# **Maximizing ChatGPT Plus: A Comprehensive Guide to Advanced Features and Effective Utilization Techniques**

## **Introduction**

OpenAI's ChatGPT Plus subscription offers users a significant upgrade over the free tier, providing access to more powerful language models, enhanced features, and a suite of tools designed to augment productivity and creativity. This document serves as a foundational guide for users seeking to harness the full potential of their ChatGPT Plus membership. It details the various techniques and features available, offering explanations and references to official OpenAI documentation and credible analyses. The objective is to empower users to tailor their ChatGPT experience for diverse applications, moving beyond basic interactions to sophisticated utilization.

**Section 1: Accessing and Utilizing Premium Models**

ChatGPT Plus subscribers benefit from access to OpenAI's most advanced language models, along with tangible performance advantages. Understanding the distinctions between these models and the benefits of a Plus subscription is crucial for optimizing their use.

* 1.1. Overview of Models Available to Plus Users  
  ChatGPT Plus users typically have access to a selection of models, with GPT-4o being the current flagship, alongside GPT-4. While free users may also access GPT-4o, Plus users receive priority and higher usage limits.1
  + **GPT-4o ("omni"):**
    - **Description:** GPT-4o is OpenAI's latest and most advanced model, designed for native multimodality, meaning it can seamlessly understand and generate combinations of text, audio, image, and video inputs/outputs.1 It matches GPT-4 Turbo performance on English text and code but offers significant improvements for non-English languages, vision, and audio understanding, often with faster response times and lower API costs.8 It features a 128k token context length.2
    - **Strengths:** Real-time reasoning across audio, vision, and text; superior performance in multilingual tasks, vision understanding, and audio processing (e.g., lower latency in voice interactions, understanding tone).3 It also powers the new advanced image generation capabilities within ChatGPT.10
    - **When to Choose:** Ideal for complex tasks requiring multimodal understanding, real-time conversational AI (especially voice), tasks involving visual analysis, or when the highest level of reasoning and multilingual capability is needed.3 It is the default for most Plus user interactions.
    - *Source Reference:* OpenAI Model Selector Guide 2, OpenAI GPT-4o Announcement 8, ZDNet 1, DataCamp.5
  + **GPT-4:**
    - **Description:** Prior to GPT-4o, GPT-4 was OpenAI's leading model. It is also a large multimodal model (accepting text and image inputs, outputting text) with significant improvements over GPT-3.5 in reasoning, coding, and reliability.1 It features a 128k token context length.2 Although GPT-4.0 (an older iteration) is scheduled for removal from ChatGPT on April 30, 2025 (though remaining available via API), the GPT-4 model accessible to Plus users remains highly capable.12
    - **Strengths:** Advanced reasoning, complex instruction following, creative generation, and strong performance on professional and academic benchmarks.9 It demonstrated significantly better performance than GPT-3.5 on exams like the simulated bar exam.9
    - **When to Choose:** Excellent for demanding text-based tasks, complex problem-solving, creative writing, and in-depth analysis where GPT-4o's specific multimodal strengths are not the primary requirement, or as an alternative if GPT-4o usage limits are reached.3 Custom GPTs also utilize GPT-4 message quotas.15
    - *Source Reference:* OpenAI Model Selector Guide 2, ZDNet 1, Just AI News 12, OpenAI GPT-4 Announcement.14
  + **Other Models (e.g., o-series, mini models):**
    - The ChatGPT interface may also provide access to specialized reasoning models (like the "o" series, e.g., o1, o3-mini) or more lightweight models (e.g., GPT-4o mini).2
    - **Reasoning Models (o1, o3-mini, etc.):** These models are trained to "think" longer and perform multi-step reasoning, excelling at complex problem-solving, coding, scientific reasoning, and agentic workflows.3 They might be preferable for tasks requiring deep, explicit reasoning steps, though GPT-4o is generally recommended for most prompts, especially those involving tools and vision.3
    - **GPT-4o mini:** A lighter-weight, faster, and more cost-effective model, often used as a fallback for free users or for tasks where speed is prioritized over maximum capability.2 Plus users might encounter it if GPT-4o limits are hit, or it might power certain high-volume, lower-stakes interactions. It does not have access to all the advanced tools GPT-4o has.2
    - **Selection Criteria:** The choice depends on the task's complexity, need for deep reasoning versus speed, and specific tool requirements. The model selector in ChatGPT allows Plus users to switch between available models.3
    - *Source Reference:* OpenAI Model Selector Guide 2, OpenAI Reasoning Models Guide 16, OpenAI Community.15
* 1.2. Benefits of ChatGPT Plus Subscription  
  Beyond access to superior models, a ChatGPT Plus subscription (priced at $20/month) offers several key advantages 17:
  + **Priority Access & Faster Response Times:**
    - Plus users receive priority access to models like GPT-4o, especially during peak times when free users might be relegated to less capable models (like GPT-3.5 or GPT-4o mini) or face capacity issues.1 This translates to more consistent availability and generally faster response speeds.17
    - *Source Reference:* ZDNet 1, OpenAI Help Center.3
  + **Increased Usage Limits:**
    - Plus subscribers have significantly higher message caps for advanced models compared to free users.2 For example, as of early 2025, Plus users could send up to 80 messages every 3 hours with GPT-4o and 40 messages every 3 hours with GPT-4.2 These limits can vary based on system conditions and may be reduced during peak hours to ensure broad accessibility.3 Unused messages do not accumulate.3
    - Limits for other models like o1 (50 messages/week) and o3-mini (150 messages/day) also apply.15
    - *Source Reference:* OpenAI Help Center 2, OpenAI Community.15
  + **Access to Advanced Tools and Features:**
    - The subscription unlocks a suite of powerful tools integrated within ChatGPT, including:
      * **Web Browsing (ChatGPT Search):** For accessing and summarizing real-time information.3
      * **DALL-E Image Generation (GPT-4o Image Generation):** For creating and editing images.11
      * **Code Interpreter / Advanced Data Analysis:** For data analysis, code execution, file uploads, and visualization.3
      * **Custom GPT Creation and Use:** Ability to build and use personalized GPTs.17
      * **Advanced Voice Mode:** For more natural voice conversations with additional features like video/screen sharing on mobile.18
      * **Deep Research Tools:** For conducting in-depth, agentic research (availability and limits apply).17
      * **File Uploads:** For analysis and use with Custom GPTs.17
    - *Source Reference:* OpenAI Help Center 3, ZDNet.18
  + **Table 1.1: ChatGPT Plus Model Usage Limits (Illustrative, as of early-mid 2025)**

| **Feature/Model** | **Usage Limit** | **Time Frame** | **Notes** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| GPT-4o | 80 messages | 3 hours | 2 |
| GPT-4 | 40 messages | 3 hours | Includes Custom GPTs 2 |
| GPT-4o mini | Unlimited | N/A | 15 |
| o1 | 50 messages | 1 week | 15 |
| o3-mini | 150 messages | 1 day | 15 |
| Image Generation | 40 prompts / 200 img | 3 hrs / 1 day | DALL-E 3 via GPT-4; GPT-4o limits may vary 15 |
| Deep Research | 10 queries (full) + 15 (lightweight) | 1 month | [15 (older data for 10 queries)] |

\*Note: Limits are subject to change by OpenAI and may be reduced during peak hours. Always refer to the latest official OpenAI information.\*

The enhanced capabilities of models like GPT-4o, particularly their multimodal nature and improved reasoning, mean that they are not just incrementally better but can tackle new kinds of problems and interact in more nuanced ways. For instance, GPT-4o's ability to process audio with very low latency and understand emotional tone fundamentally changes voice interactions from a transcribed text exchange to a more natural dialogue.5 Similarly, its improved vision capabilities allow for more sophisticated analysis of uploaded images or documents containing visuals.3 This suggests that users who adapt their interaction styles to leverage these multimodal strengths will gain significantly more value.

The provision of higher usage limits and priority access ensures that Plus subscribers can reliably use these advanced models for more substantial tasks without the frequent interruptions or downgrades that free users might experience.1 This reliability is critical for professional or time-sensitive applications. The suite of advanced tools, discussed later in this report, further amplifies the models' capabilities, turning ChatGPT Plus into a multifaceted assistant.

**Section 2: Advanced Prompting Strategies for Plus Users**

The advanced models available to ChatGPT Plus users, such as GPT-4o and GPT-4, are significantly more capable of understanding nuance, following complex instructions, and generating creative, high-quality outputs. However, unlocking this full potential requires more sophisticated prompt engineering techniques than those sufficient for simpler models.

* 2.1. Principles of Effective Prompting for Advanced Models  
  Advanced models respond well to clarity, specificity, and context. Their increased capacity for understanding allows for more elaborate instructions.
  + **Be Clear and Specific:** Provide detailed instructions about the desired context, outcome, length, format, style, and persona.21 The more precise the request, the less the model has to infer, leading to more accurate and relevant responses.21 For example, instead of "Write about dogs," a better prompt would be "Write a 500-word blog post for an audience of new dog owners, focusing on positive reinforcement training techniques for puppies, in an encouraging and informative tone."
    - *Source Reference:* OpenAI Prompt Engineering Guide 21, Best Practices.22
  + **Adopt a Persona:** Instructing the model to adopt a specific persona (e.g., "Act as an expert astrophysicist," "You are a witty marketing consultant") can significantly shape the tone, vocabulary, and style of the response.9 GPT-4, for instance, can maintain a persona like a "Shakespearean pirate" throughout a conversation if directed by a system message.9
    - *Source Reference:* OpenAI Prompt Engineering Guide 21, Wikipedia (GPT-4 capabilities) 9, AdamFard Blog.24
  + **Nuanced Tone Control:** Beyond basic personas, users can request specific emotional tones or writing styles with greater fidelity from advanced models. Examples include "firm," "persuasive," "humorous," "academic," etc..24 For instance, "Explain quantum entanglement in a confident but accessible tone, suitable for a high school student."
    - *Source Reference:* AdamFard Blog.24
  + **Complex Instruction Following:** GPT-4 and GPT-4o excel at handling multi-part prompts or instructions with several constraints.9 Users should not hesitate to provide detailed, step-by-step requirements.
    - *Example:* "Generate three marketing slogans for a new eco-friendly coffee brand. Each slogan should be under 10 words, highlight sustainability, and evoke a feeling of morning energy. Present them as a numbered list."
    - *Source Reference:* Wikipedia (GPT-4 capabilities) 9, DataCamp 13, OpenAI GPT-4 Announcement.14
* **2.2. Key Prompt Engineering Techniques**
  + **Few-Shot Prompting:**
    - **Explanation:** Providing the model with a few examples (shots) of the desired input-output behavior within the prompt itself, before posing the actual query.22 This "in-context learning" helps the model understand the task, format, and style expected.
    - **Effectiveness with Advanced Models:** More capable models like GPT-4o can generalize better from fewer examples and can handle more complex patterns demonstrated in the shots.
    - **How-to:**
      1. Identify the task (e.g., sentiment classification, code generation with specific style, summarizing in a particular format).
      2. Provide 1-5 examples of input and the corresponding desired output.
      3. Clearly delineate examples from the final query.
      4. The format of the examples is important; consistency helps.25
    - **Example (Sentiment Classification):**  
      User: Classify the sentiment of the following movie reviews as Positive, Negative, or Neutral.  
        
      Review: "This movie was an absolute masterpiece! The acting was superb and the plot was gripping."  
      Sentiment: Positive  
        
      Review: "I was really disappointed. The story was predictable and the characters were flat."  
      Sentiment: Negative  
        
      Review: "It was an okay film. Nothing special, but not terrible either."  
      Sentiment: Neutral  
        
      Review: "Incredible visuals and a powerful message. A must-see!"  
      Sentiment:
    - **Considerations:** The order of examples can matter (placing the best example last can be effective), and there's a balance to strike with the number of examples to avoid using too many tokens.26 Instructions can come before or after examples depending on task complexity.26
    - *Source Reference:* OpenAI Best Practices 22, Prompting Guide AI 25, PromptHub.26
  + **Chain-of-Thought (CoT) Reasoning:**
    - **Explanation:** Encouraging the model to generate a series of intermediate reasoning steps before arriving at the final answer, often by adding phrases like "Let's think step by step" or by providing few-shot examples that include the reasoning process.21
    - **Effectiveness with Advanced Models:** Particularly useful for complex arithmetic, commonsense reasoning, and symbolic reasoning tasks where advanced models can articulate a coherent thought process. Newer reasoning models like OpenAI's o1-preview even employ this intrinsically.28
    - **How-to:**
      1. For zero-shot CoT: Append "Let's think step by step." to your question.
      2. For few-shot CoT: Provide examples where the solution includes the intermediate reasoning steps.
    - **Example (Zero-Shot CoT for a word problem):**  
      User: Natalia sold clips to 48 of her friends and then found 7 more. If she gave 12 clips to her brother, how many clips does she have left? Let's think step by step.  
      The model would then ideally break down the problem: initial clips, clips after finding more, clips after giving some away.
    - **Benefits:** Improves accuracy on complex reasoning tasks, provides transparency into the model's process, and can help identify where the model might be going wrong.27
    - *Source Reference:* OpenAI Prompt Engineering Guide 21, Foundation Inc 27, Botpress.28
  + **Using Delimiters:**
    - **Explanation:** Employing distinct characters or strings (e.g., """, ###, <tag></tag>) to clearly separate different parts of the prompt, such as instructions, context, examples, and input data.21
    - **Benefits:** Helps the model distinguish between instructions and content to be processed, reducing ambiguity and improving instruction following, especially for complex prompts.
    - **Example:**  
      Summarize the following text in three bullet points.  
      Text: """  
      [Insert long text here]  
      """
    - *Source Reference:* OpenAI Prompt Engineering Guide 21, Best Practices.22
  + **Specifying Output Format and Length:**
    - **Explanation:** Clearly instructing the model on the desired output format (e.g., JSON, Markdown list, table, specific number of paragraphs) and length (e.g., "in under 100 words," "a concise summary").21
    - **Example:** "Provide a comparison of GPT-4 and GPT-4o in a markdown table with columns for Feature, GPT-4, and GPT-4o. Limit the description for each feature to one sentence."
    - *Source Reference:* OpenAI Prompt Engineering Guide 21, Best Practices.22
  + **Providing Reference Texts:**
    - **Explanation:** When asking the model to perform tasks based on specific information not in its general training data, include that text directly in the prompt [24 (implied)]. This is crucial for tasks like summarizing provided documents or answering questions based on them.
    - *Source Reference:* AdamFard blog.24

The advanced models like GPT-4o and GPT-4 are not merely more knowledgeable; their architecture allows them to better comprehend and execute intricate instructions.9 This means that the effort invested in crafting detailed and structured prompts yields disproportionately better results compared to simpler models. Techniques such as Chain-of-Thought prompting are effective because they guide the model through a reasoning pathway that mirrors human problem-solving for complex tasks, reducing the likelihood of superficial or incorrect conclusions.21 The model is essentially externalizing its "thought process," which can be particularly beneficial for tasks requiring logical deduction or multi-step calculations.

Furthermore, the evolution of prompting best practices, as seen with guidance for models like GPT-4.1 which emphasize literal instruction following and specific structures for agentic tasks 29, underscores that prompt engineering is not static. As models become more sophisticated, the methods to interact with them optimally also evolve. Users benefit from staying updated with official OpenAI documentation, such as the Prompt Engineering Guide and the OpenAI Cookbook 21, to adapt their strategies to the nuances of the latest model versions. This continuous learning approach ensures that Plus users can consistently leverage the cutting edge of the models' capabilities.

**Section 3: Personalizing Your Experience with Custom Instructions**

ChatGPT Plus users can significantly enhance and personalize their interactions by utilizing the "Custom Instructions" feature. This allows for persistent guidance to the AI, tailoring its responses to individual needs and preferences across multiple conversations.

* 3.1. Understanding Custom Instructions  
  Custom Instructions enable users to provide ChatGPT with specific information about themselves and their preferences for how the AI should respond. These instructions are automatically applied to all new conversations, obviating the need to repeat contextual information or stylistic requests in every prompt.33 The primary benefit is achieving more tailored, consistent, and relevant outputs that align with the user's specific roles, ongoing projects, or general interaction style.33  
  ChatGPT considers these instructions for every new chat initiated after they are set, influencing its personality, response style, the information it prioritizes, and its overall behavior.33 It's important to note that any updates made to Custom Instructions will only affect future conversations; existing chats will continue to reflect the instructions that were active at the time of their creation.33 This feature is available on all ChatGPT plans, including Plus, and is accessible across Web, Desktop, iOS, and Android platforms.33  
  Each of the two input fields for Custom Instructions typically has a character limit of around 1500 characters, which encourages users to be concise yet comprehensive in their directives.34 Regarding data usage, OpenAI states that information from Custom Instructions will be used to improve model performance, for example, by teaching the model how to adapt its responses to user instructions more effectively without overdoing it. Users retain control and can opt out of having their content used for model training.33 If users employ third-party plugins, relevant information from their Custom Instructions may be shared with the plugin developers, underscoring the need to use trusted plugins.33
* 3.2. Step-by-Step Guide to Setting Up Custom Instructions  
  Accessing and configuring Custom Instructions is straightforward:
  + **Accessing the Feature:**
    - **On iOS & Android:** Open the ChatGPT app, navigate to Settings, select Customize ChatGPT, and then toggle the "Enable for new chats" option to ON.33
    - **On Web & Desktop:** Go to the ChatGPT website, access Settings, select Personalization, click on Custom Instructions, and toggle "Enable for new chats" to ON.33
  + The Two Input Fields: 33  
    The feature is structured around two distinct input fields, each serving a specific purpose in guiding the AI's behavior:
    - **Field 1: "What would you like ChatGPT to know about you to provide better responses?"**
      * **Purpose:** This field is for providing ChatGPT with context about the user. This can include their background, profession, level of expertise in certain subjects, specific goals, interests, location, or any other information that helps the AI understand their perspective and requirements more deeply.
      * **Influence:** The information entered here primarily influences the *content*, *relevance*, and *depth* of ChatGPT's responses. For instance, if a user states they are a beginner in a particular subject, ChatGPT will likely provide simpler explanations and avoid overly technical jargon. Conversely, if a user indicates expertise, the AI might offer more advanced and detailed information.
    - **Field 2: "How would you like ChatGPT to respond?"**
      * **Purpose:** This field allows the user to define their preferences for the AI's output characteristics. This includes the desired tone (e.g., formal, informal, humorous), style (e.g., academic, conversational), personality (e.g., witty, empathetic, direct), response length (e.g., concise, detailed), formatting preferences (e.g., use bullet points, provide tables), and any specific constraints on its behavior (e.g., "always cite sources," "avoid disclaimers about being an AI," "respond as a specific character").
      * **Influence:** This field primarily shapes the *delivery*, *manner*, and *structure* of ChatGPT's responses. It allows users to receive information in a way that best suits their comprehension and preferences.
  + **Enabling/Disabling:** Custom Instructions can be toggled on or off for new chats at any time. Users can also edit or delete their instructions, with changes applying to subsequent new conversations.33
* 3.3. Effective Use Cases and Examples  
  Custom Instructions can be powerfully employed in various scenarios:
  + **Tailoring for Specific Professional Roles:**
    - **Software Developer:**
      * Field 1: "I am a senior Python developer specializing in machine learning applications. I prioritize code readability and adherence to PEP 8 standards." 35
      * Field 2: "Provide code solutions in Python. Offer explanations for complex algorithms. When discussing libraries, mention performance considerations. Format code blocks with syntax highlighting. Be concise." 35
    - **Content Creator/Marketer:**
      * Field 1: "I am a digital marketing manager for a B2B SaaS company targeting small to medium-sized businesses. My primary goal is lead generation." 35
      * Field 2: "Respond in a professional yet persuasive tone. Suggest actionable marketing strategies. When brainstorming content, focus on topics relevant to SMB pain points. Provide examples of successful campaigns. Always include a call to action. Structure responses for easy readability, using headings and bullet points." 35
    - **Academic Researcher:**
      * Field 1: "I am a postdoctoral researcher in neuroscience, focusing on memory consolidation. I require scientifically accurate and nuanced information."
      * Field 2: "Respond in a formal, academic style. When presenting factual claims, provide citations or references to peer-reviewed literature if possible. Be critical and objective. If discussing experimental results, briefly outline the methodology. Avoid oversimplification of complex topics." 35
  + **Defining Preferred Writing Styles:**
    - **Concise and Formal for Business Communication:**
      * Field 1: "I am a project manager preparing weekly status reports for stakeholders."
      * Field 2: "Respond with utmost formality and conciseness. Use bullet points for key updates and action items. Avoid jargon where possible, or explain it briefly. Ensure a professional and objective tone. Prioritize factual information."
    - **Creative and Storytelling for Fiction Writing:**
      * Field 1: "I am a fantasy author developing a new novel series set in a medieval world with unique magic systems."
      * Field 2: "Respond in a descriptive, immersive, and imaginative style. Help me brainstorm intricate plot twists and compelling character arcs. Feel free to be verbose and use rich, vivid imagery. Offer suggestions for world-building elements." 36
  + **Setting Context for Ongoing Projects or Interests:**
    - **Project-Specific (e.g., Learning a New Skill):**
      * Field 1: "I am currently learning to play the guitar. I am a complete beginner and practice for 30 minutes daily."
      * Field 2: "When I ask for guitar advice, provide tips suitable for beginners. Suggest simple songs or exercises. Explain music theory concepts in an easy-to-understand manner. Be encouraging."
    - **General Interest (e.g., Philosophy):**
      * Field 1: "I have a deep interest in ancient Greek philosophy, particularly the works of Plato and Aristotle, and how their ideas relate to contemporary ethics."
      * Field 2: "When discussing ethical dilemmas or decision-making, incorporate relevant concepts from Plato or Aristotle if applicable. Offer thoughtful perspectives and encourage critical thinking."
  + **General User Preferences for Everyday Interactions:**
    - Field 1: "My name is Sarah. I live in New York. I work in tech. I appreciate direct and efficient communication." 35
    - Field 2: "Provide well-rounded, factual information on a variety of topics. Use concise and clear language. Avoid overly casual slang. Get straight to the point. Never mention that you are an AI or large language model." 35
  + *Source Reference:* OpenAI Help Center 33, GodOfPrompt.ai 35, Cognilytica 34, Reddit.36

The Custom Instructions feature effectively allows users to establish a persistent "system message" or a set of meta-instructions that guide the AI's behavior across different chat sessions.9 This capability, often associated with more technical API usage, becomes accessible to all Plus users through a simple interface, democratizing a significant level of personalization and control.

However, it is worth noting that the consistency of adherence to these instructions might vary. Observations suggest that some models, or interactions involving multiple active tools or very long conversation histories, might not follow Custom Instructions with perfect fidelity.37 For instance, user tests have indicated potential inconsistencies with GPT-4o compared to other models, or that enabling many tools can add "overhead" to the system prompt, potentially diluting the impact of custom directives.37 This suggests that while Custom Instructions are a powerful tool, users may occasionally need to experiment with phrasing, simplify their instructions, or even gently remind the AI of their preferences within a chat, especially in complex scenarios or with the newest model iterations.

Furthermore, OpenAI's explicit statement that "Information from your use of custom instructions will also be used to improve model performance" 33 indicates that users are, in effect, contributing to the ongoing refinement of how these models interpret and respond to personalized directives. This feedback loop can lead to improved adherence and more nuanced responses in future model updates, highlighting a co-evolutionary aspect of user interaction and model development. Users concerned about data privacy should familiarize themselves with OpenAI's data control options.33

**Section 4: Creating and Utilizing Custom GPTs**

One of the most powerful features available to ChatGPT Plus, Team, and Enterprise users is the ability to create Custom GPTs. These are personalized versions of ChatGPT, tailored by the user for specific tasks, topics, or functionalities by combining unique instructions, supplementary knowledge, and selected capabilities.

* 4.1. Introduction to Custom GPTs  
  Custom GPTs represent a significant step towards democratizing AI application development, allowing users to build specialized AI assistants without needing coding expertise.39 They can range from simple tools designed for a niche task to complex assistants integrated with external data and services.39  
  For Plus users, Custom GPTs offer several distinct benefits:
  + **Specialization:** By providing specific instructions and "Knowledge" (uploaded files), a Custom GPT can be focused on a particular domain, leading to more accurate, relevant, and in-depth responses compared to the general ChatGPT model.42 For example, a Custom GPT trained on a company's internal documentation can serve as an expert support tool for employees.
  + **Efficiency:** Custom GPTs can automate repetitive tasks or streamline complex workflows by having a pre-configured AI assistant ready to perform specific functions, saving time and effort.42
  + **Enhanced Personalization:** They embed the creator's specific instructions, preferred style, and necessary knowledge directly into the GPT, eliminating the need to re-prompt with the same context in every new chat.43
  + **Sharing and Collaboration:** Useful Custom GPTs can be shared with individuals, teams, or even published to the public GPT Store, allowing others to benefit from these tailored AI tools.39
  + *Source Reference:* OpenAI Help Center 39, OpenAI Blog 40, Lumenalta 42, BYU GenAI.43
* 4.2. Building a Custom GPT: A Detailed Walkthrough  
  The process of creating a Custom GPT is facilitated by the GPT Builder, an interactive interface within ChatGPT.
  + Accessing the GPT Builder:  
    Users can start building a Custom GPT by navigating to chatgpt.com/create or chatgpt.com/gpts/editor. Alternatively, from the chatgpt.com/gpts page (Explore GPTs), users can click the "+ Create" button.39 The builder interface presents two main tabs: "Create" for a conversational setup process, and "Configure" for more detailed, manual settings.39
  + Defining Purpose and Core Instructions (using the 'Create' tab):  
    The "Create" tab allows users to define their Custom GPT by simply chatting with the GPT Builder. Users describe the desired behavior, role, and overall goal of their Custom GPT. For instance, a user might prompt the Builder with: "Make an AI assistant that helps brainstorm and outline blog posts for a tech audience" or "Create a GPT that acts as a friendly language tutor for Spanish, focusing on conversational practice".39 Based on this conversation, the GPT Builder will suggest a name, a description, and even generate a profile picture for the Custom GPT, all of which can be further refined by the user.43
  + Refining in the 'Configure' Tab: 39  
    The "Configure" tab offers a more structured way to fine-tune the Custom GPT:
    - **Name & Description:** Users can set or modify the name and descriptive summary of their GPT. These should clearly communicate its purpose.
    - **Instructions:** This is arguably the most critical field. Here, users provide detailed, explicit guidelines on how the GPT should behave, its functionalities, its personality or tone, specific knowledge areas to draw upon or avoid, and any behaviors it should exhibit or refrain from. Effective prompt engineering principles are vital here to ensure the GPT performs as intended.43
    - **Profile Picture/Icon:** Users can request the GPT Builder to generate a unique image for their Custom GPT or upload their own custom image. This image serves as the visual identifier for the GPT.39
  + Crafting Effective Conversation Starters:  
    Conversation starters are pre-defined example prompts that are displayed to users when they first interact with the Custom GPT.39 Their purpose is to guide users on how to begin a conversation and to showcase the GPT's primary functions or common use cases. For a Custom GPT designed as a "Historical Fact Checker," conversation starters might include: "Verify a historical claim about World War II," "What were the main causes of the French Revolution?" or "Tell me about daily life in ancient Rome."
  + *Source Reference:* OpenAI Help Center 39, BYU GenAI.43
* 4.3. Personalizing with "Knowledge"  
  The "Knowledge" feature allows builders to significantly personalize their Custom GPTs by uploading files that provide additional context or specific information for the GPT to reference during its interactions.39 This capability effectively implements a form of Retrieval Augmented Generation (RAG), where the model retrieves information from the provided documents to inform its responses, rather than relying solely on its general training data.43
  + File Limits and Types:  
    A builder can upload up to 20 files to a single Custom GPT.39 Each individual file can be up to 512 MB in size and can contain up to 2,000,000 tokens (a measure of text length).45 While files containing images can be uploaded, the system currently processes only the textual content within these files; the visual information from images in knowledge files is not directly interpreted by the GPT in this context.45 (This may evolve with the enhanced multimodal capabilities of models like GPT-4o).
  + How Custom GPTs Use Knowledge: 45  
    When files are uploaded to a Custom GPT's knowledge base, the system processes them by:
    1. Breaking the text content into smaller, manageable chunks.
    2. Creating "embeddings" for these chunks – these are numerical (vector) representations of the text that capture semantic meaning.
    3. Storing these embeddings for efficient retrieval later.

When a user interacts with the Custom GPT, the model can access these uploaded files to obtain additional context relevant to the user's prompt. It typically chooses one of two methods based on the nature of the query:

* + - **Semantic Search:** For prompts that are question-like or require specific pieces of information (e.g., "What is our company's policy on remote work?"), the GPT performs a semantic search over the embedded knowledge to find and return the most relevant text chunks.
    - **Document Review:** For tasks like summarization, translation, or when a broader understanding of a document is needed, the GPT may retrieve and use entire short documents or relevant, extended excerpts from larger documents as part of its context.
  + Best Practices for Knowledge Files: 45  
    To maximize the effectiveness of the Knowledge feature:
    - **Formatting:** Use simple, clean formatting for uploaded documents. Single-column text layouts are ideal. The parser may struggle with complex layouts like multi-column PDFs or understanding the nuanced positioning of text on presentation slides.
    - **Prioritization:** In the "Instructions" field of the Custom GPT configuration, builders can guide the GPT to prioritize information from its uploaded Knowledge files before resorting to a general web search (if that capability is enabled).
    - **Citations:** By default, Custom GPTs will avoid revealing the names of the files they draw information from. If the builder wants the GPT to "cite its sources" by referring to specific uploaded documents, this must be explicitly stated in the "Instructions."
  + *Source Reference:* OpenAI Help Center 39, BYU GenAI.43
* 4.4. Integrating and Configuring Capabilities  
  Located in the 'Configure' tab of the GPT Builder, "Capabilities" are toggles that enable various built-in functionalities, allowing the Custom GPT to perform a wider range of actions.39
  + **Web Browsing (Web Search):** Enabling this capability allows the Custom GPT to access and process real-time information from the internet, similar to the standard ChatGPT search feature. This is useful for tasks requiring up-to-date information or broader context beyond its training data and uploaded Knowledge.39
  + **DALL-E Image Generation (now often GPT-4o Image Generation):** This enables the Custom GPT to create original images based on textual descriptions provided by the user or generated by the GPT itself as part of a task. Custom GPTs with "4o Image Generation" enabled will utilize the newer, more advanced image generation model.11
  + **Code Interpreter / Advanced Data Analysis:** Activating this powerful capability allows the Custom GPT to write and execute Python code within a secure, sandboxed environment. This enables a wide array of functionalities, including data analysis from uploaded files, file manipulation (e.g., converting formats, editing content), creating charts and graphs for data visualization, and solving complex mathematical problems.39 It is crucial to ensure this capability is enabled if the Custom GPT is intended to perform such tasks; otherwise, it may fail or underperform.39
  + **Canvas:** This is another listed capability that provides additional functionality.39 The specific nature of "Canvas" and its applications would require more detailed documentation, but it generally implies tools for more visual or structured interactions or outputs.
  + **Custom Actions (API Integration):** This is an advanced feature that allows builders to connect their Custom GPT to external third-party APIs. This is achieved by defining the API endpoints, the necessary parameters, authentication methods, and providing a description of how the model should utilize these APIs, often through an OpenAPI schema.39
    - Custom Actions empower GPTs to retrieve data from external sources (e.g., query a customer database, fetch product information from an e-commerce API) or perform actions in other systems (e.g., create a ticket in a project management tool, send an email via an email API).47
    - Configuration typically involves setting up authentication (e.g., API Key, OAuth 2.0) to securely connect to the external service.48
    - For Custom GPTs intended for public use in the GPT Store that utilize Custom Actions calling an external API, domain verification for the API and a publicly accessible Privacy Policy URL are mandatory.44
  + *Source Reference:* OpenAI Help Center 11, OpenAI API Docs 47, Autodesk Blog.48
* 4.5. Sharing and the GPT Store  
  Once a Custom GPT is built and configured, creators have options for how it can be shared and accessed.
  + Publishing Options: 39  
    When publishing a Custom GPT, creators can choose from three main visibility settings:
    - **Private:** The GPT is only visible to and usable by its creator.
    - **Anyone with link:** The GPT is unlisted (not discoverable through search in the GPT Store) but can be shared with others via a direct URL.
    - **Everyone:** The GPT is listed publicly in the GPT Store, making it discoverable by all ChatGPT users. Publishing to "Everyone" requires the creator to have a verified Builder Profile.
  + **Builder Profile:** To publish a GPT to the public GPT Store, creators must first verify their Builder Profile. This can be done either through Name Verification (matching the name on their ChatGPT Plus billing profile) or optionally through Domain Verification (linking a verified website domain to their profile).44 Builders can also link social media profiles (Twitter, GitHub, LinkedIn) to their Builder Profile to add credibility.44
  + **GPT Store:** The GPT Store is a marketplace within ChatGPT where users can discover, browse, and use a vast array of Custom GPTs created by both the community and OpenAI itself.40 GPTs in the Store are searchable and often categorized (e.g., Productivity, Education, Lifestyle) to aid discovery. OpenAI may also spotlight particularly useful or innovative GPTs.40
  + **Review Process:** All GPTs submitted for public listing in the GPT Store undergo a review process. This typically involves automated checks against OpenAI's usage policies and may include manual review if any potential issues are flagged.44 This process aims to ensure safety and compliance.
  + **Monetization:** OpenAI has indicated plans for builders to potentially earn money based on the usage of their Custom GPTs, although the specific details and timeline for such a program may still be evolving.40
  + *Source Reference:* OpenAI Help Center 39, OpenAI Blog 40, GetGuru.49
* **4.6. Key Table for Section 4**  
  **Table 4.1: Custom GPT Configuration Options**

| **Configuration Element** | **Purpose/Function** | **Key Settings/Considerations** | **Source Snippet Example(s)** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Name & Description** | Identifies and summarizes the GPT's purpose. | Clear, concise, accurately reflects function. | 39 |
| **Instructions** | Core directives defining behavior, role, tone, knowledge use, and restrictions. | Highly detailed, specific; good prompt engineering is crucial. Defines personality and task execution. | 39 |
| **Prompt Starters** | Example prompts to guide users' initial interaction. | Showcase primary functions; make it easy for users to start. | 39 |
| **Knowledge** | Uploaded files providing specific information for the GPT to reference (RAG). | Up to 20 files, 512MB/file, 2M tokens/file. Text processed. Simple formatting best. Instruct on prioritization and citation if needed. | 39 |
| **Capabilities: Web Search** | Allows GPT to access real-time internet information. | Toggle on/off. Useful for current events or broad knowledge. | 39 |
| **Capabilities: Image Gen.** | Enables GPT to create images (uses GPT-4o image generation). | Toggle on/off. | 11 |
| **Capabilities: Code Int./ADA** | Allows GPT to run Python code for data analysis, file manipulation, visualization. | Toggle on/off. Essential for analytical or computational tasks. | 39 |
| **Capabilities: Custom Actions** | Connects GPT to external APIs for data retrieval or actions. | Requires OpenAPI schema, authentication setup. For public GPTs, needs domain verification and privacy policy. | 39 |

The introduction of Custom GPTs marks a significant evolution in how users can interact with and leverage large language models. It shifts the paradigm from using a single, general-purpose AI to creating and deploying a multitude of specialized AI assistants, each fine-tuned for particular tasks or knowledge domains.39 This democratization of AI tool creation, enabling even non-coders to build their own GPTs through a conversational interface, is a key development.40 The effectiveness of these Custom GPTs, especially their specialization, heavily relies on the "Knowledge" feature. The ability to upload specific documents effectively grounds the GPT in relevant, often proprietary, information, enabling a form of Retrieval Augmented Generation that enhances accuracy and contextual relevance.43

Furthermore, the combination of detailed instructions, uploaded knowledge, and functional capabilities—particularly Custom Actions for API integration and Code Interpreter for data execution—positions Custom GPTs as an early, accessible form of AI agents.40 These are systems that can not only process information but also perform tasks and interact with external services with a degree of autonomy based on user-defined goals. OpenAI's own announcements have framed Custom GPTs as a step towards such agentic AI 40, and the underlying models, like GPT-4o 51, are increasingly designed to support these more complex, multi-step operations.52 For Plus users, this means they are at the forefront of experiencing, building, and shaping these emerging agent-like AI systems.

**Section 5: Leveraging Integrated Tools within ChatGPT Plus**

ChatGPT Plus provides users with a suite of powerful integrated tools that extend the capabilities of the core language models. These tools enable access to real-time information, image creation, and sophisticated data analysis directly within the chat interface, transforming ChatGPT into a versatile workbench.

* 5.1. Web Browse (ChatGPT Search)  
  The Web Browse feature, often referred to as ChatGPT Search, allows ChatGPT to access, process, and synthesize information from the internet in real-time.53 This capability is crucial for queries that require up-to-date information, current events, or context beyond the model's training data cutoff.
  + **Functionality:** When activated, ChatGPT can perform web searches, retrieve content from web pages, and summarize this information to answer user queries. It aims to provide timely answers and includes links to the sources it used, allowing users to verify the information.53
  + **How to Use:**
    - Users can explicitly invoke the search tool by selecting "View all tools" next to the message input bar and then choosing the "Search" icon, or by typing / in the input bar and selecting "Search" from the pop-up menu.53
    - Alternatively, ChatGPT may automatically decide to use web search if it determines that the user's query would benefit from current information available online.53
    - Responses generated using web search will typically include inline citations. On desktop, users can hover over these citations to see more details and click to navigate to the source page. A "Sources" button at the end of the response provides a consolidated list of all referenced links.53
    - Users also have the option to regenerate a GPT-4o response to explicitly include a web search if the initial response did not use one.53
  + **Operational Details:**
    - When performing a search, ChatGPT might rephrase the user's original query into one or more targeted search queries that it sends to its search partners.53
    - To enhance the relevance of local searches (e.g., "best coffee shops near me"), ChatGPT may use general location information derived from the user's IP address. However, the IP address itself or specific account information is not shared with third-party search providers.53
    - If the "Memory" feature is enabled in ChatGPT settings, the system may leverage relevant information from past conversations to refine search queries and make them more contextually appropriate.53
  + **Practical Examples:**
    - "What were the main outcomes of the G7 summit that concluded yesterday?" (Current Events)
    - "Provide a summary of recent reviews for the latest Tesla Model Y." (Product Research) 53
    - "Find academic papers published in the last six months discussing the impact of microplastics on marine ecosystems." (Scientific Research)
    - "What is the weather forecast for London for the upcoming weekend?" (Real-time Information) 53
  + **Availability:** ChatGPT Search is available to all ChatGPT users, including those on the Plus plan. Plus users benefit from the search and synthesis being performed by the more advanced underlying models like GPT-4o.53
  + *Source Reference:* OpenAI Help Center.53
* 5.2. DALL-E Image Generation (Native GPT-4o Image Generation)  
  ChatGPT Plus integrates advanced image generation capabilities, now primarily powered by GPT-4o's native multimodal architecture.10 This allows users to create and refine original images directly within their conversations. While the DALL-E GPT remains accessible for those who prefer it, GPT-4o's image generation is the default and offers several enhancements.11
  + **Key Improvements with GPT-4o Image Generation:** 10
    - **Enhanced Text Rendering:** GPT-4o demonstrates improved ability to accurately render text within generated images, a common challenge for previous models.
    - **Multi-turn Conversational Refinement:** Users can iteratively refine images through natural conversation. GPT-4o can build upon previous images and text within the chat context, ensuring stylistic and content consistency across iterations.
    - **Superior Instruction Following:** The model can handle more complex prompts involving a greater number of objects (reportedly 10-20) and exhibits better binding of attributes to those objects.
    - **In-context Learning from Uploaded Images:** GPT-4o can analyze user-uploaded images and integrate their details or styles into its context to inform new image generations.
    - **Integrated World Knowledge:** The native integration allows GPT-4o to better link its vast textual knowledge base with its image generation capabilities, resulting in more contextually aware and intelligent outputs.
  + **How to Use:**
    - Users can simply ask ChatGPT to create an image by providing a detailed textual description (e.g., "Generate a whimsical illustration of a cat reading a book in a cozy library, in a storybook art style").11
    - Alternatively, the "Create image" option can be selected from the "View all tools" menu.11
    - To edit an existing image (either uploaded or previously generated), users can click on the image and use the "Select tool" (typically found in the top-right corner of the image view). This tool allows selecting an area of the image to be modified, with changes described via text prompt.11
  + **Techniques for Crafting Effective Image Prompts:**
    - **Be Specific and Detailed:** The more detail provided regarding subjects, objects, colors, artistic styles, lighting, composition, mood, and even camera angles or lens types (e.g., "wide angle," "macro shot," "18mm objective"), the more likely the output will match the user's vision.22
      * *Example:* "A hyperrealistic digital painting of an ancient, moss-covered stone golem awakening in a misty forest. Glowing runes cover its body. Cinematic lighting, dramatic low-angle shot."
    - **Specify Artistic Styles and Mediums:** Use terms like "impressionist painting," "surrealism," "cyberpunk art," "photorealistic," "watercolor sketch," "3D render," "pixel art," or "in the style of [famous artist]".55 For photorealism, using "photo style" can sometimes yield better results than "photorealistic" which might trigger painterly styles.54
    - **Use Descriptive Adjectives and Layered Descriptions:** Build up the scene with rich adjectives and provide details in layers to combine multiple elements effectively.55
    - **Avoid Negative Prompting:** DALL-E models generally struggle with negative instructions (e.g., "no red cars"). Instead, focus on describing what *should* be present in the image.54 For example, instead of "a forest with no people," try "a serene, empty forest path."
    - **Iterate and Refine:** Image generation is often an iterative process. Start with a broader concept and then refine the prompt based on the initial results. Leverage ChatGPT's conversational ability to request modifications (e.g., "Make the dragon larger," "Change the background to a stormy sky").10
    - **Prompt Structure:** A common recommendation is to start the prompt with the most important subject or element, followed by details, mood descriptors, and finally any technical instructions (like style or camera view).54
    - **Controlling GPT's Prompt Modification:** ChatGPT may rephrase or expand user prompts before sending them to the image generation model. If precise control over the prompt sent to DALL-E is desired, users can instruct ChatGPT with phrases like "Use the following prompt for image generation exactly as written: [your prompt]".54
  + **Limitations and Considerations:** While significantly improved, image generation models may still face challenges with highly complex text rendering, consistently reusing specific characters or scenes across multiple distinct images without very careful and iterative prompting, and understanding nuanced cause-and-effect relationships unless explicitly described.54 All image generation is subject to OpenAI's content policies, which prohibit the creation of explicit, hateful, violent, or deceptive content, and restrict the generation of images resembling living public figures or directly copying the distinct styles of living artists without permission.55
  + *Source Reference:* OpenAI Blog 10, OpenAI Help Center 11, Datacamp 55, Foundation Inc 56, Reddit DALL-E 3 Prompting Tips 54, OpenAI Best Practices.22
* 5.3. Code Interpreter / Advanced Data Analysis (ADA)  
  The Code Interpreter, now more commonly referred to as Advanced Data Analysis (ADA), is a powerful integrated tool that provides ChatGPT Plus users with the ability to upload files, execute Python code in a secure sandboxed environment, perform complex data analysis, and generate visualizations.39
  + **Functionality and How it Works:** 58
    1. **File Upload:** The user uploads one or more data files (or provides data directly in the prompt).
    2. **Instruction:** The user provides natural language instructions on what analysis or operations to perform.
    3. **Code Generation:** ChatGPT (ADA) writes Python code to accomplish the requested task. It has access to a wide range of pre-loaded Python libraries commonly used for data science, such as pandas for data manipulation and Matplotlib or Plotly for creating charts.
    4. **Code Execution:** The generated Python code is executed in a persistent, secure, sandboxed environment.
    5. **Result Interpretation & Presentation:** ChatGPT examines the output of the code execution (including any data, tables, charts, or errors). It then integrates these results into a natural language response for the user, often including the generated tables or charts directly in the chat. Users can also typically request to download processed files (e.g., a cleaned dataset, a generated report).
    6. **Transparency:** Users can view the actual Python code generated and executed by ChatGPT by clicking on a "[>\_]" (View Analysis) link that often appears with the response. This allows for verification and understanding of the process.
  + **Capabilities:**
    - **Data Analysis:** Capable of a wide range of analytical tasks, including data cleaning (handling missing values, correcting errors), statistical analysis (descriptive statistics, hypothesis testing, regression), trend identification, pattern recognition, and summarizing large datasets.58
    - **Code Execution:** Beyond data analysis, it can run Python scripts for various purposes, such as text processing, mathematical computations, simple simulations, file format conversions, and more.
    - **File Handling:**
      * **Uploads:** Supports a variety of common file formats, including Excel spreadsheets (.xls, .xlsx), Comma-Separated Values files (.csv), Portable Document Format files (.pdf), and JSON files (.json). It also allows direct uploads from cloud storage services like Google Drive and Microsoft OneDrive (including SharePoint).58 Users can upload up to 10 files within a single conversation, with an individual file size limit of 512 MB (though for CSVs and spreadsheets, a practical limit around 50MB may apply depending on row complexity).58 Uploaded files are typically deleted after a certain period based on the user's plan.58
      * **Downloads:** ADA can generate new files based on its processing (e.g., a cleaned CSV, a PDF report containing analysis, an image file like a QR code) and provide users with a download link for these files.
    - **Generating Visualizations:** Can create a variety of static and interactive charts to help users visualize data. Common interactive charts include bar charts, pie charts, scatter plots, and line charts. A broader range of static charts like histograms, box plots, heat maps, area charts, and treemaps can also be generated.58 Users can often request customizations to these charts.
  + **Practical Examples:**
    - "Upload this customer\_feedback.csv file. Perform sentiment analysis on the 'comments' column and show me a bar chart of positive, negative, and neutral sentiment counts." 58
    - "I've uploaded financial\_data.xlsx. Can you calculate the quarterly revenue growth rate for the past two years and visualize it as a line graph? Also, identify any significant outliers."
    - "Convert the attached PDF document, research\_paper.pdf, into a plain text file. Then, extract all email addresses mentioned in the text."
    - "Generate a Python script to simulate 1000 coin flips and plot a histogram of the number of heads obtained in sets of 10 flips."
    - "Analyze the provided website\_traffic.json data to identify the top 5 referral sources and create a pie chart showing their contribution to total traffic."
  + **Best Practices for File Uploads:** For tabular data, it's recommended to use descriptive column headers in the first row, use plain language for these headers (avoiding obscure acronyms or jargon), and ensure each row represents a single record or observation.58
  + *Source Reference:* OpenAI Help Center [39 (as a capability in Custom GPTs), 58], ClickUp Blog.59
* **5.4. Key Table for Section 5**  
  **Table 5.1: Integrated Tools in ChatGPT Plus: Usage and Examples**

| **Tool Name** | **Core Functionality** | **How to Activate/Use** | **Example Prompts for Plus Users** | **Key Output Types** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Web Browse (ChatGPT Search)** | Accesses, processes, and summarizes real-time internet information. | Select "Search" tool or type "/"; automatic activation for relevant queries. | "What are the latest advancements in quantum computing reported this month?" / "Summarize recent news about the global chip shortage." | Text summaries, links to sources, inline citations. 53 |
| **GPT-4o Image Generation (formerly DALL-E)** | Creates and edits original images based on text prompts; native to GPT-4o. | Ask directly to create/edit an image; or select "Create image" tool. Use "Select tool" for editing. | "Create a photorealistic image of a serene beach at sunset with palm trees." / "Edit this uploaded image to make the sky look stormy." | Digital images (various styles). 10 |
| **Advanced Data Analysis (Code Interpreter)** | Executes Python code for data analysis, file handling, and visualization. | Upload file(s) and provide natural language instructions for analysis or operations. | "Analyze sales\_report.csv and create a bar chart of sales by region." / "Convert document.pdf to a Word file and extract all tables." | Tables, charts (interactive & static), text analysis, downloadable files (CSV, PDF, images, etc.), Python code snippets. 58 |

The integration of these tools directly within the ChatGPT Plus interface signifies a move towards a more holistic and capable AI assistant. Rather than being a purely conversational AI, ChatGPT Plus acts as an integrated workbench where users can seamlessly pivot between generating text, searching the web for current information, creating visual assets, and performing complex data analyses.11 This interconnectedness is powerful; for example, a user could research a topic using Web Browse, generate an image related to it using GPT-4o Image Generation, and then analyze related data using Advanced Data Analysis, all within a continuous conversational flow.

The effectiveness of these tools hinges significantly on the underlying language model's ability to understand the user's intent and correctly decide when and how to deploy a specific tool—a capability often referred to as "tool use" in AI research.9 The advancements in models like GPT-4o and the specialized reasoning models (e.g., o-series) are crucial for this orchestration. As these models become better at reasoning and planning, the integrated tools become more reliable and capable of handling more complex, multi-step tasks.

For users, particularly those tackling non-trivial tasks, an iterative approach is often most effective. Complex data analyses or intricate image generations may not yield perfect results from a single prompt. Instead, engaging in a dialogue with ChatGPT, providing feedback, asking for refinements, or breaking down the task into smaller steps, tends to produce superior outcomes.10 This reinforces the collaborative nature of interacting with these advanced AI systems.

**Section 6: Exploring Other Plus Features and Future Customization Potential**

Beyond the core models and widely used integrated tools, ChatGPT Plus offers additional features that enhance the user experience and points towards future directions in AI interaction and customization. Understanding these, along with the influence of OpenAI's broader API developments, provides a more complete picture of the platform's value.

* 6.1. Advanced Voice Mode  
  Advanced Voice Mode elevates the voice interaction experience in ChatGPT, aiming for more natural, real-time, and emotionally nuanced conversations.5 This feature is powered by natively multimodal models like GPT-4o, which can directly process audio inputs and generate audio outputs without intermediate text conversion steps, thus preserving more of the richness of spoken language.19
  + **Purpose and Enhanced Experience:** The goal is to make voice conversations with ChatGPT feel more like talking to a human. The system can recognize non-verbal cues such as the user's tone of voice and speaking speed, and can respond with corresponding emotion and intonation.20 It also allows for interruptions, contributing to a more fluid and natural conversational flow.20
  + **How to Use:**
    - Users can activate Voice Mode by selecting the voice icon (often depicted as headphones or a microphone) in the ChatGPT interface on mobile or web.19 Advanced Voice Mode is typically indicated by a blue orb animation, distinguishing it from standard voice mode's black circle.19
    - First-time users are prompted to select a preferred voice from a range of options (e.g., Ember, Breeze, Cove, Juniper), each with a distinct character.19 This voice can be changed later in settings or, for advanced voice users, even during a conversation via a customization menu.19
  + **Key Features for Plus Users:**
    - **Higher Daily Usage Limits:** ChatGPT Plus subscribers receive significantly higher daily usage limits for Advanced Voice Mode compared to free users, who typically get a limited daily preview powered by a model like GPT-4o mini.18 Plus users usually receive a warning (e.g., 15 minutes remaining) as they approach their daily limit.19
    - **Powered by GPT-4o:** The advanced voice experience for Plus users is powered by the full capabilities of GPT-4o, ensuring higher quality interaction, better understanding, and more nuanced responses.20
    - **Video and Screensharing (iOS & Android only):** A significant enhancement for mobile users is the ability to share live video from their device's camera or share their screen (including uploading photos) directly within an Advanced Voice chat session.18 ChatGPT can react to this visual input.
    - **Background Conversations:** Users can enable "Background Conversations" in settings, allowing the voice chat to continue even if they switch to another app or lock their phone screen. This feature has limitations, such as a maximum conversation length (e.g., 1 hour) or ending if the daily usage limit is reached.19
  + **Limitations:** Daily usage limits apply to audio, video, and screensharing functionalities.19 Some user feedback has indicated that the personality or tone of Advanced Voice Mode can sometimes feel different from the text-based GPT-4o, occasionally perceived as more "customer-service" oriented or less nuanced.62 This aspect is likely subject to ongoing refinement by OpenAI.
  + *Source Reference:* OpenAI Help Center 19, ZDNet 18, DataCamp 5, AINews 20, Springsapps 61, OpenAI Community.62
* 6.2. Deep Research  
  Deep Research is an advanced, agentic capability within ChatGPT designed to conduct comprehensive, multi-step research on the internet for complex queries.18 It synthesizes information from a multitude of online sources into a structured, cited report.
  + **Purpose:** This feature is particularly beneficial for users engaged in intensive knowledge work, such as those in finance, science, policy research, or engineering, who require thorough, precise, and reliable information gathering and analysis.63 It can also be useful for detailed consumer research.63
  + **Functionality:**
    - Deep Research is powered by a version of OpenAI's o3 model (optimized for web browsing and data analysis) or, for broader accessibility, a lightweight version based on the o4-mini model.63
    - It operates autonomously after receiving a prompt, browsing the web, reading and interpreting text, images, and PDFs, analyzing the gathered information, and synthesizing the findings.63
    - The output is a comprehensive report that includes clear citations for all information sources and a summary of the AI's reasoning process, facilitating verification and further exploration by the user.63
    - A research task can take between 5 to 30 minutes to complete, reflecting the depth of the investigation.63
  + **How to Use:**
    - Users can initiate Deep Research by selecting the "deep research" option in the message composer area of ChatGPT.63
    - They then input their research query. It's possible to attach files or spreadsheets to provide additional context for the research task.63
    - Once initiated, a sidebar typically appears, showing the steps being taken by the AI and the sources it is consulting in real-time.63
  + **Usage Limits (Plus Users):** As of early-mid 2025, Plus and Team users typically receive 10 tasks per month using the full-power version of Deep Research, plus an additional 15 tasks per month using the lightweight version. If the quota for the full version is exhausted, the system automatically defaults to the lighter model..6415
  + **Integration with External Data Sources:** Deep Research can be connected to external data repositories to extend its search capabilities beyond the public web:
    - **GitHub:** Users can connect their GitHub repositories, allowing Deep Research to access and reason over live data from code, README files, and other documents within those repositories. It can pull relevant snippets and cite them directly.65 This requires authorizing the ChatGPT connector for specific repositories.
    - **SharePoint and Microsoft OneDrive:** Similarly, users can connect their SharePoint sites and Microsoft OneDrive document libraries. Deep Research can then access, analyze, and cite content from files stored in these locations.66 This also involves an authorization process for the connector.
  + *Source Reference:* OpenAI Blog 63, OpenAI Help Center 63, ZDNet 18, Maginative.64
* 6.3. The Influence of API Capabilities on Plus Features  
  The features and capabilities available to ChatGPT Plus users are often direct applications or reflections of advancements made within OpenAI's underlying API and model development efforts. Understanding this connection provides insight into the current power of Plus features and the potential for future enhancements.
  + **Underlying Engine and Innovation Pipeline:** Many of the sophisticated functionalities experienced in ChatGPT Plus, such as the advanced reasoning of GPT-4o, its multimodal capabilities (handling text, image, audio, video), the tool-calling mechanisms that power Custom GPT Actions, Advanced Data Analysis, and Web Browse, and the specialized reasoning of o-series models, are all rooted in technologies developed for and often first exposed via OpenAI's APIs.16 The API frequently serves as a proving ground where developers can experiment with and build upon these core technologies.
  + **Emergence of Agentic Capabilities:** A significant trend in AI is the development of "agents"—systems that can understand goals, plan, and independently execute sequences of actions to achieve those goals. This is clearly visible in API offerings like the Assistants API 41, the Responses API, and the Agents SDK 41, as well as in the design of reasoning models.16 This trend manifests directly in ChatGPT Plus features such as Deep Research, which operates as an autonomous research agent 63, and in the potential of highly capable Custom GPTs that can leverage knowledge and actions to perform tasks.52
  + **Potential for Future Customization and Power:** As OpenAI continues to refine its API offerings—introducing more powerful and efficient models (like the GPT-4.1 series, noted for better coding, instruction following, and long-context handling 52), enhancing tool integration, and developing more sophisticated reasoning paradigms (such as the use of "reasoning tokens" by models like o3 and o4-mini 16)—these advancements are highly likely to translate into more powerful, nuanced, and customizable features for ChatGPT Plus users. This could mean Custom GPTs with even greater capabilities, finer-grained control over model behavior within the ChatGPT interface, and potentially new categories of integrated tools.
  + **Feedback Loop and Experimental Features:** OpenAI also uses the ChatGPT platform to test experimental features, such as enhanced e-commerce shopping recommendations within ChatGPT Search.71 User interactions and feedback on these experiments, as well as on broader model behaviors like tendencies towards sycophancy 72, play a crucial role in shaping the ongoing development and refinement of both the API and the user-facing ChatGPT products.
  + *Source Reference:* OpenAI API Docs 16, OpenAI Blog 52, OpenAI Help Center 41, OpenTools.ai.74

The evolution of features like Advanced Voice Mode and Deep Research underscores a clear trajectory towards more agent-like AI interactions within the ChatGPT Plus environment.40 Advanced Voice Mode, with its real-time, emotionally aware responses and multimodal input (including video/screen sharing on mobile), moves beyond simple voice commands to facilitate more natural and dynamic human-AI collaboration.19 Deep Research, by autonomously conducting complex web investigations and synthesizing cited reports, exemplifies an AI taking on significant, multi-step knowledge work on behalf of the user.63

This progression towards seamless multimodal interaction is also a key theme. The ability of GPT-4o to natively process audio in Advanced Voice Mode 19, combined with Deep Research's capacity to analyze text, images, and PDFs 63, points to a future where users can interact with AI using diverse data types without needing to consciously switch modes or tools. The AI is becoming increasingly adept at understanding and integrating information from various modalities fluidly.

Ultimately, the ChatGPT Plus experience offers a window into the applied power of OpenAI's foundational API capabilities. The continuous improvements in models (e.g., GPT-4.1 enhancing GPT-4o's instruction following and coding abilities 52), tool use, and reasoning frameworks available through the API are strong indicators of how ChatGPT Plus features will mature, offering ever-increasing power, intelligence, and customization to its subscribers.16 Plus users are, in essence, leveraging a sophisticated application built upon these rapidly evolving AI primitives.

**Conclusion**

The ChatGPT Plus subscription provides a robust platform for users seeking to leverage advanced AI capabilities for a wide array of applications. Access to premium models like GPT-4o and GPT-4, coupled with increased usage limits and faster response times, forms the foundation of this enhanced experience. However, the true value of ChatGPT Plus is unlocked through the strategic application of advanced prompting techniques, the deep personalization offered by Custom Instructions, the creation and utilization of specialized Custom GPTs, and the effective use of integrated tools such as Web Browse, GPT-4o Image Generation, and Advanced Data Analysis.

Features like Advanced Voice Mode and Deep Research further extend the platform's utility, pushing the boundaries towards more natural, multimodal, and agentic AI interactions. The close relationship between the capabilities available in ChatGPT Plus and the ongoing developments in OpenAI's API suggests a future of continued innovation, with even more powerful and customizable features on the horizon.

To maximize the benefits of ChatGPT Plus, users are encouraged to:

1. **Understand Model Differences:** Choose the appropriate model (GPT-4o, GPT-4, or specialized models) based on the specific task requirements, considering factors like multimodality, reasoning complexity, and speed.
2. **Master Advanced Prompting:** Invest time in learning and applying sophisticated prompt engineering techniques, including few-shot prompting and chain-of-thought reasoning, to elicit the best possible responses from advanced models.
3. **Leverage Personalization:** Utilize Custom Instructions to tailor ChatGPT's behavior and responses to individual needs, roles, and preferences, ensuring more consistent and relevant interactions.
4. **Explore Custom GPTs:** Experiment with creating and using Custom GPTs to develop specialized AI assistants for niche tasks or knowledge domains, and explore the GPT Store for community creations.
5. **Utilize Integrated Tools:** Become proficient in using Web Browse for real-time information, GPT-4o Image Generation for creative visuals, and Advanced Data Analysis for insightful data processing and visualization.
6. **Stay Informed:** The field of AI and OpenAI's offerings are rapidly evolving. Regularly consult official OpenAI documentation, help center articles, API documentation, and announcements to stay abreast of the latest features, model updates, and best practices.

Continuous learning and experimentation are key to fully harnessing the dynamic and expanding capabilities of ChatGPT Plus. By actively engaging with its advanced features and adapting to new developments, users can significantly enhance their productivity, creativity, and problem-solving abilities.

*Primary Source Repositories for Further Learning:*

* OpenAI Help Center: https://help.openai.com/
* OpenAI API Documentation: https://platform.openai.com/docs/
* OpenAI Blog: https://openai.com/blog/
* OpenAI Cookbook: https://cookbook.openai.com/

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