

ChatGPT Prompt Writing Checklist:

10 Checks Before You Press Send

A useful prompt gives ChatGPT a clear task and enough direction to produce a relevant first draft. Work through these ten checks, then adapt the examples to your own task.

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Checks 1 and 2

☐ 1. Goal

Say exactly what you want ChatGPT to do, using a clear action such as explain, compare, draft or summarise.
Example, before: Tell me about solar panels.
Example, after: Explain how home solar panels generate electricity in three simple steps.

☐ 2. Context

Include the background details that affect the answer, such as what you have already tried or what the situation is.
Example, before: Help me plan a weekend break.
Example, after: Help me plan a two-night weekend break from Bristol by train. I enjoy museums and quiet cafés, and I have already visited Bath.

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Checks 3 and 4

Shape the answer around the person who will read it and the way you need to use it.

☐ 3. Audience

Name the reader and their level of knowledge so the language and detail are appropriate.
Example, before: Explain compound interest.
Example, after: Explain compound interest to a teenager who is new to saving. Define any financial terms in plain English.

☐ 4. Format

Ask for a structure that makes the response easy to read, compare or act on.
Example, before: Give me ideas for packed lunches.
Example, after: Give me five packed lunch ideas in a table with columns for meal, ingredients and preparation time.

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Checks 5 and 6

Set a useful level of detail and show the model what a good result could look like.

☐ 5. Length

Specify a practical length or level of detail instead of leaving the response size open-ended.
Example, before: Write a note to my team about the meeting.
Example, after: Draft a meeting follow-up for my team in about 120 words. Include decisions, owners and next steps.

☐ 6. Examples

Provide a short sample or model answer when tone, style or quality is difficult to describe.
Example, before: Write a friendly reminder about the library books.
Example, after: Write a friendly reminder about returning library books. Example tone: 'Just a quick note to bring your books back when you can.' Keep it warm, not demanding.

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Checks 7 and 8

Make boundaries clear, and tell ChatGPT what information it can rely on.

☐ 7. Constraints

State what to include, avoid or preserve so the result stays within your requirements.
Example, before: Suggest a meal plan for next week.
Example, after: Suggest a five-day vegetarian meal plan. Avoid peanuts, include one quick evening meal each day, and do not assume I have an oven.

☐ 8. Sources

Name or provide trusted material to use, and ask for uncertainty to be flagged rather than guessed away.
Example, before: Summarise the rules for recycling in my area.
Example, after: Summarise the recycling instructions in the council text I provide below. Do not add rules from elsewhere. If a detail is missing, say so.

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Checks 9 and 10

Protect sensitive information and plan how to refine an answer that misses the mark.

☐ 9. Privacy

Remove identifying details and use only information you are permitted to share with the service.
Example, before: Here is my customer's full complaint with their name, address and account number. Draft a reply.
Example, after: Using this anonymised summary, draft a polite reply: a customer reports that a delivery arrived late. Do not add personal details or invent a resolution.

☐ 10. Follow-up

Invite a targeted revision by saying what needs to change or what is still missing.
Example, before: Write a short introduction to our gardening club.
Example, after: Write a short introduction to our gardening club. If you need more information, ask me up to two questions first. After drafting, suggest one warmer version.

Check before you use it

Never put personal or confidential data into ChatGPT, including client, patient, staff, customer and children's data. Check facts, figures and citations before relying on them. ChatGPT may be inaccurate. For current product details, visit help.openai.com.

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