

The Framework: Role → Context → Task → Format

Step	What to write	Example
Role	Who should the AI act as?	"You are an experienced HR manager..."
Context	Background the AI needs	"We're a 12-person engineering firm in Scotland..."
Task	Exactly what you want	"Write a job advert for a junior CAD technician..."
Format	How the output should look	"Use bullet points, keep it under 300 words..."

Weak vs Strong Prompts

Weak (vague)	Strong (specific)
Write me an email	Write a polite follow-up email to a client who hasn't replied to our quote in 7 days. Keep it under 100 words, mention the quote ref Q-2024-031, and suggest a call.
Summarise this data	Summarise the attached CSV of monthly sales. Highlight the top 3 products by revenue, flag any month-on-month declines over 10%, and give me 3 bullet points I can paste into a board report.
Help me with Excel	I have a column of dates in DD/MM/YYYY format in column A (rows 2-500). Write an Excel formula for B2 that extracts the month name. I'm using Excel 365.

Power Techniques

- **Chain of thought:** "Think through this step by step before answering."
- **Few-shot examples:** Show 2–3 examples of the output you want.
- **Constraints:** "Do not use jargon." "Maximum 5 bullet points."
- **Iterate:** "Good, now make it more formal" or "Shorten the second paragraph."
- **Persona test:** "Explain this so a non-technical business owner would understand."
- **Negative prompting:** "Do NOT include pricing or make promises we can't keep."

Common Pitfalls

- **Too vague:** "Write something about marketing" → the AI guesses everything.
- **Too long:** A 500-word prompt with contradictions confuses the model.
- **No format:** Without format guidance, you'll get an essay when you wanted bullets.
- **Trusting blindly:** Always fact-check names, numbers, and dates — AI can hallucinate.
- **One-and-done:** Treat it as a conversation. First answer is a draft, not final.

Quick-Start Templates

Email reply: "You are my business email assistant. Here is an email I received: [paste]. Draft a professional reply that [accepts/declines/asks for more info]. Keep it under 100 words."

Document summary: "Summarise the following document in 5 bullet points suitable for a team briefing. Focus on decisions and actions, not background: [paste]."

Data analysis: "I'm going to paste CSV data. Analyse it and tell me: (1) the key trends, (2) any anomalies, (3) three plain-English insights I can share with my manager."

Proofreading: "Proofread the following text for grammar, spelling, and clarity. Don't change the tone — just fix errors and suggest one improvement: [paste]."