

AI Prompt Engineering

ABSOLUTE BEGINNER'S GUIDE

No experience necessary!



Michael Miller

FREE SAMPLE CHAPTER |



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Michael Miller



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About the Author

This book is written by me, **Michael Miller**. Having written one best-selling book (*Using Artificial Intelligence: Absolute Beginner's Guide*), a training course, and numerous articles about artificial intelligence, I am apparently an AI expert—at least on the end-user level. (I don't pretend to be a developer in any way, shape, or form.)

Equally important, I've written more than 200 books over the past four decades, including the aforementioned one about AI and several others in the *Absolute Beginner's Guide* series. My readers say I have a knack for explaining complex technologies in easy-to-understand terms, and who's to argue with what my readers think? My books have collectively sold more than 2 million copies worldwide, which I'm justifiably proud of.

I have always had an interest in new and evolving technologies. I've been around long enough to experience and write about many different "new" technologies, from the original IBM PC in the 1980s to the Internet in the '90s to social media in the 2000s. AI is just the next new technology to explore.

Now a bit about me. I reside in a suburb of Minnesota's Twin Cities and do almost all my writing in a handful of local coffeeshops. (I drink chai, not coffee, however.) In addition to writing books like this one, I play drums, hang out with my eight grandkids, and write about music from the '60s, '70s, and '80s in my *Classic Song of the Day* blog (www.classicsongoftheday.com). I also have a YouTube channel you might want to check out, at www.youtube.com/@MichaelMillerWriter; there's some interesting and educational stuff there.

If you want to find out more about me and what I'm up to, check out my website, located at www.millerwriter.com. Feel free to use the contact form there to get in touch with me. I'm interested in all that anybody might have to say or ask, even though may not always be able to respond personally. I appreciate any feedback you might have.

Dedication

To my grandkids, in chronological order: Collin, Alethia, Hayley, Judah, Lael, Jackson, Jamie, and Addie. They're growing up in a much different world than the one I knew when I was their ages.

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Introduction

So, you want to become more proficient in your use of artificial intelligence (AI) tools. That is presumably why you're now reading this book. Good for you; hopefully I'll provide you with the information and skills you need to become a proficient AI prompt engineer.

When it comes to AI, which is a topic none of us seems to be able to avoid, I am of mixed minds. I see its value but also see its limitations. Let me elaborate.

First, the obvious. AI is a really big deal and is going to get even bigger. There's no question that AI will have a significant impact on many professions. Because it can quickly recognize patterns in vast amounts of data, AI stands to revolutionize scientific and medical research, as well as automate a lot of currently manual tasks. We will go further and faster with AI's help.

Then there's the impact of AI on business. If AI isn't impacting your job yet, it will—soon and perhaps in a major way. Many, many employers are looking to use AI to take over certain business functions, which will improve their profits while at the same time cause untold numbers of people to lose their jobs. On the other hand, if you manage to keep your job through the AI revolution, you'll probably be able to use artificial intelligence tools to become more efficient in it. So, there's that.

AI also looks to revolutionize our personal lives. AI tools will help you make better personal decisions, communicate better with others, and make more efficient use of your time. Over time, you may come to think of AI as an indispensable part of your life.

All that said, AI is not perfect—nor is it the be-all, end-all for all of society's ills. AI is only as good as the data it trains on, and that data comes from us human beings and our flawed human experiences. Because of that, it's quite possible that AI agents will only ever be average performers, not exceptional ones.

That's why I tend to think of artificial intelligence the same way I think of the Cliff character on the old *Cheers* television show. (If you're too young to remember *Cheers*, look it up online; it's probably streaming somewhere.) In that show, Cliff was the guy at the end of the bar who professed to be an expert on everything. Ask a question, and Cliff had an answer. ("Here's a little-known fact ...")

The problem with Cliff was that he *didn't* know everything. While ol' Cliffie was a self-professed expert on every conceivable topic, he really didn't know as much as he thought. Cliff's knowledge, as the old saying goes, was a mile wide and an inch deep. He knew a little bit about a lot of stuff but not a lot about any given thing.

Worse, what Cliff didn't know, he made up. His proclamations might start out with a nugget of factual information but then veer off into wild speculation—speculation, one might recall, presented with an unerring air of authority.

It's the same thing with AI. AI doesn't know everything—and what it doesn't know, it makes up. Now, today's advanced AI models might be more knowledgeable than Cliff (and better guessers, too), but they still make up a lot of stuff a lot of the time. (When AI makes something up out of whole cloth, it's called a *hallucination*.) That's not good.

What I'm getting at is that while AI is important and will become more so, it's not perfect. You can, however, help AI achieve its highest potential by how you interact with it. That's what prompt engineering is all about.

What Prompt Engineering Is—and What It Isn't

The phrase “prompt engineering” might be new to you. It certainly sounds very technical and impressive—scary, even.

Fortunately, prompt engineering isn't that technical or complex. It's just another way of saying “crafting effective prompts.” As you probably know, a prompt is the input you provide to an AI model, and you craft a prompt pretty much the same way you craft a query to a web search engine. Nothing overly technical involved.

The big difference with an AI prompt, however, is that you need more than a word or two to get your point across. The more explicit your prompt—the more detailed and exact your instructions—the better the results you'll receive. That's what prompt engineering is all about: learning how to craft the most effective prompts possible.

What you might not know, or at least not yet, is that there are several different strategies you can employ when creating a prompt. Proper prompt engineering involves choosing the best prompt strategy, including all the necessary elements, and then fine-tuning your input until you get the output you want. It doesn't matter whether you're using AI to draft an email, create a presentation, or generate an image, the quality and completeness of your prompt will make all the difference in the world.

That's why I wrote this book—to help you become a better prompt engineer and get better AI results.

What's in This Book

AI Prompt Engineering: Absolute Beginner's Guide is your guide to crafting more effective AI prompts. This book will take you through the figurative A to Z of prompt engineering, no prior experience required. I assume that you know a little bit about some of the most popular AI tools and that you've probably used some of these tools to some extent. You're not an AI expert, by any means, but you're at least familiar with the technology.

Let's be clear. While you're familiar enough with AI to know how to use it, you don't need to be an expert or an AI professional to use this book or to practice proper prompt engineering. This book is for the average user just dabbling in AI, as well as for more advanced users who need to use AI in their professions. It's a reality that users of all types and levels need to use prompt engineering to get better AI results, and this book is for everybody.

For that reason, *AI Prompt Engineering: Absolute Beginner's Guide* starts pretty much at the beginning, with a brief review of AI basics and an overview of today's most popular AI tools. From there, you'll delve right into the topics of prompt engineering—what it is, how it works, and how to use it. You'll discover the six major prompting strategies and when to use them, as well as how to employ prompt engineering for various AI-related tasks. You'll even get some predesigned prompt templates you can use in specific situations.

You start the book knowing little to nothing about prompt engineering and finish it being able to use prompt engineering to produce better AI results. That's time well spent, don't you think?

How This Book Is Organized

The information in *AI Prompt Engineering: Absolute Beginner's Guide* is organized into 23 fairly accessible chapters plus one appendix. Here's how that information is presented:

Chapter 1, "Understanding Generative AI": A basic overview of today's artificial intelligence technology and a quick look at the most popular AI tools.

Chapter 2, "What Is Prompt Engineering—and Why Is It Important?": This is where you learn all about prompt engineering—what it is, how it works, and how to use it. It's all about the importance of proper prompt design.

Chapter 3, "The Anatomy of a Perfect Prompt": This chapter shows you the important elements of a prompt, how to structure an effective prompt, and what to include and not include in a prompt.

Chapter 4, "Defining Output in Your Prompts": This is a chapter about output format and style, and how to ensure that you get the right type of output you want.

Chapter 5, "Understanding and Comparing Different Prompting Strategies": Introducing the six essential prompt strategies and when to use each.

Chapter 6, "Using Zero-Shot Prompting": Zero-shot prompting is creating a prompt without providing any examples. Learn how and when to use this strategy.

Chapter 7, "Using One-Shot Prompting": This chapter introduces one-shot prompting, the strategy that involves creating a prompt that includes an example of the type and style of output you want.

Chapter 8, "Using Few-Shot Prompting": If one-shot prompting is good, few-shot prompting ought to be better, right? Find out in this chapter where you learn what few-shot prompting is, how to use it, and when it makes sense.

Chapter 9, "Using Role-Based Prompting": Sometimes you get better results by assigning AI a role or persona to shape its tone and style. This chapter will tell you all about it.

Chapter 10, "Using Chain-of-Thought Prompting": In this chapter, you learn how to create prompts that encourage AI to think step-by-step to reach a solution—and to display all the steps.

Chapter 11, "Using Self-Consistency Prompting": This one's all about asking the AI model to generate multiple reasoning paths and then select the most consistent results.

Chapter 12, "Using Prompt Chaining": This chapter is about a technique that uses multiple prompts linked together in a sequence to achieve the desired output.

Chapter 13, "Using Multimodal Prompts": Here's where you learn how to use multimodal prompts—prompts that, in addition to the traditional text prompt, utilize other types of input, such as text documents, images, and videos.

Chapter 14, "Evaluating Prompt Performance": How do you know when a prompt is working? This chapter is all about defining the metrics of success, using both quantitative and qualitative evaluation models.

Chapter 15, "Refining Your Prompts": Sometimes the AI doesn't get it right the first time. This chapter shows how to improve your results by using iterative prompting—and asking the AI to critique its own response.

Chapter 16, "Prompting for Writing": Now we get into how to use prompt engineering for specific types of tasks. In this chapter, we tackle prompt engineering for writing of all types, from social media posts and emails to research papers and novels.

Chapter 17, "Prompting for Productivity": In this chapter, you learn specific prompting techniques for different productivity use cases—business, education, medicine, and the like.

Chapter 18, "Prompting for Image Generation": Using AI to generate images is a whole other ball game, and this chapter details how to engineer your prompts for the types of pictures and drawings you want.

Chapter 19, "Prompting for Video Generation": If you thought prompting AI for image generation was different, wait till you learn how to use prompt engineering to create AI-generated videos—which is what this chapter is about.

Chapter 20, “Prompting for Music Generation”: This chapter teaches you how to use prompt engineering to create your own AI-generated music.

Chapter 21, “Advanced Prompting Strategies and Tools”: Learn even more tips and tricks for improving your prompts. Really.

Chapter 22, “Prompting Responsibly”: This chapter is all about the ethical issues related to the use of AI, and how you can make sure you use AI ethically, responsibly, and legally.

Chapter 23, “Troubleshooting Less-Effective Prompts”: Find out how to recognize and improve prompts that aren't quite right yet.

Chapter 24, “Future Directions in AI and Prompt Engineering”: This final chapter wraps things up by discussing what's next for artificial intelligence technology and the art of prompt engineering.

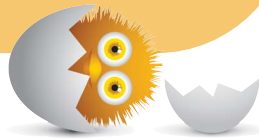
In addition, there's an appendix after Chapter 24 that includes dozens of prompt templates for all types of AI-related tasks. If you're not sure what kind of prompt to create, that's the place to look.

One last thing. As you read through this book, you'll see a variety of notes that provide additional information—some of which is cautionary. You'll also find some extended sidebars that provide tangential information that might be interesting but not necessarily necessary. You may find them interesting or helpful.

IN THIS CHAPTER

- Crafting an effective AI prompt
- Necessary components of an AI prompt
- What *not* to include in a prompt
- Putting it all together

3



THE ANATOMY OF A PERFECT PROMPT

AI prompt engineering is all about crafting more effective AI prompts, but how exactly do you do that? Not surprisingly, the most effective prompts contain similar key elements. Include these elements, and you'll likely be more satisfied with the AI results.

Crafting an Effective AI Prompt

Crafting an effective AI prompt requires a clear understanding of what you want to receive and some forethought on how to best instruct the AI model to give you what you want. That's what prompt engineering is all about—engineering an effective prompt.

To be effective, your prompt needs to tell the AI model what you want it to do, how you want it to do it, and how you want it to present the results. You need to present these instructions in as much detail as necessary, while also being as concise as possible. (That's contradictory, I know; when in doubt, err on the side of too much detail.)

Doing this requires a little homework. Just entering a bunch of words off the top of your head isn't prompt engineering, it's freeforming—and it isn't consistently effective. You need to think about what you want the AI to do and then figure out the best way to instruct it to do that.

You might even want to write your prompt in advance, so that you can edit it as you work through it. Read through your prompt, one step or item at a time, and make sure it makes sense to you. If you get confused, so will the AI tool. Make the effort to ensure that your prompt is as clear as possible and includes all the necessary instructions and information.

Bottom line: Think of your prompt as a set of instructions that the AI will follow precisely. Make sure you're explaining things as clearly as possible and don't leave anything to chance.

Necessary Components of an AI Prompt

Whether you're asking for text, image, or video output, your AI prompt needs to include the same basic components. These components include

- **Task:** What you want the AI to do, such as "write a..." or "summarize this..." or "generate a..." in as much detail as possible.
- **Format:** What kind of output you need, including length, type (blog post, letter, and so on), file format, and any other pertinent details.
- **Topic:** The thing in which you're interested. The subject of the verb presented in the task—write a paper about *topic*, answer a question about *topic*, or create a photo of a *topic*.
- **Tone or style:** Serious, lighthearted, professional, and so on.

- **Context:** Background information and relevant details about the topic, audience, or situation.
- **Requirements or constraints:** Things that the AI should include or exclude from the task.

We'll look at each of these elements in more detail next.

Task

Probably the most important part of a prompt is the task or objective—what you want the AI to do. This is the primary directive to the AI tool, in as much detail and specificity as possible.

Start out by using action verbs, such as

- Write (a blog post, an email, a short story, and so on)
- Explain (a topic or concept)
- Tell me about (a topic)
- Generate (ideas, a list, an outline)
- Create (a photorealistic image, a watercolor painting, a short film)
- Summarize (a document, a piece of text, meeting notes)
- Analyze (a document, a piece of text, a web page, a report)
- Translate (a word, a phrase, a document)
- Compare (two documents, two pieces of text, two approaches or theories)

Format

The format describes, in as much detail as possible, the type of output you want. It can be rather broad, such as an **article**, **story**, or **social media post**. But it should also include other necessary details, such as

- Length (number of words or pages or, for an audio or video, amount of time)
- File format
- Number of paragraphs or number of sections
- Number of slides (for a presentation)
- Aspect ratio or dimensions (for an image or video)
- Professional formats (such as MLA or APA format for scholarly papers)

The format might also specify how you want the output structured, such as in a bulleted or numbered list, Q&A format, and so forth. If the result should include specific sections, such as an introduction or summary, notate that as well.



NOTE Learn more about specifying different output formats in Chapter 4, “Defining Output in Your Prompts.”

Topic

Every task should reference a specific topic or target. The topic is typically a noun with one or more descriptive adjectives.

The topic follows the task and the format. As an example, the task might be **write**, the format might be **a blog post**, and the topic would be what you want the post to be about, such as **adopting a pet**. Put it all together, and you get the prompt:

write a blog post about adopting a pet

The more specific the topic, the better. For example, instead of saying

write about banks

say

write about the history and different types of American banking institutions

Instead of saying:

create a picture of a girl

Describe the subject in more detail as

create a picture of a teenaged girl with long blonde hair and blue eyes wearing an orange t-shirt

Along the same lines, instead of saying

create a menu for dinner

say

Create a menu for dinner for four that includes appetizer, main course, and dessert and is gluten-free. Attendees prefer something light Mediterranean influenced.

Instead of saying

generate an outline for a detective story

Provide more details, such as

generate an outline for a detective story about a missing wife, mobsters, and an insurance scam, set in Chicago in the 1940s

The more details you can include about your topic, the better.

Tone and Style

With this element, you tell the AI what type of tone or style in which you want the results presented. This one isn't necessarily mandatory, but it can help steer the AI toward the desired results.

When describing the desired tone, you can use words such as *professional*, *friendly*, *witty*, *persuasive*, *formal*, *casual*, *academic*, *conversational*, or *concise*. When it comes to style, use descriptors such as *dark*, *dramatic*, *comedic*, *pompous*, and the like. You can even reference defined dramatic styles, such as **create a hardboiled mystery story** or **write a poem in the style of Robert Frost**. Use whatever descriptors you need to convey how you want your results presented.

Context

Think of context as important background information that can help the AI model fine-tune its results. This background info might include details about the situation or characters, key facts about a given topic, important data points, where an image or video takes place, and the like.

Requirements/Constraints

This element details things that must be included in the output or should not be included in the output. For example, if you're writing a paper for school, you can specify that the paper includes citations, a specific number of sources, and a summary or conclusion. You can specify elements or ideas that must be included, such as pointing to relevant data or arguments that should be referenced. For images, you also specify items that should be included in an image, such as background details and overall color scheme.

You can also specify things that should be avoided in the results, such as to avoid technical jargon, avoid inappropriate language or images, avoid mentioning specific arguments or approaches, or avoid mentioning particular individuals or groups. For images, you can also define colors or details to avoid.

In addition, you can note the intended audience for the output, as well as the desired reading level, such as **write an article at an 8th grade reading level** or **present the information in a way that 4th graders can understand it**.

Optional Elements

There are also several optional elements you can include in a prompt as appropriate for the task at hand and the type of output you desire. These elements include

- **Goal:** If the objective is to persuade an audience to action or achieve some sort of response, let the AI know. For example, you might insert the goal of **convince the reader to vote for the proposal** or **lead the reader to request a sample** or something similar.
- **Role:** Ask the AI to assume a specific identity or perspective or describe the likely consumer of the output. For example, you might include something like **assume the role of a drill sergeant** or **assume you're teaching a high school class** or **write as if you're a seasoned political analyst**. Or, to detail the role of the consumer, you might include something like **direct the output to seniors considering Medicare plans** or **assume the readers are students at a liberal arts college**.



NOTE Learn more about having AI assume a specific role in Chapter 9, "Using Role-Based Prompting."

- **Examples and references:** One or more similar items that can serve as a reference for what type of output you want. You can use a specific URL to direct the AI to content on the web; cut and paste the example or reference into your prompt; or, with some AI tools, upload the reference as a separate file.



NOTE Learn more about using examples and references in Chapter 13, "Using Multimodal Prompts."

Which of these optional elements you include, if any, depends on the type of output you desire.

What Not to Include in a Prompt

Knowing what not to include in an AI prompt is just as important as knowing what to include. To ensure better results, here are some things to avoid in your prompts:

- **Too many tasks at once:** AI models, just like us human beings, can get confused or overwhelmed if tasked to do too many things at the same time. If what you want is overly complex, break it down into multiple prompts.
- **Too many details or too much background information:** Similarly, you can overwhelm some AI models by including too many irrelevant background

details. Include what’s important or necessary, but don’t make the model try to extract the wheat from the unnecessary chaff.

- **Contradictory instructions:** Don’t ask the AI to go in two different directions at the same time. Your desired output cannot be both serious and light-hearted at the same time, nor can it be concise and detailed. Pick your lane and stick to it.
- **Jargon and industry speak:** Use plain English when crafting your prompt. Avoid lingo and TLAs (three-letter acronyms) that only industry insiders will understand. Don’t assume the AI knows all the jargon used inside your company or industry.
- **Inappropriate or sensitive content:** Avoid asking for or referencing anything illegal, violent, or discriminatory. (You may, in fact, be prohibited from entering inappropriate prompts with some AI engines.)
- **Copyrighted material:** Along the same lines, avoid infringing on any copyrighted characters or material. While some AI engines might let you generate an image of Superman at your birthday party, others will refuse to do so on copyright grounds.

When it comes to crafting your prompts, just use common sense. Don’t do anything confusing or inappropriate, and you should be fine.

Putting It All Together

Now that you know what you should and shouldn’t include in an AI prompt, let’s put it all together to look at how to construct a complete prompt. Referencing all the previously discussed elements, follow this format:

[task] [format] [topic] [tone] [context] [requirements/constraints] [optional elements]

For example, if you want to write a college-level paper about the Revolutionary War, you can identify the elements shown in Table 3.1.

TABLE 3.1 Elements of a Prompt for a Scholarly Paper

Element	Example
Task	Write a paper
Format	1,000 words in MLA format
Topic	Revolutionary War
Tone	Scholarly

Element	Example
Context	Audience of college history professors
Requirements/constraints	Include information about the role of the Founding Fathers
Optional elements	Convince the audience to provide additional funding for my research

Now all you have to do is put all that together in a prompt. Here's what that might look like:

Write a 1,000-word paper in MLA format about the Revolutionary War. Use a scholarly tone appropriate for an audience of college history professors and include information about the role of the Founding Fathers. The goal is to convince the audience to provide additional funding for my research.

Figure 3.1 shows the beginning of the paper, as written by ChatGPT.

The Revolutionary War and the Founding Fathers: A Critical Reassessment

The American Revolutionary War (1775–1783) stands not merely as a military confrontation between Great Britain and its North American colonies but as a crucible in which modern political thought, constitutional government, and national identity were forged. While popular historical narratives have long celebrated the war's drama and idealism, a deeper scholarly investigation reveals a more intricate tapestry of philosophical ambition, strategic diplomacy, and internal discord. At the center of this narrative lie the Founding Fathers—figures such as George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, John Adams, Benjamin Franklin, James Madison, and Alexander Hamilton—whose complex roles as revolutionaries, politicians, and thinkers demand a more nuanced analysis. This paper argues that sustained research into the Revolutionary War, with particular focus on the ideological and strategic contributions of the Founding Fathers, remains not only relevant but essential to understanding the genesis of American political culture. I seek additional funding to expand this line of inquiry, especially through archival work and historiographic reevaluation.

The traditional historiography of the Revolutionary War has often leaned toward hagiography, elevating the Founding Fathers to quasi-mythical status. Yet, in recent decades, revisionist historians have begun to deconstruct these figures, examining the contradictions between their revolutionary ideals and their personal or political practices (Wood 12; Holton 47). For example, Thomas Jefferson's authorship of the Declaration of Independence in 1776—a document espousing equality and liberty—stands in stark contrast to his lifelong enslavement of African Americans. Likewise, George Washington's evolution from colonial officer to commander-in-chief of the Continental Army reflects both strategic brilliance and calculated image management (Chernow 103). A more thorough examination of these tensions can shed light on the ideological undercurrents of the Revolution and how ↓ war's leaders reconciled, or failed to reconcile, principle with practice.

FIGURE 3.1

The opening paragraphs of a scholarly paper about the Revolutionary War, as created by ChatGPT.

Follow this format to create prompts for all types of tasks. As another example, let's say you want to create a short story for a six-year-old boy about superheroes in his neighborhood. Table 3.2 details the necessary elements.

TABLE 3.2 Elements of a Prompt for a Children’s Story

Element	Example
Task	Tell me a bedtime story
Format	Less than five minutes long
Topic	Superheroes in our neighborhood
Tone	Lighthearted
Context	For a six-year-old boy
Requirements/constraints	Not scary
Optional elements	Help put the boy to sleep

And here’s the resulting prompt:

Tell me a bedtime story less than five minutes long about superheroes in our neighborhood for a six-year-old boy. The tone should be lighthearted, not scary, and help put the boy to sleep.

Figure 3.2 shows the beginning of just such a story, as written by DeepSeek.

The Sleepy Superheroes of Sunny Street

One quiet evening on Sunny Street, as the moon rose high and the stars began to twinkle, six-year-old Max snuggled under his blanket. But just before he closed his eyes, he heard a tiny *whoosh* outside his window.

Curious, Max peeked out and gasped—there, in the soft glow of the streetlight, was **Captain Pillow**, the sleepest superhero of all! His fluffy cape billowed as he stretched and yawned.

"Time for my bedtime patrol," Captain Pillow mumbled, floating gently down the street.

Then, *zip!* **Pajama Girl** zoomed by in her striped slippers, delivering warm milk to anyone still awake. "Night-night, neighbors!" she whispered.

Max giggled as **Blanket Boy** rolled past like a cozy burrito, tucking in stray puppies and sleepy cats. "Snuggle tight!" he murmured.

Finally, **The Lullaby** floated down from the sky, strumming her guitar and singing a soft, soothing song. One by one, the houses on Sunny Street sighed and drifted off to sleep.

FIGURE 3.2

The first part of a bedtime story about superheroes, as conceived by DeepSeek.

You can also use this approach to create prompts for images, videos, and music. For example, if you want to generate a photo of an older couple at the dinner table for a marketing brochure, you’d use the elements shown in Table 3.3.

TABLE 3.3 Elements of a Prompt to Create a Photographic Image

Element	Example
Task	Generate
Format	Photorealistic image in portrait format
Topic	Older couple sitting next to each other at a dinner table
Tone	Warm
Context	For a marketing brochure
Requirements/constraints	The couple should be holding hands and smiling.
Optional elements	Selling life insurance

Here's the resulting prompt:

Generate a photorealistic image in landscape format of an older couple sitting next to each other at a dinner table. The vibe should be warm and appropriate for a marketing brochure. The couple should be holding hands and smiling. The goal is to help sell life insurance.

Figure 3.3 shows just one of the images generated by Midjourney from this prompt.

**FIGURE 3.3**

A photorealistic image of an older couple at the dinner table, as generated by Midjourney.

As you can see, when you follow this format and include the proper elements, you get pretty good results. It's a good place to start with your prompt engineering.

And, to help you get started, here's a blank form you can copy and use for your own prompt construction. It's labeled as Table 3.4, but it's really a prompt element template for your use.

TABLE 3.4 Prompt Element Template

Element	Your prompt
Task	
Format	
Topic	
Tone	
Context	
Requirements/constraints	
Optional elements	

TIPS FOR MORE EFFECTIVE AI PROMPTS

Want to make your prompts even better? Then consider these quick tips for more effective prompts:

- Be as specific as possible.
- Use clear and concise language.
- Provide context or other background information that might be useful.
- Include any necessary requirements or constraints.
- Provide examples, in the form of similar files or the type of person who is writing or consuming the item.
- Ask for multiple options and then choose the best result given.
- Break complex tasks into multiple steps or multiple prompts.
- Use follow-up prompts to refine the results.
- Ask the AI tool to analyze and improve its own results.

As you can see, there are a lot of little things you can do to guarantee better AI results. For even more tips, check out Chapter 21, "Advanced Prompting Strategies and Tools."

Summary

In this chapter, you learned the anatomy of an effective AI prompt. You learned how to craft a prompt and the essential elements to include. You also learned what *not* to include and how to put it all together in a practical fashion.

Next up, more information on how to use prompts to define your desired output.

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