

The Five-Part Prompt Formula

A quick-reference card for getting better results from AI tools, every time.

THE FRAMEWORK

Think of AI as a brilliant new executive assistant — intelligent and fast, but they know nothing about your situation unless you tell them. The five-part formula is how you brief them properly.

- 1 Task**
What do you want it to do?
 Specify the action — draft, summarise, analyse, compare, rewrite. Not "write something about X" but "write a two-paragraph introduction to X for [audience]."
- 2 Context**
What does it need to know?
 Background, relevant history, current situation. The element most people skip — and the one that most often determines quality.
- 3 Audience**
Who is this for?
 A board member, a close colleague, a first-time customer. Tone and detail level vary enormously depending on the reader.
- 4 Format**
How should it be structured?
 Bullet points, flowing paragraphs, a table, a single sentence. If you don't specify, AI will choose — and it may not be right.
- 5 Constraints**
Any limits to observe?
 Word count, tone, phrases to include or avoid, UK not US, reading age.

BEFORE & AFTER

BEFORE

"Write an email about AI for my team."

AFTER

Draft a short email to my team [task] introducing AI tools in our work. We're a small team and most people haven't used AI before — some may be sceptical [context]. Write for a mixed group of colleagues [audience], friendly in tone, under 150 words, UK English [format + constraints].

Labels in blue are for reference only — write the prompt as natural prose.

QUICK REFERENCE

Element	Ask yourself...	Example
Task	What do you want it to do?	"Draft a two-paragraph summary..."
Context	What does it need to know?	"We are a small charity..."
Audience	Who is this for?	"For a board member new to this brief..."
Format	How should it be structured?	"Three short paragraphs, no bullets..."
Constraints	Any limits to observe?	"Under 200 words. UK spelling."