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PROMPT LIBRARY · GUIDE 01

The Prompt Recipe

Give AI a clear brief

Give AI a clear brief so its first draft is closer to what your business needs.

For busy small business owners. Standalone guides that complement AI Basics.

IN THIS GUIDE

- Turn a one-line request into a short brief that gets a usable first draft
- Use CRIT (Context, Role, Interview, Task) with the practical fields that sit inside it
- Fix a weak draft by finding the gap in the brief instead of starting over

ABOUT THIS GUIDE

CRIT (Context, Role, Interview, Task) is Geoff Woods' prompt framework. We teach it in AI Basics and build on it here.

Practical guidance reviewed November 2026. Start simple and test on your own tasks. No guaranteed results.

Keep customer data private. Use placeholders or anonymized facts in an approved AI tool. Check facts, figures, promises and tone before anything leaves the business.

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START HERE

01

Start with the job, not magic words

A prompt is a work brief. Write it the way you would brief a capable new hire on their first week.

Before you type, name one useful result. A quote cover note. A reply to a customer. A checklist for a job your crew repeats every week. When you know the result, the rest of the brief gets easy.

You do not need a long formula for every request. A quick question can stay quick.

> A BRIEF EARNS ITS PLACE WHEN
>
> *The job matters*
> *The first answer keeps missing*
> *You will reuse it*

VAGUE REQUEST

Write a follow-up for a landscaping quote.

A BRIEF WITH THE FACTS FILLED IN

Draft a short follow-up for a spring cleanup quote we sent a homeowner four days ago. They have not replied. Invite questions, keep it friendly and give one simple next step. Under 90 words. Do not send it.

> THE SECOND VERSION JUST ANSWERS WHAT A PERSON WOULD ASK FIRST
>
> *What service?*
> *Who is it for?*
> *What should happen next?*
> *How long should it be?*

THE LAYERS

02

Choose the layers you need

Seven fields cover most business tasks. Treat them as a checklist, not seven required paragraphs.

FIELD	WHAT IT HOLDS	EXAMPLE
Task	What to produce	A follow-up email for my review
Context	The situation, the reader and the business facts that matter	Quote sent four days ago, no reply yet
Role	The working perspective AI should take	A customer-service writer for a local home-service business
Instructions	The work to do	Mention the quote, invite questions, give one next step
Rules	Limits to respect	No invented prices, dates or discounts
Example	A sample of the pattern or tone you want	A line you have actually written
Output	The shape, length and format	Subject line plus 90 words or fewer

A NOTE ON ROLES AND EXAMPLES

A role is a working perspective, not a fictional life story. An example shows the pattern you want copied. That is different from reference material you share only as background, so label which is which.

> Put the task and the output in plain view. Most weak drafts come from a missing reader, a missing limit or a missing length.

CONNECT IT TO CRIT

03

How the recipe fits CRIT

CRIT is Geoff Woods' prompt framework: Context, Role, Interview, Task. It is the way of asking we teach in AI Basics.

LETTER	WHAT IT DOES
Context	Sets the situation and the facts
Role	Points the work toward the right kind of help
Interview	AI asks you questions to fill the gaps before it starts
Task	Names the result you want

Context and Role orient the brief. Interview fills the gaps. Task produces the work. The extra fields in this recipe (instructions, rules, examples and output) sit inside that brief. They are a practical detail layer, not extra CRIT letters.

Use the Interview step with care

- Ask AI to question you one at a time, up to three questions.
- Only for facts that would change the result.
- If you do not know an answer, say so. Do not invent one to finish faster.

FILL THE GAPS WITH CRIT

Context:	I own [business]. I need to improve [one process], and the main problem is [what happens now]. My limits are [time, people, budget].
Role:	Help as an operations planner for a business of this size.
Interview:	Ask one question at a time, up to three, to find the facts needed for a useful recommendation.
Task:	After my answers, suggest two practical changes in a table with effort, likely benefit, assumptions and a first step. Use only supplied facts. Flag what I need to check. Do not take action.

BEFORE AND AFTER EXAMPLE 04

One real business task

> Here is the vague follow-up request from page 2, rebuilt with each field labeled. The order is for readability. No word order is magic.

● A QUOTE FOLLOW-UP BRIEF

Task:	Draft a follow-up email for my review. Do not send it.
Context:	I run a small landscaping company. We sent a spring cleanup quote four days ago. The homeowner has not replied. I want to offer a chance to ask questions, not pressure them.
Role:	Help as a customer-service writer for a local home-service business.
Instructions:	Mention the spring cleanup quote, invite questions and give one simple next step.
Rules:	Do not invent a price, appointment, discount or deadline. No em dashes or sales hype.
Example of our tone:	"Happy to explain what is included before you decide."
Output:	A subject line and an email of no more than 90 words.

If a missing detail would change the message, ask me one question at a time, up to three, before drafting.

EXAMPLE OUTPUT

Illustrative output (an example of the shape, not a tested result)

Subject: Questions about your spring cleanup quote?

Hi [name], I wanted to check in on the spring cleanup quote we sent a few days ago. Happy to explain what is included or adjust the scope before you decide. If it helps, reply with a good time for a quick call. Thanks, [your name]

TROUBLESHOOTING

05

Fix the brief before starting over

When a draft misses, the brief usually has a gap. Find the gap, add one line and run it again.

First, judge the draft on four things. Never score polish above truth.

CHECK	ASK YOURSELF
Accuracy	Is every fact true and supplied by you?
Relevance	Does it fit this customer and this job?
Voice	Would you actually say it?
Next step	Is it clear what the customer should do?

Then find the gap

WHAT YOU SEE	WHAT TO ADD
Too general	The actual reader, the service and the action you want
Wrong shape or length	A length limit or a small sample of the output. Start without samples and add one only if the pattern is not landing.
Made-up details	"Use only the facts I supplied. List anything missing instead of guessing." Then check the draft yourself.
Big, messy job	Split it. Research in one request, drafting in another, checking in a third.

For a complex job, ask AI to list the assumptions it made and give a short check summary at the end. You want to see what it relied on, not a long account of its thinking.

● ADD A CHECK AT THE END OF ANY BRIEF

Before you finish, list any facts you assumed that I did not give you, and anything I should confirm before using this.

WORKSHEET PRACTICE 06

Your reusable recipe card

> Fill this in once for a job you do every week. Fields marked optional can stay blank.

Recipe card

Task What do I want produced?	
Context Situation, reader, facts that matter	
Role (optional) What kind of help?	
Instructions The work to do	
Rules Prices, privacy, claims to avoid	
Example (optional) A sample of our pattern or tone	
Output Shape, length, format	
Interview	Ask me up to three questions, one at a time, if a missing fact would change the result.
Human review Who checks it before it leaves the business?	

> Save only approved, non-sensitive context and refresh it when prices change. Next step: pair it with Roles That Work or a Prompt Starter.

If this feels like a lot, you don't have to work through it alone. We help owners and small teams build these skills step by step. Book a free 20-minute call at thelayeredfuture.com/book.