Before you draft: should you?

Not legal advice. These pages teach a careful way of *preparing* a document with an AI assistant. They state no law for any place and cannot tell you whether a document is valid. Before you sign, send or rely on an agreement that matters, have a lawyer licensed where you are review it.

The question is not "can an assistant write this?" (it can write anything) but "what happens if this is wrong, and would I know?" The handbook sorts documents into three bands:

Green, low stakes: a polite or complaint letter, meeting minutes, house rules for guests. Use the method; a lawyer review is optional.

Amber, moderate stakes: a room rental or lodger agreement, a simple service or freelance agreement, a refund policy or privacy notice. Use the whole method, then have a licensed lawyer review it before you sign or publish.

Red, lawyer first: the list below. Don't start with a draft; use the method only to organize your facts and questions.

SPEAK TO A LAWYER FIRST IF ANY OF THESE APPLY

- ◯ You have received court papers, a formal demand, or an official letter with a deadline.
- ◯ Eviction, dismissal from a job, discrimination, a debt claim, or a dispute that is already heated.
- ◯ Family matters (separation, custody, support), wills and estates, powers of attorney.
- ◯ Immigration, criminal matters, tax disputes.
- ◯ Buying, selling or mortgaging property; commercial leases; anything registered with a public office.
- ◯ Employing people: employment contracts, termination, contractor-or-employee questions.
- ◯ Raising money, shares, partnerships and business ownership, loans of significant sums.
- ◯ Health information, children's data, or other sensitive personal data processed as part of a business.
- ◯ Anything where the amount involved would seriously hurt to lose, or where the other side has a lawyer.

PROMPT 1 · IS THERE AN OFFICIAL FORM?

I need to prepare a [type of document] for [one-sentence situation] in [country, state/province, city]. Do not tell me what the law requires. Instead:
1. Tell me what kinds of official bodies commonly publish forms, model documents or guidance for this type of document (for example a government department, a court, a regulator or a city or county government), so I know where to look.
2. Give me search phrases I can use on official websites.
3. Tell me which features of my situation might put this document in a category where a lawyer should be consulted before drafting.
Do not give web addresses or the names or numbers of specific laws or forms. If you mention a kind of body or document, mark it "unverified" so I can find it myself. Say clearly where you are unsure.

EVERY CHAT STARTS HERE

The rules block and a research plan

Copy a prompt into a chat and replace the highlighted [placeholders]. Paste the rules block at the start of every chat about the document. Keep real names, addresses and account numbers out of the chat.

PROMPT 2 · THE RULES BLOCK

RULES FOR THIS CHAT
- You are helping me prepare a document. You are not my lawyer and this is not legal advice.
- The place whose rules apply is: [country / state or province / city].
- Do not state what the law is. Use only the official text I paste, and quote it when you rely on it.
- Never invent facts, amounts, dates, names or legal references. If something is missing, write [FACT NEEDED: ...], [DECISION NEEDED: ...] or [CHECK LOCAL RULE: ...].
- Write in plain English. Keep my defined terms exactly as written.
- Change only what I ask you to change, and list every change you made.
- If you are unsure, say so instead of guessing.

The assistant plans your research; it must not answer it. You look up the official pages yourself and paste the exact text back.

PROMPT 3 · RESEARCH PLAN

[Rules block and section checklist.]
Make me a research plan. For each item marked [CHECK LOCAL RULE]:
1. Write the question in plain words, as specifically as possible.
2. Suggest which level of government or kind of official body is most likely to cover it.
3. Give me two or three search phrases to use on official websites.
Do not tell me the answers, even if you think you know them. Do not give web addresses or the names or numbers of specific laws or forms. I will paste the official text back to you.

BEFORE YOU START

- [ ] The document is green or amber, not red; if red, I am speaking to a lawyer or legal aid first.
- [ ] I have looked for an official form or model document for this situation.
- [ ] I know which place's rules apply (and whether more than one place is involved).

KEEP THE EXACT WORDS

The RULES file

One entry for every official rule you rely on. Paste the exact text, not a summary, and date it: rules change.

TEMPLATE · RULES ENTRY (FROM THE BOOK'S ROOM RENTAL EXAMPLE)

R3. Notice to end a lodger agreement
Source: [title of the official page or law, section number if any]
Published by: [government body]
Address: [full web address]
Checked: [date you read it]
Type: [law / regulation / official guidance]
Applies to me because: [one line, e.g. "covers lodgers in the owner's home"; or "not sure: question for the lawyer"]
Exact text:
"[Paste the exact wording. Do not summarize here.]"
My plain-language note: [your own one-line summary, marked as yours]

THE RULES ARE READY WHEN

- [ ] Every [CHECK LOCAL RULE] item from the shape checklist has a RULES entry or a question in QUESTIONS.
- [ ] Every RULES entry has the exact text, title, publisher, web address and date checked.
- [ ] I have noted why each rule applies to me, or added the doubt to QUESTIONS.
- [ ] I checked for city or local rules as well as national and state or provincial ones.
- [ ] No rule in RULES came only from an assistant, a blog or a template site.

[CHECK LOCAL RULE] marks any point that depends on the place. The "shape checklist" is the list of sections a document of this type usually has, which the handbook asks the assistant for before any drafting.

What the full handbook adds. “Prompt the Prompt: Legal and Business Documents” is a 57-page PDF in US Letter and A4: 5 parts, 16 chapters and 4 appendices, with 21 copy-ready prompts, checklists and 7 folder templates (also as a plain-text file). It follows one room rental agreement from the first question to the lawyer's review: the decisions interview, plain language, drafting with placeholders, letters and notices, policies and privacy notices, reviewing as the other party, checking against the official text, and preparing a review pack for a lawyer. At mothleaf.com/product/prompt-the-prompt-legal-and-business-documents.

Set for A4 (210 × 297 mm); print at 100% or read on screen. Free for personal use: copy and adapt the prompts and templates for your own documents. Please share the link rather than the file. Works with any chat-based AI assistant. Educational only. Not legal advice; it does not create a lawyer-client relationship and does not state the law of any place.