

ACE Quick Guide to Writing Effective AI Prompts

Whilst AI can be ethically **utilised to streamline the assignment planning, research, and development process**, it is important to engage critically with its outputs due to the risk of accessing inaccurate, misleading, or fabricated information.

Writing effective prompts can **significantly influence the quality of outputs**, increasing the likelihood of obtaining productive suggestions and credible search results.

(Adapted from Harvard University, 2023)

How Can I Write Effective Prompts?

1

Be **clear** and **specific** about the information you require, providing unambiguous instructions that **limit the chance of obtaining inaccurate results**. Without proper guidance, AI tools will necessarily make assumptions to fill in missing details, leading to subpar results that poorly align with your expectations.

2

Ask the AI tool to adopt a relevant persona. For example, prompting it to **respond as if it were a scholarly researcher or professor working in a related field** may help to obtain more credible results! This is because the AI tool will attempt to emulate this persona, adapting its output accordingly.

3

Use **do's** and **don'ts**. Telling the AI tool what you do and don't want to be included in the output can save time and improve the applicability of its suggestions!

4

Incorporate your **preferred format** or **presentation style**. AI tools can generate different types of outputs such as lists, tables, code, reports, summaries, dialogue, business communications, audio, and images. As such, it is important to consider which best complements your learning needs.

5

Write **follow-up** prompts and **provide feedback**. If the output is not what you expected, rephrase or supplement your original prompt with follow-up instructions or additional context to focus the result. You can also give feedback, informing the AI tool what was useful versus what could be further improved, enabling it to correct its mistakes.

(Adapted from Bodleian Libraries, 2025; Newcastle University, 2026)

The CARE Framework

You may also find it helpful to adopt the CARE framework to **formalise the process of writing effective prompts**:

Context	Describe the situation, including relevant, non-sensitive background information such as your role and the project you are working on.
Action	What task do you require the AI tool to perform? Whether you are providing a command or a question, it must be specific and unambiguous – detailing the expected output, the steps or processes to be followed, and your chosen format.
Rules	Introduce constraints. What should be included or excluded from the output?
Example	Demonstrate what an effective or ineffective output looks like, clarifying the expected response.

(Nielsen Norman Group, 2024; Purdue University, 2025)

Ethical Uses and Example Prompts

Due to the risk of an academic misconduct charge, you should **never**:

- Upload sentences, paragraphs, or completed drafts of an assignment to an AI tool for any purpose, including editing and proofreading.
- Copy AI outputs into an assignment, unless you are explicitly given permission to do so.
- Rely on AI summaries to understand scholarly research or cite these in an assignment.

Whilst AI tools can be utilised to develop foundational, entry-level knowledge, you must **conduct further research to advance your understanding and verify the accuracy of outputs**. The following table lists several ethical uses and **example prompts** for assignment planning, research, and development.

Use	Example Prompts
<i>Understanding the requirements of an assignment task.</i>	<p>Explain the requirements of the following assignment task...</p> <p>The response must include simple definitions of key directive phrases such as 'critically evaluate'.</p>

<p><i>Producing a basic structural outline of an assignment, including potential headings and sub-headings.</i></p>	<p>You are a student undertaking a degree apprenticeship in...</p> <p>Your next assignment brief includes the following information and guidance...</p> <p>Generate a planning template with relevant headings and sub-headings.</p>
<p><i>Identifying synonyms and associated terms that can be used to search for relevant academic literature, broadening your results.</i></p>	<p>Produce a list of 10 synonyms for ethical considerations.</p> <p>Evaluate which options are most applicable to the public healthcare sector and explain your reasoning.</p>
<p><i>Searching for relevant academic literature.</i></p>	<p>Locate 5 peer-reviewed academic sources with the highest number of citations, published in the past five years, on the topic of using AI to improve decision-making in the finance industry. Do not include academic sources that cannot be accessed for free or without a subscription.</p>
<p><i>Determining the relevance of a source to your assignment topic.</i></p>	<p>Summarise the purpose, methodology, and key findings of this journal article in no more than 250 words...</p>
<p><i>Defining key concepts and terminology.</i></p>	<p>Define 'qualitative research' to a non-expert audience.</p>
<p><i>Simplifying complex theories to develop a foundational level of understanding.</i></p>	<p>Explain Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs in simple terms, including examples relevant to a modern workplace.</p>
<p><i>Considering the potential limitations of research.</i></p>	<p>You are a professor undertaking research into... Identify 3 potential limitations of the following journal article.</p>

<p><i>Summarising grammatical rules for the purpose of applying them to your work.</i></p>	<p>According to the rules of English grammar, when should words be capitalised in a university assignment?</p>
<p><i>Listing unnecessary 'filler' words that are regularly used in assignments for the purpose of identifying them in your work.</i></p>	<p>Generate a list of unnecessary 'filler' words commonly used by students in university assignments.</p>
<p><i>Identifying formal alternatives to colloquial phrases.</i></p>	<p>What are some formal alternatives for 'put together' that could be used in a university assignment?</p>
<p><i>Generating a reference list or individual entries.</i></p>	<p>Generate a reference list entry for this book in the QA Harvard style...</p> <p>For example: Maylor, H. (2010) <i>Project Management</i>. 4th edn. Harlow: Pearson Education Ltd.</p>

Continuous Testing and Improvement

Continuous testing and improvement are frequently required to compose an effective prompt. You may therefore find it useful to **collate two versions of a prompt with one or two key variations, assessing which produces the most relevant output**. For example:

1. Produce a timetable for completing a 3000-word university assignment over a 10-week term, including deadlines for conducting research, planning, drafting, and editing the submission.
2. You are a degree apprenticeship student with 10 weeks to research, plan, and write the following 3000-word report. Produce a timetable for completion, including soft deadlines.

This may help you to **determine which approach is best suited to a given task, allowing you to optimise your prompts for different contexts**.

Reference List

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