

# Getting Started with ChatGPT

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## Your Complete Beginner's Guide to AI-Powered Productivity

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**Author:** Tech Horizon Academy

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**Difficulty Level:** Beginner

**Time to Complete:** 30-45 minutes

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## Welcome to the Future of Work

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ChatGPT is transforming how businesses operate, enabling small teams to accomplish what once required entire departments. This guide will take you from complete beginner to confident user in under an hour, with practical exercises and real-world examples tailored for Australian small and medium businesses.

Whether you're a solopreneur managing multiple roles or leading a growing team, ChatGPT can become your most valuable team member—one that never sleeps, never complains, and continuously learns from your feedback.

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## What You'll Learn

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By the end of this guide, you will be able to:

- Set up your ChatGPT account with proper security measures
- Write effective prompts that generate high-quality outputs
- Apply the RIPE framework to structure your requests
- Use ChatGPT for common business tasks (emails, content, research)

- Avoid common mistakes that waste time and produce poor results
  - Integrate ChatGPT into your daily workflow
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## Part 1: Getting Set Up (10 minutes)

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### Step 1: Choose Your Plan

ChatGPT offers three main tiers for business users. The right choice depends on your needs and budget.

Plan	Price (AUD)	Best For	Key Features
Free	\$0/month	Testing & light use	Basic GPT-4o model, limited queries, no priority access
Plus	\$30/month	Individual professionals	GPT-4o, DALL-E image generation, 80+ queries/3 hours, priority access
Team	\$40/user/month	Small businesses (2+ users)	Everything in Plus, shared workspace, admin controls, higher limits

**Our Recommendation:** Start with Plus if you're working solo, or Team if you have 2-3 people who will use it daily. The free tier is too limited for serious business use.

### Step 2: Create Your Account

1. Visit [chatgpt.com](https://chatgpt.com) in your web browser
2. Click **Sign Up** and choose your preferred method:
  - Email address (recommended for business use)
  - Google account
  - Microsoft account
  - Apple ID
3. Verify your email address by clicking the link sent to your inbox
4. Complete your profile with your name and business details

**Security Tip:** Use a strong, unique password and enable two-factor authentication (2FA) immediately. Your ChatGPT account will contain sensitive business information and prompts.

### Step 3: Enable Two-Factor Authentication (2FA)

1. Click your profile icon (bottom-left corner)
2. Select **Settings** → **Security**
3. Click **Enable Two-Factor Authentication**
4. Download an authenticator app if you don't have one:
  - **Google Authenticator** (iOS/Android)
  - **Microsoft Authenticator** (iOS/Android)
  - **Authy** (iOS/Android/Desktop)
5. Scan the QR code with your authenticator app
6. Enter the 6-digit code to confirm
7. Save your backup codes in a secure location (password manager or encrypted file)

**Why This Matters:** Without 2FA, anyone who guesses or steals your password can access your entire ChatGPT history, including confidential business information, client details, and strategic plans.

### Step 4: Configure Your Settings

Navigate to **Settings** → **Personalization** and configure:

- **Custom Instructions:** Tell ChatGPT about your role, industry, and preferences (we'll cover this in detail later)
  - **Data Controls:** Decide whether your conversations can be used to improve ChatGPT (disable for sensitive business use)
  - **Chat History:** Enable to save your conversations for future reference
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## Part 2: Understanding the Interface (5 minutes)

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### The ChatGPT Dashboard

When you first log in, you'll see three main areas:

1. **Sidebar (Left):** Your chat history, organized by date. Click any conversation to resume it.
2. **Main Chat Area (Center):** Where you type your prompts and see ChatGPT's responses.
3. **Model Selector (Top):** Choose between different AI models (GPT-4o is the default and most capable).

### Key Interface Elements

- **New Chat Button:** Start a fresh conversation (use this when switching topics)
- **Attach Files (+):** Upload documents, images, or data files for ChatGPT to analyze
- **Regenerate Response:** Ask ChatGPT to try again if you're not happy with the answer
- **Copy/Share:** Copy responses to your clipboard or share conversations with colleagues
- **Rename Chat:** Give your conversations meaningful names for easy retrieval

### Mobile App vs. Web

ChatGPT is available on iOS, Android, and web browsers. The mobile app is excellent for quick queries on the go, but the web interface is better for:

- Uploading and analyzing documents
- Long-form content creation
- Complex multi-step tasks
- Copying and pasting between applications

**Pro Tip:** Use the web version for serious work and the mobile app for quick questions, brainstorming, or when you're away from your desk.

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## Part 3: Writing Effective Prompts (15 minutes)

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### The RIPE Framework

RIPE is a proven structure for writing prompts that consistently produce high-quality outputs. It stands for:

- **Role:** Who ChatGPT should act as
- **Instructions:** What you want it to do
- **Parameters:** How it should do it
- **Examples:** What good output looks like

Let's break down each component with practical examples.

### R – Role (Who)

Define who ChatGPT is and what expertise it should bring. This anchors the tone, perspective, and depth of knowledge.

#### Weak Role:

*“Help me write an email.”*

#### Strong Role:

*“You are a senior marketing manager at a B2B SaaS company with 10 years of experience in customer success.”*

**Why It Matters:** The role determines vocabulary, tone, and the level of sophistication in the response. A “senior marketing manager” will write differently than a “friendly customer support agent” or a “technical product manager.”

#### Common Roles for Business:

- Marketing manager
- Sales director
- Customer success specialist
- Financial advisor

- HR consultant
- Operations manager
- Content strategist

## I – Instructions (What)

Tell ChatGPT exactly what task you want completed and why you need it.

### Weak Instructions:

*“Write something about our new product.”*

### Strong Instructions:

*“Write a 300-word product announcement email for our existing customers explaining the new features in our November release and encouraging them to try the beta.”*

**Why It Matters:** Vague instructions produce vague outputs. Specific instructions with clear goals produce focused, actionable results.

### Instruction Checklist:

- ☐ What format do you need? (email, blog post, report, list, etc.)
- ☐ What’s the goal? (inform, persuade, educate, entertain)
- ☐ Who’s the audience? (customers, prospects, internal team, investors)
- ☐ What’s the context? (product launch, crisis response, routine update)

## P – Parameters (How)

Set constraints and expectations so ChatGPT doesn’t wander off track.

### Key Parameters to Specify:

1. **Length:** Word count, character limit, or number of sections
2. **Tone:** Professional, casual, friendly, authoritative, empathetic
3. **Structure:** Headings, bullet points, numbered lists, paragraphs
4. **Constraints:** What to avoid, what to include, specific requirements

### Example Parameter Block:

*“Keep it under 300 words. Use a friendly but professional tone suitable for existing customers. Structure it with: opening paragraph, 3 bullet points highlighting key features, closing call-to-action. Avoid technical jargon and focus on benefits, not features.”*

## E – Examples (Output Samples)

This is the most powerful—and most overlooked—part of RIPE. Show ChatGPT what good output looks like.

### Three Ways to Provide Examples:

1. **Attach Documents:** Upload a previous email, report, or document you’re happy with
2. **Paste Snippets:** Copy-paste a paragraph or section that captures the style you want
3. **Describe the Pattern:** Explicitly reference the structure or format to follow

### Example Using Examples:

*“Use the attached customer email from March 2024 as a style guide. Match its friendly tone, clear structure (greeting → update → benefit → call-to-action → sign-off), and level of detail.”*

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## Part 4: Practical Exercises (10 minutes)

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### Exercise 1: Write a Customer Email

**Scenario:** You need to email your customers about a price increase.

**Your Prompt (Using RIPE):**

**Role:** You are a customer success manager at a growing Australian SaaS company.

**Instructions:** Write an email to our existing customers announcing a 15% price increase effective January 1, 2026. Explain that the increase reflects new features we've added (AI-powered analytics, mobile app, priority support) and our commitment to continuous improvement.

**Parameters:**

- Keep it under 250 words
- Tone: Empathetic but confident
- **Structure:** Greeting → announcement → justification (new features) → reassurance (grandfathered pricing for annual plans) → call-to-action (upgrade to annual to lock in current rate) → sign-off
- Avoid: Apologetic language, over-explaining, technical jargon

**Examples:** Use a tone similar to Atlassian's customer communications—transparent, customer-focused, and solution-oriented.

**Try It Now:** Copy this prompt into ChatGPT and see what you get. Then refine it based on the output.

## Exercise 2: Create a Social Media Content Calendar

**Your Prompt:**



**Role:** You are a social media strategist **for** a small business coaching company **in** Australia.

**Instructions:** Create a 2-week content calendar **for** LinkedIn **with** 10 post ideas that will engage small business owners **and** drive traffic **to** our website.

**Parameters:**

- **Each** post should include: topic, **key** message, content type (text/image/video), **and** suggested hashtags
- Mix **of** content types: 40% educational, 30% inspirational, 20% promotional, 10% behind-the-scenes
- Tone: Approachable expert-knowledgeable but **not** preachy
- Format: Table **with** columns: **Date** | Topic | **Key** Message | Content Type | Hashtags

**Examples:** Think Gary Vaynerchuk's style—direct, actionable, no fluff—but less aggressive and more supportive.

## Exercise 3: Analyze a Competitor's Website

### Your Prompt:

**Role:** You are a digital marketing analyst specializing **in** competitive research **for** Australian SMBs.

**Instructions:** Visit [competitor website URL] **and** provide a detailed analysis **of** their messaging, value proposition, **and** content strategy.

**Parameters:**

- **Structure** your analysis **with** these headings: Homepage Messaging, Value Proposition, Target Audience, Content Strategy, Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities **for** Us
- Keep **each** section **to** 2-3 paragraphs
- Tone: Objective **and** analytical
- Focus **on** actionable insights we can apply **to** our own marketing

**Examples:** N/A (this **is** a research task, **not** a creative one)

**Note:** ChatGPT cannot browse the web in real-time on the free plan. You'll need to copy-paste the website content or upgrade to Plus/Team for web browsing.

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## Part 5: Common Mistakes to Avoid

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### Mistake 1: Treating ChatGPT Like Google

#### Wrong Approach:

*“Best CRM for small business”*

#### Right Approach:

*“You are a business operations consultant. I run a 5-person marketing agency in Melbourne and need a CRM to manage 50-100 active clients. Compare HubSpot, Pipedrive, and Zoho CRM based on: ease of use, pricing for small teams, email integration, and reporting capabilities. Present your analysis in a table with a recommendation.”*

**Why:** ChatGPT is a reasoning engine, not a search engine. Give it context and structure to produce useful analysis.

### Mistake 2: Accepting the First Output

ChatGPT’s first response is rarely perfect. Treat it as a first draft and refine iteratively.

#### Refinement Prompts:

- “Make it more concise—cut 30% of the words without losing key points.”
- “Rewrite the opening paragraph to be more engaging.”
- “Add a section on pricing and include a comparison table.”
- “Change the tone to be more formal—this is for a board presentation.”

### Mistake 3: Not Saving Good Prompts

When you write a prompt that produces excellent results, save it for reuse.

#### How to Build a Prompt Library:

1. Create a document (Google Doc, Notion, or even a text file)

2. Save prompts by category: Emails, Content, Research, Analysis, etc.
3. Include notes on when to use each prompt and what to customize

### Example Prompt Library Entry:

**Category:** Customer Emails  
Use **Case:** Product update announcement  
Prompt Template:  
"You are a [role]. Write a [length]-word email to [audience] announcing [update]. Tone: [tone]. Structure: [structure]. Avoid: [constraints]."  
**Notes:** Works best **for** feature launches. Adjust tone based **on** whether it's a major or minor update.

## Mistake 4: Sharing Sensitive Information

### Never Put This in ChatGPT:

- Customer credit card numbers or payment details
- Passwords or API keys
- Confidential financial data (unless using ChatGPT Team with data controls)
- Personal health information
- Legal documents with client names (redact first)

### Safe to Share:

- Anonymized data
- Public information
- General business strategies
- Draft content for review

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## Part 6: Integrating ChatGPT Into Your Workflow

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### Daily Use Cases

#### Morning Routine (5-10 minutes):

1. Summarize overnight emails and prioritize responses
2. Draft replies to top 3 urgent emails
3. Review today's calendar and prepare talking points for meetings

#### **Content Creation (30-60 minutes):**

1. Brainstorm blog post topics based on recent customer questions
2. Outline a post and generate a first draft
3. Create social media snippets from the blog post
4. Design email newsletter content

#### **Research & Analysis (20-30 minutes):**

1. Analyze competitor websites or marketing campaigns
2. Summarize industry reports or long articles
3. Generate market research questions for customer interviews

#### **Administrative Tasks (15-20 minutes):**

1. Draft meeting agendas
2. Summarize meeting notes into action items
3. Create project timelines and task lists

#### **Keyboard Shortcuts (Web)**

- **Cmd/Ctrl + K:** Start a new chat
  - **Cmd/Ctrl + Shift + ;:** Copy last response
  - **Cmd/Ctrl + /:** Search chat history
  - **Up Arrow:** Edit your last message
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## Part 7: Next Steps & Advanced Learning

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### Immediate Actions (Complete Today)

- ☐ Set up your ChatGPT account and enable 2FA
- ☐ Complete the 3 practice exercises in Part 4
- ☐ Write and save your first 3 prompts in a prompt library
- ☐ Identify 3 tasks in your daily workflow where ChatGPT can save time

### This Week

- ☐ Use ChatGPT daily for at least one task (emails, content, research)
- ☐ Experiment with different roles and tones to see what works best
- ☐ Share one useful prompt with a colleague or team member
- ☐ Track time saved and quality of outputs

### This Month

- ☐ Build a library of 10-15 reusable prompts for your most common tasks
- ☐ Explore advanced features: custom GPTs, file uploads, web browsing (Plus/Team)
- ☐ Join the Tech Horizon Academy community to share prompts and learn from others
- ☐ Consider upgrading to Team plan if you have 2+ people using ChatGPT regularly

### Advanced Resources

#### Tech Horizon Academy Courses:

- **Vibe Marketing:** Advanced ChatGPT for content marketing and social media
- **Vibe Coding:** Use ChatGPT to build websites and automate workflows (no coding experience required)
- **Vibe Alignment:** Integrate AI across your entire business operations

## Recommended Reading:

- OpenAI's official prompt engineering guide
  - "The AI-Powered Business" by Tech Horizon Labs (coming Q1 2026)
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## Troubleshooting & FAQs

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### ChatGPT is giving me generic/boring outputs

**Solution:** Add more specificity to your prompts. Use the RIPE framework and include examples of the style/tone you want.

### I'm hitting usage limits on the free plan

**Solution:** Upgrade to Plus (30/month) for 80 + queries per 3 hours, or Team (40/user/month) for higher limits and shared workspaces.

### ChatGPT is making up facts or citing non-existent sources

**Solution:** ChatGPT can "hallucinate" information. Always verify facts, especially for:

- Statistics and data
- Legal or medical advice
- Technical specifications
- Historical events

Use ChatGPT for drafting and brainstorming, then fact-check before publishing or making decisions.

### My prompts are too long and complicated

**Solution:** Start simple and refine iteratively. You don't need to write the perfect prompt on the first try. Ask ChatGPT to improve its own output with follow-up prompts like "Make this more concise" or "Add more detail to the second paragraph."

## I'm not sure if ChatGPT is right for my business

**Solution:** Try it for 2 weeks on the free plan. Focus on one specific use case (e.g., email drafting or content creation). Track time saved and quality of outputs. If you're saving 2+ hours per week, it's worth the Plus subscription.

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## Conclusion: Your AI-Powered Future Starts Now

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ChatGPT is not a replacement for human creativity, judgment, or expertise—it's an amplifier. The businesses that thrive in the next decade will be those that learn to collaborate effectively with AI, using it to handle routine tasks so humans can focus on strategy, relationships, and innovation.

You've now completed the foundational training. The next step is practice. Use ChatGPT every day for at least one task, and within a month, you'll wonder how you ever worked without it.

**Welcome to the Tech Horizon Academy community. We're here to support your AI journey every step of the way.**

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## Quick Reference Card

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### The RIPE Framework (One-Page Summary)

**R – Role:** Who ChatGPT should act as

*Example: "You are a senior marketing manager with 10 years of B2B experience."*

**I – Instructions:** What you want done and why

*Example: "Write a 300-word product announcement email to existing customers explaining our new features and encouraging beta sign-ups."*

**P – Parameters:** Structure, tone, length, constraints

*Example: "Friendly but professional tone. Structure: greeting → announcement → 3 bullet points → call-to-action → sign-off. Under 300 words. Avoid technical jargon."*

**E – Examples:** Samples of good output

*Example: “Use the attached March 2024 customer email as a style guide.”*

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**Need Help?** Join the Tech Horizon Academy community at [portal link] or email support@techhorizonlabs.com

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