



# Creating Effective Prompts

A **prompt** is the input you provide when you are interacting with a genAI tool such as EVA Chat. You are prompting a response from the tool when you pose a question or provide directions.

Prompts can vary in complexity, ranging from simple queries to detailed instructions. A clearly stated prompt can enhance the AI output and help it to align with ESDC objectives and values.

This guide outlines what makes a good prompt, with a focus on content and structure that will obtain the best results. It also addresses the importance of providing relevant information.



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# Key Elements of Effective Prompts

The following key elements should be considered when you are composing a prompt. You can create one prompt that combines all the relevant elements or use additional elements in a follow-up prompt to improve the AI's response.

## ▼ The subject matter

Identify the focus of your prompt:

- Simple example: "Generate a report on ESDC's new AI initiative."
- Complex example: "Create a detailed analysis of ESDC AI Centre's work-aid initiative, including projected benefits and challenges."

## ▼ Your objective

Specify the purpose (e.g. to inform, persuade, analyze, etc.):

- Simple example: "Summarize AI policy updates for ESDC."
- Complex example: "Prepare a briefing on how recent AI policy updates in ESDC will enhance efficiency and align with federal guidelines."

## ▼ Tone

Indicate the desired tone – formal, conversational, persuasive:

- Simple example: "Write a formal letter about AI training."
- Complex example: "Draft a formal letter announcing AI training sessions, emphasizing productivity and compliance."

## ▼ Length

Set a word limit if necessary:

- Simple example: "Write a 300-word AI project update."

- Complex example: "Draft a 1,000-word report on the ESDC's AI project, including milestones and next steps."

### ▼ Keywords

Words or phrases that need to appear in the AI's response:

- Simple example: "Discuss AI tools used at ESDC."
- Complex example: "Analyze the use of 'Generative AI' and 'machine learning' in ESDC modernization efforts."

### ▼ Target Audience

Specify who the content is for:

- Simple example: "Prepare a brief for ESDC managers about AI."
- Complex example: "Create a detailed briefing for senior management on the strategic benefits of AI, focused on operational impact and ROI."

### ▼ References

Identify/provide sources or references to use:

- Simple example: "Include recent AI research."
- Complex example: "Incorporate studies from the AI CoE's 2023 report and research from Gartner and MIT."

### ▼ Call to Action

Specify the desired action from the reader:

- Simple example: "Suggest team members attend an AI workshop."

- Complex example: "Urge team members to register for the AI workshop, including a link and deadline reminder."

Refer to [Examples of Prompts that Combine Key Elements](#) for additional examples that include multiple elements.

## Using a Noun Phrase

A **noun phrase** is a group of words that function as a single noun. You can use these to be more specific and add clarity to your prompt, to generate a more useful response. Noun phrases can improve responses in a variety of ways.

### ▼ Enhancing Specificity and Clarity

- Original: "Generate a report on the **AI project**."
- With a noun phrase: "Generate a report on the **ESDC AI project**."

### ▼ Grounding in Context

- Original: "Summarize **the benefits of the initiative**."
- With a noun phrase: "Summarize the benefits of the **ESDC AI-driven employee work-aid initiative**."

### ▼ Improving Consistency

- Original: "Describe **the impact of the program**. Mention its goals."
- With a noun phrase: "Describe the impact of the **AI Center of Excellence program**, detailing how its goals align with ESDC's strategic objectives."

### ▼ Leveraging Structured Data

- Original: "List the results of the **study**."

- With a noun phrase: "List the results of the **ESDC study on AI implementation**.

#### ▼ Streamlining for Focus

- Original: "Outline **the government's comprehensive strategy for integrating multi-disciplinary approaches in healthcare reform**.
- With a noun phrase: "Outline the **government's healthcare reform strategy**, focusing on its key components and successes.

## Providing Supporting Materials

Including relevant information in your prompt helps to ensure the AI's responses align with your needs. This also helps to avoid “hallucinations” – factually incorrect or misleading content produced by the AI.

#### ▼ Contextual Information

Share background materials such as policy documents to tailor responses. Introduce the material and explain that you want to include it as a source when the AI is composing its response.

#### ▼ Draft Documents

Your prompt may be a request to improve the language, clarity and coherence of a draft document, which you must provide.

#### ▼ Data-Driven Insights

Provide any essential statistics or research that is required to produce an accurate, fact-based response.

#### ▼ Consistency

When you are seeking to generate a series of related AI responses, ensure that in each case you are providing the same references to help ensure consistency across the series.

## Using the Chain-of-Thought Technique

You've created a prompt that uses all of the key elements, you've improved it with noun phrases, and you've pointed to the right supporting materials. But the genAI answer still isn't making sense. Now what's wrong?

Prompts that incorporate multiple elements and point to several sources can be very thorough and help with precision, but they can also be very complex for the AI to interpret and serve with the right emphasis or approach. This can actually make it more difficult for the genAI tool to produce a helpful or correct result.

Chain-of-thought prompting is a technique that can be used to help guide genAI toward a correct and useful answer. It invites the AI to develop its answer using a step-by-step approach that eventually incorporates all of the pieces you require. This may also help uncover why it is giving an incorrect response for the more complicated single prompt.

Here are different options for how to use chain of thought with genAI:

### ▼ Explicit instructions

Use wording that suggests what you want it to think about first, or in what order. For example, you might begin with the words "First we need to consider...". Or you could list the exact sequence of steps you would like it to follow to arrive at its answer: "First we need to search the list for all relevant items and sort those in the correct order; then..." etc.

### ▼ Implicit instructions

This approach is helpful when you don't know yourself what the correct sequence of steps might be. At the end of your prompt, add the words "Let's think step by step." This alone may be enough to improve the response, or it will at least demonstrate the steps which genAI follows to arrive at its response. You can then review those steps to see whether their ordering makes sense. You can then direct the tool to perform those steps in a different order or ask it to perform an additional step in the sequence.



#### ▼ Demonstrate by example

If you can show genAI a similar problem and its correct solution, this can help it to answer your problem more accurately.

The chain of thought technique works best for problems that naturally require a step-by-step approach to arrive at a solution.

## Responsible Use of Generative AI at ESDC

Remember your essential responsibilities when providing prompts to AI: do not share protected or confidential information that poses a risk to privacy or the government.

The AI Centre of Enablement (AI CoE) is committed to integrating AI responsibly. Each application of AI will be evaluated for risk, and ongoing guidance will be provided as capabilities evolve. For questions or to explore AI opportunities, visit the [AI CoE portal](#)  or reach out to [edsc.dgjit.cdeia-aicoe.iitb.esdc@hrsdc-rhdcc.gc.ca](mailto:edsc.dgjit.cdeia-aicoe.iitb.esdc@hrsdc-rhdcc.gc.ca) .

## Examples of Prompts that Combine Key Elements

#### ▼ Example 1

Create a formal (**tone**) report for senior management about ESDC's AI strategy, including recent achievements as well as current challenges in advancing AI technologies (**subject matter**). A primary focus should be on the role of Generative AI, specifically how it can improve processes and enhance the efficiency of daily tasks (**objective**). Include data and references from AI Centre of Enablement's 2023 report

and research from Gartner and MIT (**references**). Summarize the key points in a PowerPoint presentation (**format**), with no more than 10 slides (**length**). Include a final message to urge employees to read and follow guidance on the use of generative artificial intelligence, with a link to the AI Centre of Enablement SharePoint site (**call to action**).


### ▼ Example 2

As a research scientist working at a consulting firm, write a 300-word educational LinkedIn post about the top 5 human-induced factors driving climate change. Ensure that you include the roles of carbon emissions and deforestation, explaining how these factors contribute to global warming. Support your analysis with references from peer-reviewed journals only. Provide an actionable solution for each factor to communicate the message to a general audience.

### ▼ Example 3

Write a 500-word report comparing Denis Villeneuve's Dune: Part One movie adaptation with Frank Herbert's original novel. Focus on key differences in character portrayals and how these variations impact the story, particularly regarding Paul Atreides' rule over Arrakis. Present compelling arguments to encourage fans of the movie to read the book so they will gain a deeper understanding of the characters and themes. Support your analysis with references from movie critics and public reviews.

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