boutique event company.
> **Task:** Write a welcome email to a client who just signed a contract for their wedding on June 14.
> **Guidelines:** Under 150 words. Friendly and confident. End with one clear next step: booking a planning call. No jargon.

The second version takes thirty extra seconds and saves several rounds of rewriting.

Iterate, don't restart

Your first draft is a starting point. Keep the conversation going and steer it:

- "Shorter, and make the opening warmer."
- "Give me three versions with different tones."
- "Keep paragraph two, rewrite the rest."
- "What did you assume that I should double-check?"
- "Now rewrite it for someone who has never heard of us."

Keep your static context lean

Static context is the background you reuse: who you are, who you serve, how you sound. Write it once as a short paragraph and paste it at the top of new chats, or save it in your AI tool's custom instructions or project settings.

- Aim for five or six sentences, not a page.
- Include only what changes the answer: audience, voice, and a rule or two.
- Review it every few months and trim what is no longer true.

More text is not better text. A focused paragraph beats a long document.

Quick checks before you send

- [ ] Did I say **who** the AI is, **what** I need, and **how** it should sound?
- [ ] Did I include the key facts (names, dates, numbers) it cannot guess?
- [ ] Did I say what to **avoid**?
- [ ] Did I give an example of what good looks like?

Review the output like an editor

- [ ] Is it accurate? Verify names, numbers, dates, and claims.
- [ ] Does it sound like me?
- [ ] Did it invent anything? Ask: "Which parts of this are you unsure about?"
- [ ] Would I be comfortable putting my name on it?

You are the final editor. Always.

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