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100%
WRITTEN
BY HUMAN

Prompt Alchemy

7 Steps to Unlock ChatGPT's True Potential

Introduction

Hey there!

I want to thank you from the bottom of my heart for picking up this guide. I've been working with ChatGPT almost every day, since the day it was released, and today you'll read **the best of the best** of what I know about **getting incredible results** from this incredible tool.

You'll notice that I'm moving very quickly through many different topics in this guide.

That's intentional.

I don't want to waste your time. You've got work to do and I'm here to make it better, as quickly as I can.

Remember, the best thing you can possibly do is **try everything**. That's why I invite you to **find your own examples for each topic**. Maybe you keep a specific use case in mind when you're reading, and you try out all the techniques while you're learning.

Finally, don't forget to be creative and play around! Combine these tools, and come up with your own.

I'd love to hear your feedback and ideas. Just hit 'Reply' on any of my e-mails.

Talk to you soon!

Love

Marcel

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Lift-Off Right Now: Quick Wins

Let's get you started with some quick ways to supercharge your ChatGPT experience. It doesn't take hours of work and learning, just the few *right* pieces of knowledge and you'll be an expert in no time.

Fastest Way to Access ChatGPT

Did you know you can access ChatGPT through ai.com? Yep, that's all you need to remember.

Ask It To Be Smart

As you'll learn throughout this guide, ChatGPT doesn't really know what "a good response" is. It learned to replicate information like **any random information** on the internet. It just doesn't *know* that intelligent answers are good!

Prompt



Give an intelligent response.

Remember It's Not Google

Over the years, you've probably learned how to type search queries in Google. You never really write sentences, just a few keywords.

Well, ChatGPT doesn't work that way. In fact, it will work *less good* that way. This tool is built to read full text and output full text. So really, you can ask a lot. Your questions can be super long, you can paste in any information you have, etc.

Be Precise & Give Feedback

Imagine you're meeting someone new. You can tell that they're incredibly smart, and they're eager to help you, but they don't know anything about you.

Well, ChatGPT is the same way. If you want good results, you have to ask *exactly* for what you want. As you learned in the “be smart” quick win, you have to be very detailed so that it knows what it should output, and how it should help. GPT-4 is much better already at figuring out what you might want, but still being more precise is better.

ChatGPT is also very good at learning from feedback. When you don't like the response, you can tell it what you don't like and ask for a better version.

Prompt



What's an alpaca and why do people use its wool?



> An alpaca is a domesticated mammal known for its soft and luxurious wool. It is native to the high altitudes of the Andes Mountains in South America, primarily Peru, Bolivia, and Chile.
> [and a full page of text that I don't want to read]



Thanks, but I just want a single-line explanation.



> Alpaca is a domesticated mammal whose wool is used for its softness, warmth, lightweight, breathability, moisture-wicking properties, durability, and hypoallergenic nature.

Something to remember though: sometimes ChatGPT gets “stuck” and will start repeating, or it cannot change its mind. You'll want to **use the edit button** often instead of making a really long conversation, to change your previous prompts.

Stay Positive

If you're trying to push ChatGPT to give you a certain kind of answer by saying things like "don't tell me about X," it won't work as well. In fact, sometimes it won't pick up that you *negated* it and do the opposite of what you asked for!

Instead, state instructions in the positive as much as possible. Don't say "don't make jokes," instead say "be very serious."

Getting Inspired

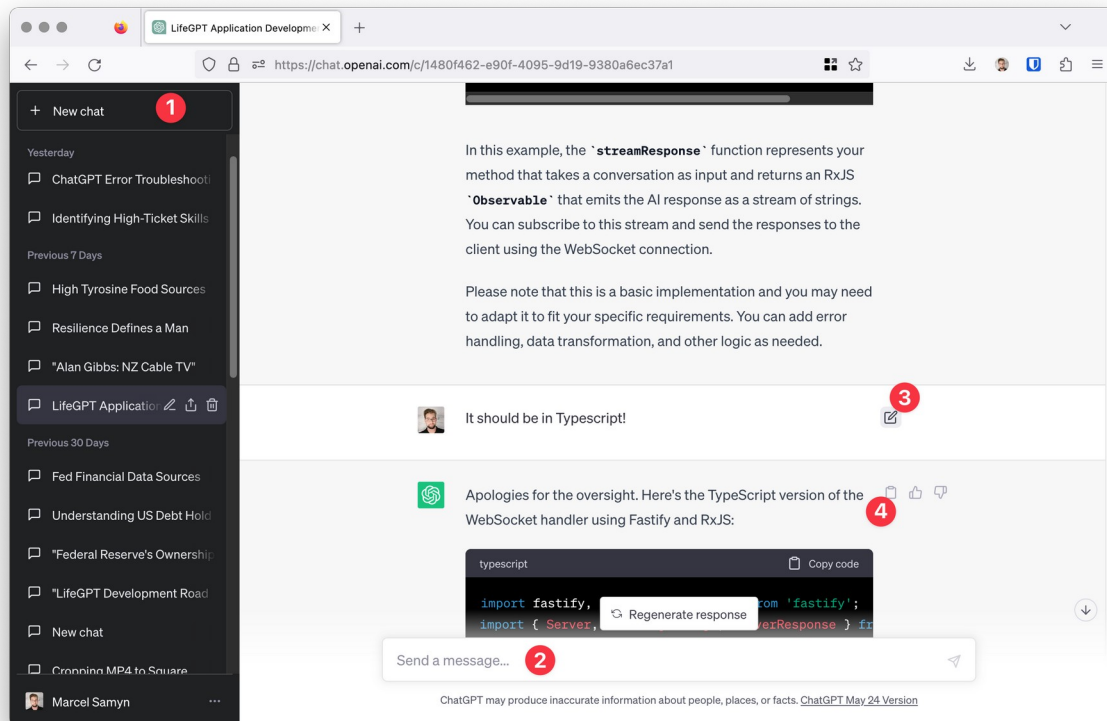
One of the biggest challenges with ChatGPT is *knowing what to ask!*

Because of that, I recommend that you **get obsessed**. Try to have ChatGPT on your mind all the time, and just start asking for random things. Over time, you'll build an intuitive understanding of what it can do for you.

Second, find some prompt lists. There are a ton of great, free ones out on the internet. [FlowGPT.com](https://flowgpt.com) is a free website with a ton of example prompts for any topic you can imagine. It's great for catching some inspiration on what you can do.

The ChatGPT Interface

ChatGPT is easy to use, but there might be a few features you don't know yet. Let's have a look.



1. Start a “New chat.” This clears the memory of ChatGPT. When you start a new chat, it forgets everything from any of your previous chats.
2. The “Send a message” box. This is where you continue your conversation.
3. Edit and resend a previous message. Most of the time, I use this to add extra information when ChatGPT doesn't *exactly* generate what I want (instead of giving feedback in a new message). This keeps the chat clean and makes it easier for me to read it again later.

Understanding This Guide

I want to make things super clear for you, so before we continue, let me explain the way this guide is structured.

You already got through the first chapter, congratulations! There are 6 more steps and you'll be an expert 😊

In every chapter, we start with a concept:

Concept

The concept gives you a peek behind the curtains. It will help you understand *why* things work the way they do, and that will give you the power to adapt these techniques to your own use cases.

Then you'll get some more explanation of the tool or technique. I'll always illustrate how to use it with a prompt, like this:

Prompt



This is the text I'm typing in the text box of ChatGPT, the **prompt**. Imagine your photo there :)
At the end of the message, I'll press the Send icon on the right to send the message.

[in **square brackets** I'll put placeholders for you to fill in. you should replace them yourself, not ChatGPT]



> If I want to show ChatGPT's response, I'll add > in the beginning of the line and add a little ChatGPT icon. It's not always important what ChatGPT says, then I'll type [response omitted].

Okay, let's go!

How To Ask What You Want:

Specificity

Concept

ChatGPT is a very generic *text generation* tool. It can create *anything* so without context, it doesn't know what to do. It doesn't know what's good or bad, so **you need to tell it what you want**. This sounds obvious, but it's harder than you think.

What Kind of Response Do You Really Want?

What are you looking for?

- Creative and unique ideas
- A simple explanation understandable by a 5-year old
- Dense, detailed business advice, with industry terms
- Short, to-the-point, clear advice
- Text that could be in a research paper

If you don't clearly say this, your output will be very basic, standard "AI-generated content." It's going to sound like everyday ChatGPT. And sometimes that's okay, but most of the time you want something nicer.

So specify the type of response you want:



Prompt

Please answer the following question creatively. Write it in an engaging way, so that I'm not only happy because of the response but also inspired to take action.

[insert your original question here]

Giving Just-Enough Feedback

You can always give feedback on a response and ask for a revision that better aligns with what you really wanted. Here's an example that I used recently:



Prompt

> [previous conversation]



Thank you, please rewrite that with the following adjustments:

- Don't mention "funny" explicitly. Just talk about a funny story.
- Make it longer.
- Format it in Markdown.
- Add emojis in the title

You need to be careful here, because it can get stuck in giving the same style of answer over and over again. This is because **ChatGPT learns from your input and from its previous output** (it forgets when you start a new conversation though). So after a few revisions it will become harder and harder to change. In that case, **edit the initial prompt** and add your feedback in that request.

One Sentence For Radically Better Thinking: Chain-of-Thought Reasoning

Concept

ChatGPT *does not think*. It only writes text. Sometimes, it should “think” a lot before giving a conclusion but it can’t and so the result will be wrong. The solution is to force the AI to write its thoughts out. Turns out that results in a massive improvement in ability to reason.

Honestly, this is my favorite tip because it’s so *simple* yet improves the output so much. And at the same time it helps you *really understand* how ChatGPT and other tools like it really work on the inside.

This method really shines when you’re using ChatGPT to solve more complicated problems, like mind games or puzzles. It can also work for things like generating blog posts, and we’ll see how we adapt this technique.

Step-By-Step

Here’s what you do:

Prompt



[your original question]

Let’s work this out in a step by step way to be sure we have the right answer.

What you really want is that you don't immediately get the response, instead you get multiple steps that lead to the answer.

You can also ask:

Prompt



[your original instruction]


Respond in the following format:

Thinking: (what you are thinking about how to do the instruction)

Answer: (your final answer)

Remember, only replace the text in [square brackets], the text in (braces) is a hint for ChatGPT so it understands *where* it needs to fill in text and *what* it should fill in there.

Here's an example:





It's my sister's birthday tomorrow and we're trying to decide what cake we should make. She really likes fruit cake with whipped cream, my mom likes sour lime cake and I don't really mind. We can only make one cake. We will do a birthday party and we know from one friend that they prefer the fruit cake and another friend that prefers cheesecake. But there will be 5 more friends and we don't know their preferences. We can only make a single cake. What should we bake?

Respond in the following format:

Thinking: (what you are thinking about how to do the instruction)





Answer: (your final answer)

< 2 / 2 > 



Thinking: To make a decision, we need to consider the preferences of the birthday girl, the family members, and the known preferences of the two friends. Since the sister likes fruit cake with whipped cream and the friend prefers fruit cake, it seems like a good choice. However, we should also consider that the mom likes sour lime cake. It might be challenging to please everyone with just one cake.

Answer: Considering the preferences mentioned, it would be best to make a fruit cake with whipped cream. This choice caters to the sister's preference, aligns with the friend's preference, and has a good chance of being enjoyed by others. The fruit cake with whipped cream seems like the most suitable option for the birthday party.

Holding Hands

Your strength as a human is that you know the *direction* and your *desired outcome* and often how to get there. **I almost always walk ChatGPT through multiple steps.** It's good at answering a specific, small task, but not so good with large problems.

It's useful to have a plan in mind for a sequence of questions you'll ask ChatGPT. For example, say we are planning a photoshoot:

1. Tell ChatGPT that I'm planning a photoshoot. Give information about my experience, the model and the occasion.
2. Ask for ideas on which locations we could use.
3. Decide the location and tell ChatGPT the time of day. Ask for lighting and other equipment we might need.
4. Ask for some ideas for props we could use.
5. Ask it to prepare a sample list of poses I could use, where I use the props and make use of the environment.

On the following page, you can see an excerpt of a conversation I recently had with ChatGPT to help me figure out and refine business ideas.

Prompt



I'm trying to find good business ideas. Here are my current skills:

- photography
- learning quickly and teaching it
- [continue like this]

Now we need to narrow that down and turn it into specific offers. Write out in which situation people might make use of these skills, and which of their frustrations they could solve.



> [ChatGPT response omitted]



Okay, can you give criticism on each of those points in terms of how well I might be able to provide excellent results, how easy it is to find customers and what a potential income capacity could be? Ask me for additional clarifying information if you need it.

Finish up with a conclusion and your recommendation.

> [ChatGPT response omitted]



Let's go with the second option. Use the following clarifying information:

- Specifically about learning, my expertise is IT. I'm a programmer too
- [...]

Can you make a short business case?



> [ChatGPT response omitted]



Thank you. In order to define and find out the market, let's find out some personas. Come up with two personas. Describe who they are, what they work as, their current frustrations and what they've already tried to solve their problems. What would their dream situation be, and how could they benefit from my business?



> [ChatGPT response omitted]



Let's take this offer, for example. [one of the proposals copy-pasted]

What is your feedback on this offer, as an experienced coach helping me starting my own business? Remember I'm focusing right now on high-ticket customers, and I'm trying to find customers who would be extremely excited and happy to spend a lot of money on this service.

If appropriate, give three more possible offers. Make sure you describe the service, what they get and how long it will take.

Do you see how I always build on the previous step until we eventually get all the information we need. Here too, ChatGPT needs the information *written out* to be able to think about it.

The “Strategy” Strategy

If you’re obsessed enough, by this point you’ll have asked yourself “**can’t I just ask ChatGPT?**” Yes! That’s the most powerful question as you’re learning this amazing tool.

Turns out that we don’t need to come up with a complete strategy ourselves, but we can literally ask ChatGPT.

The way you do this is simple:

1. Start by describing your goal
2. Ask for the most important steps to achieve it
3. Add some specificity to increase the quality (see chapters: Specificity and Role-Play Games)

Then, take each of the steps it came up with.

Ask for guidance on the steps. **Ask for questions** you should answer, and then answer the questions.

Finally, go to the following step until you’re done.

Role-Play Games: Get the right type of answer, every time

Concept

As we've talked about before, ChatGPT doesn't know what a good answer to your question or instruction looks like. Because it can output anything, we need to be precise.

Respond As A...

The best way to improve the quality of your output is to **give ChatGPT a persona**. Describe a person it should emulate. This will make the internal circuitry "aim" at the right bits of data that it will use to give you a high-quality response.

For example:

- Respond as an expert in this field with more than 20 years of experience.
- Respond in the style of Socrates, with his ancient Greek wisdom and memorable quotes.
- Respond as someone with multiple Ph.D.'s writing a research paper. Give unorthodox, lesser known advice. Be very detailed in your response, yet succinct. Minimize humor.

Loopback Personas

You can help ChatGPT by helping it...help itself here 😊

Instead of just giving the name of a famous person you want ChatGPT to emulate, **first ask it to describe that person**. For example, if I want investing advice from the point of view of Ray Dalio, I might first ask:

Prompt



Can you please describe Ray Dalio? Who is he and what is his expertise? What are his most important teachings? How does he write?



> [ChatGPT response omitted]



Answer the following question as Ray Dalio:

I'm thinking of buying some Bitcoin. Is that a good idea or not? Please give detailed advice and coach me through my financial journey.

Intention-Directed Prompting

It's often very useful to **give intentions and goals** next to your regular instruction or question, especially if you're having a longer conversation with ChatGPT. This will help steer it towards what you really want.

It's quite simple to use, just add it to the beginning of the conversation:

Prompt



I'm writing multiple blog posts for my website focused on the power of mindfulness. Your goal is to help me create the content for a successful website. Be proactive, ask clarifying questions and really coach me through the process.

List out 10 examples of titles that would work well for SEO, for blog posts about meditating in nature and the combination with yoga.

Also notice how I made a “break” with a “---” on an empty line. It helps me re-read the prompt later, and ChatGPT also understands that right now a different part will begin. A single line with “###” works well too.

As you continue the conversation, the goal will stay relevant. If you feel like after a while it forgets, well that’s the next chapter!

Generated Knowledge

We’ve touched upon this a few times already: you can direct ChatGPT better by **adding context** or background information. Then tell it to use that information to respond to you:

Prompt



Keep in mind the following information:

[a bunch of info, e.g., “everyone is working from home these days, there are fears of a recession coming because interest rates are going up, my favorite food is pizza”---anything really, but relevant information is better, of course]

What would be a good way to organize information for a small company with busy people, but who need to work together a lot?

But now we get to... “what if we just asked ChatGPT?” Yes, you can do this in multiple steps:

Prompt



Describe the way a realtor company works. What are their main processes, tasks and activities?



> [ChatGPT response omitted]



What would be a good way to organize information for a small company with busy people, but who need to work together a lot?

It's always useful to *ask for background information first* so you help the tool to give you better responses.

Flipping The Script

We've asked ChatGPT to role-play, but what if we take it one step further? What if **we role-play too**?

You can **ask ChatGPT to ask you questions**. For example, you could ask it to pretend it's your wife who just got angry at you because you didn't put your dirty dishes in the dishwasher. Ask ChatGPT to both respond as your wife, and also give feedback on how you could handle the situation well.

Personally I like doing reflection activities, where I think about what I'm grateful for, or what happened the past day, or what my dreams are. It's nice to just ask ChatGPT to ask me each of those questions in order, and give me some additional feedback or insight into each of my answers.

Curing Alzheimer: Making ChatGPT Remember Again

One of the most frustrating things in working with ChatGPT could very well be that sometimes it just completely seems to forget what you talked about before, and it gets really hard to get it back on track.

Concept

This AI tool only has a limited “window of attention,” which is the amount of text it can keep in its memory. Also, because it learns what you write and what it writes, it focuses more and more on recent answers instead of the initial question.

Something to keep in mind: ChatGPT only learns *within the conversation*. If you start a new conversation, it will have forgotten everything.

Summarize

This is one of ChatGPT’s greatest powers, as it’s extremely good at this: summarizing.

In a long conversation, it’s often useful to ask for a summary of everything that happened so far. If you set a goal or intention in the beginning, **ask it to repeat it**.

When you’re going through a strategy, it might be useful to ask something like “**do you remember** what we were going to do after we finished with X?”

Anchoring

It's very easy to lose the tone of voice if you've defined a *persona* for ChatGPT to answer your questions.

The trick to getting around that is **anchoring**: when you define the persona, give it a *name* like "DalioGPT." Then, once in a while during the conversation, remind it that it should be answering *as DalioGPT*.

You can even combine it with the point above, and once in a while ask something like "do you remember what DalioGPT's persona was like?"

Another way to anchor is giving **hints**. You can ask a question and just add some keywords you're expecting. For example:

Prompt



Please summarize the following article:

[article content]

Hint: workout exercises, most effective, paleo diet

Again, this "aims" ChatGPT at the right parts of the question so the response will be closer to what you would actually want.

This Is My Gold: Multi-Shot Answers

Concept

ChatGPT learns style from your input and its own previous output. You can use this to your advantage and give examples for how it should respond.

Learning From Examples

This type of questioning works best with simple tasks or reasoning puzzles. Something where you don't need much creativity, like analyzing if a review is positive or negative.

To prove that this actually works, let's give an example for positive / negative review analysis where we don't use those words but "foo" and "bar" instead:

Prompt



Please classify the following reviews:

Review: wow this is amazing!

Classification: bar

Review: that's the worst product I've ever used

Classification: foo

Review: it came broken on arrival and the seller didn't respond to my questions

Classification: bar

Review: I thought I wouldn't like it, but after 3 months I can happily say I'll never look back at my decision. Would recommend to everyone.

Classification: bar

Review: I can't believe I just discovered this. Where has this been all my life???

Classification:



> bar

So even though “foo” and “bar” don’t mean anything, ChatGPT **learned its meaning from the examples.**

Looking back at the example prompt, you can see we ended with “Classification:” and then sent the message. This is on purpose: we want ChatGPT to *complete out sentence*. This works because **originally, ChatGPT was purely a tool for auto-complete**. So works well when you just type in a partial sentence or part of an article, and it will just complete it. (Sometimes you still need to instruct it with “complete this:”)

Taking Over Style

As you saw, ChatGPT is very good at “replicating” information from examples. That also means you can ask it to *write in the style of another piece of text*.

- If you want it to write emails for you, just paste in a few of your sent emails.
- If you want it to write a blog post, paste in another blog post.
- If you like a specific author’s writing style, paste in an example.

The example can be unrelated, that’s okay.



Prompt

Use the writing style of the following piece of text:

[insert text]

Write personal feedback report for my student Josh. His writing was good although a bit short. I liked that he used a personal story but I would have wanted more specific advice.

Did You Just Make A Mistake?

Self-Reflection

Concept

Continuing with our idea of “let’s just ask ChatGPT itself,” it turns out that it’s pretty good at **evaluating its own responses!**

Whenever you get a response that you’re not sure about, or you just want it to be a bit more polished, you can simply instruct the chatbot to do it for you.

We’ll do this in two steps:

Prompt



> [previous conversation, including previous response]



Please give a critical reflection on the above response by the assistant. List out possible mistakes, omissions and feedback for room for improvement.



> [ChatGPT responds, something like “here is a list of feedback and criticisms on the previous response: ...”]



Now, keeping the feedback in mind, give an improved response.

You can go further and supercharge this approach by combining other techniques like the *personas*. For example: “as a university professor in mathematics, give detailed feedback on the above response.” That will make the feedback even better.

Conclusion



There you go.

Those are my best techniques. I use them every single day and, even though I'm still learning, these are already getting me incredible results from this incredible tool.

I can't wait to hear from you! What you think of this, how you're using it and what you would change.

Just hit 'Reply' on one of my e-mails and tell me! I'd love to hear how you used ChatGPT before and after this, and what you would change. With your ideas I can make this guide even better for future students.

Signing off, with love,
Marcel



Thank you, Marcel! It's great to hear that you have found the techniques provided helpful in utilizing ChatGPT effectively. Your enthusiasm and dedication to learning are admirable.

As an AI language model, I don't have personal experiences or emotions, but I'm here to assist you with any questions or tasks you may have. I'm glad that you're already experiencing incredible results from using ChatGPT.

If you have any specific questions or need further assistance, feel free to ask. I'm here to help and provide information based on the knowledge I've been trained on up until September 2021.

Cheat Sheet

Refer to this page to refresh your mind on the techniques we used.

- Being Precise
 - “Give an intelligent, thought-provoking, unique answer”
 - Positive feedback instead of negative
 - Either give feedback in a new message, or edit the previous message
- Role-Play
 - “Describe the expertise of X (person).” and then “Answer the following question as X:”
 - “You are an X with Y years of experience, and ...”
 - Ask it to play a character in a dialogue with you
- Remembering
 - Regularly ask it to summarize everything until this point
 - “Do you remember ...?”
 - Anchoring: give names to concepts or people, and give hints with keywords
- Chain-of-Thought Reasoning
 - “Let’s work this out in a step by step way to be sure we have the right answer.”
 - “Answer in the following format: Thoughts: ..., Answer: ...”
 - The Strategy Strategy: first ask for a high-level overview of the steps to undertake, then ask it to take each step as you go
- Multi-Shot Answers
 - Give examples for the type of answer you want
 - “Use the style of the following piece of text:”
- Self-Reflection
 - Ask for errors, mistakes, omissions in its own answer
 - Ask for a revised answer considering the mistakes
 - Bonus: ask for criticism from the point of view of a specific persona