

Prompt Engineering Primer

Write a clear prompt.
Check it. Improve it.

A practical first step for people new to AI.

Your outcome: one useful prompt, a checked result and a simple way to try again.

Start with a clear brief

Tell the AI what you need, what it can use and what a useful answer looks like.

A **prompt** is the request you give an AI tool. A clear request helps, but the AI can still misunderstand or invent details. Choose a small task you can check yourself.

Use these seven parts as a checklist. Start with what the task needs; add detail when a check reveals a gap.

1. Role - optional

What perspective would help? A writing assistant, for example. A role does not give the AI real credentials.

2. Task

What should it do? Name one action: draft, rewrite, summarize or organize.

3. Objective

Why do you need the result? Explain what a useful answer will help you do.

4. Context

What facts and limits matter? Supply the source text or details the AI needs.

5. Audience

Who is the result for? A new volunteer may need a different explanation from a colleague.

6. Format

What should it look like? Specify a short email, a checklist, a table or a length.

7. Special instructions

State what to preserve, what not to guess and what to flag for review.
For example: "Use only my notes. Ask if the date is missing."

A FILL-IN STARTER

"Help me **[task]** for **[audience]**. Use **[facts or source text]**.
Return **[format]**. Keep **[important limits]**. Flag anything missing."

Start safely: use fictional or non-sensitive material. Before using real information, check that you have permission and that the tool is approved for it. Removing names alone may not protect someone's identity.

See the difference

One fictional reading-circle reminder, from a vague request to a useful first draft.

THE FACTS YOU HAVE

The group meets in the Cedar room. Everyone should bring one book.
The date and time are not supplied yet. You only want a draft.

VAGUE REQUEST

"Write a reminder."

The AI has no meeting details, audience or length to work with. You would need to supply those facts or answer follow-up questions.

CLEARER REQUEST - TRY THIS

Draft a warm reminder for our fictional reading circle. Use only these facts: Cedar room; bring one book. The date and time are missing, so do not invent them. Keep the message under 60 words. Put missing details in separate reviewer notes. Draft only; do not send anything.

WORKED FIRST DRAFT

"For our next reading-circle meeting in the Cedar room, please bring one book you would like to discuss."

REVIEWER NOTES - KEEP SEPARATE

Confirm the date and time before using this as a complete reminder.
No message has been sent.

What improved? The request now supplies the task, audience, known facts, length and a rule for missing details. The draft is useful, but it is not finished.

Complete it. Then check it.

Add confirmed details yourself, then compare every important fact with the source.

NEW FACTS FOR THIS FICTIONAL EXERCISE

The organizer now confirms: October 6, 2026, at 6 p.m., in the Cedar room. Participants should bring one book. Ask the AI to add those details and keep the same tone and length.

COMPLETED WORKED DRAFT

"Join our reading circle on October 6, 2026, at 6 p.m. in the Cedar room. Please bring one book you would like to discuss. We look forward to seeing you!"

THREE QUICK CHECKS

1. Did it follow my request?

It is a warm reminder under 60 words. It includes what to bring.
It is still a draft; nothing has been sent.

2. Are the facts right?

October 6, 2026, at 6 p.m.; Cedar room; one book.
Each detail matches what the organizer supplied.

3. What is missing?

The missing date and time have now been supplied. If a detail you need is still missing, ask for it before using the draft.

IF A CHECK FAILS

Point out the mistake and supply the correct fact. Try again. If the answer still fails your checks, finish it yourself. Asking the AI to review its answer can help, but it does not replace your own check.

Remember: check the answer against your facts, not how confident it sounds.

Your turn: write, check, save

Use a fictional task you can finish and check: a reminder, a rewrite or a short checklist.

BUILD YOUR PROMPT

Task and purpose - What should the AI do, and why?

Audience and format - Who is it for? What should the answer look like?

Facts to use - What details or source text will you supply?

Limits and missing details - What must it preserve, avoid guessing or ask you about?

CHECK THE RESULT

- ☐ It follows my request and preserves the important facts.
- ☐ I checked names, numbers and dates; missing details are flagged.
- ☐ I reviewed it before using it. No unintended action occurred.

ONE THING I WOULD CHANGE

Save your evidence: prompt, input, answer, checks, date and tool/model if shown. Note errors as well as wins. Count preparation, generation, checking and repair time when comparing with doing it yourself. Retest when the model or tool changes; one good answer is limited evidence.

Keep learning: try the FixicoAI Jumpstart Guide for a first-week plan.
Find resources at fixicoai.com. AI can be wrong; important decisions need qualified review.