The method on one page

You don't have to write the perfect prompt yourself. Let the assistant ask the questions and draft the brief, plan the work in small steps, and move each step into a clean, focused chat. The decisions stay yours.

1 **Let it interview you**
Say what you want in a sentence, then let the assistant ask you questions, one at a time. It ends with a short brief for you to confirm. (Template 1)

2 **Have it write the prompt**
Ask for the prompt that would do the task well, not for the task itself. Read it, fix it, and note the decisions it says you still have to make. (Template 2)

3 **Plan first**
For anything bigger than a paragraph, ask for the steps before any work: what each needs from you, what it produces, and where it can go wrong. (Template 3)

4 **One step at a time**
Do one step, stop, and check it before the next. A mistake caught at step two costs minutes; at step nine it can cost everything.

5 **Fresh chat, clean handoff**
When a chat gets long or starts drifting, ask it for a handoff note, check the note, and paste it into a new chat. (Template 4)

6 **Separate maker and checker**
Have a fresh chat that never saw the work review it against your standard. You stay the judge of what to fix. (Template 5)

YOUR PROJECT

Goal _____

Who it is for _____

Decisions made so far _____

_____

Current step _____

Still to decide _____

NOTES

_____

_____

TEMPLATES 1 TO 3

Start well

Copy a template into a chat and replace the highlighted [placeholders] with your own details.

TEMPLATE 1 · LET IT INTERVIEW YOU

I want to [goal]. Before you start, interview me to get what you need to do this well.
Ask one question at a time, and wait for my answer before asking the next.
Start with the questions that matter most. When you have enough, stop and summarize what you've learned as a short brief, then ask me to confirm it before you begin.

TEMPLATE 2 · THE PROMPT-WRITING PROMPT

I need help with a task, but I don't want you to do it yet. I want you to write the prompt I should give an AI assistant to do it really well.

My task: [describe it]
My situation: [who it's for, constraints, what you already have]

Write a prompt that:
- states the goal and the audience clearly
- lists the information the assistant will need, with placeholders where I must fill in details
- sets clear constraints and an exact output format
- tells the assistant to ask questions before starting if anything is unclear
- tells it to mark uncertain claims and never invent facts, figures or sources
- breaks the work into steps and asks it to stop for my review after each step

Then list any placeholders I still need to fill in, and any decisions I haven't made yet.

The last line of Template 2 matters most: the list of decisions you haven't made yet is often the most useful part of the reply.

TEMPLATE 3 · PLAN FIRST

I want to [goal]. Don't do the work yet. First, give me a step-by-step plan:
- the steps in order, each with a one-line description
- what each step needs from me (information, decisions, files)
- what the output of each step will be
- the risks or common mistakes at each step
- where a qualified professional should be involved, if anywhere

Keep it to the steps that are really needed.

TEMPLATES 4 AND 5

Keep it clean

TEMPLATE 4 · THE HANDOFF NOTE

We're going to continue this work in a new conversation. Write a handoff note that a new assistant, with no access to this chat, can use to continue without asking me to repeat myself. Include:
- the goal and the audience
- decisions made, with the reason for each
- the current state of the work (paste the latest version in full if it's short)
- what's left to do, in order
- constraints and things to avoid
- open questions

Write it as instructions to the new assistant.

Read the note before you use it. It is a summary, and summaries can drop things. Correct it, then paste it at the top of the new chat.

TEMPLATE 5 · THE REVIEW CHAT

You are reviewing work produced by someone else. You did not write it and have no reason to defend it.
The goal it was meant to meet: [goal]
The standard it must meet: [requirements or checklist]

[paste the work]

List every problem you find, most serious first, ranked Critical / Major / Minor / Note. For each: where it is, what is wrong, why it matters, and a suggested fix. If you're unsure whether something is a problem, include it and say you're unsure.

Use a fresh chat that never saw the work being made. It has no reason to defend earlier choices.

What the full handbook adds. “Prompt the Prompt: Working with AI Assistants” is a 53-page PDF in US Letter and A4: 5 parts, 19 chapters and 3 appendices, with 15 copy-ready templates (also as a plain-text file), the anatomy of a good prompt, ways to reduce made-up answers, a review loop with severity levels, audit lenses, and when a person must take over. At mothleaf.com/product/prompt-the-prompt.

Set for US Letter (8.5 × 11 in); print at 100% or read on screen. Free for personal use: copy and adapt the templates for your own work. Please share the link rather than the file. These templates work with any chat-based AI assistant; check what it gives you, especially facts, figures and sources.