

AI IMAGE GENERATION CHEAT SHEET

Liz Magaly Herrera | Data & AI Practitioner | Clarity ∞ Decisions ∞ Impact | For Primary School Teachers

WHAT IS IMAGE GENERATION?

AI image generation uses tools like **DALL-E**, **Midjourney**, **Gemini**, **Canva AI**, and **Firefly** to create images from text descriptions called **prompts**. The more detail you give, the better the result.

| Block | What it does | Vague Prompt | What to Write |
|---------------------------------------|--|------------------------|--|
| F FOCUS | Define the subject Who or what is in the image. Number, age, diversity, species, object. | ✗ "A teacher." | A friendly robot wearing a Victorian top hat |
| R RENDERS | Choose the visual style. This is the single biggest lever for changing the output. | ✗ "Make it look nice." | Colourful cartoon illustration |
| A ACTION | Describe what the subject is doing. Static or dynamic — the verb drives the scene. | ✗ "Teaching." | Reading to diverse children from a giant history book |
| M MOOD & SETTING | Set the environment and atmosphere. Where it happens + lighting + emotion. | ✗ "In a school." | In a bright classroom, cheerful mood |
| E EXTRAS | Add fine details that make it classroom-ready. Camera angle, labels, format, age-appropriateness. | ✗ "For kids." | Flat design, Year 2, no text, A4 landscape, suitable for 5-year-olds |

EXAMPLE: Colourful cartoon illustration of a friendly robot wearing a Victorian top hat, reading to diverse children from a giant history book in a bright classroom, cheerful mood, flat design, Year 2, no text, A4 landscape, suitable for 5-year-olds

5 GOLDEN RULES ① Start simple, then refine ② Specify age and education ③ Check before print ④ Say “no text” if adding your own ⑤ Keep human in the loop – AI can hallucinate

| SAFETY CHECKLIST BEFORE USING AI IMAGES | | |
|--|---|---|
| ✗ Anatomical errors (wrong fingers, distorted faces) ✗ Cultural stereotypes or gender bias in characters ✗ Inappropriate background elements or hidden content | ✗ Factual errors in diagrams or scientific illustrations ✗ Misspelled text (if text was included — avoid text!) ✓ Always review for diverse, inclusive representation ✓ Check age-appropriateness before sharing with pupils | ⚠ AGE RESTRICTIONS: Most AI image tools require users to be 18+. Check each tool's terms before allowing pupil access. Refer to your school's AI policy and the DfE AI Guidance (June 2025) for age-appropriate use. |

⚠ DATA PROTECTION: NEVER input real pupil names, data, photos, or identifiable information into ANY AI tool. Always use fictional examples.

UK GDPR • KCSIE 2025 • Data Protection Act 2018 • DfE AI Guidance June 2025

⚠ COPYRIGHT NOTICE FOR SCHOOLS

AI-generated images have varying licensing terms depending on the tool used. Before printing, distributing, or publishing AI images in school materials, check your tool's licensing terms. Always note which tool generated the image. When in doubt, use the image for internal classroom display only, not for external publication. **UK copyright law** for AI-generated content is under active government review. A formal report and economic impact assessment are expected by March 2026 under the Data (Use and Access) Act 2025. Check GOV.UK for the latest guidance before publishing AI-generated images externally.

⚠ STYLE REFERENCE NOTE: Style references to specific artists or studios (e.g., “Studio Ghibli”, “Pixar style”) may be restricted on some AI platforms due to copyright and IP protection policies. If a style keyword doesn't work on your chosen tool, try describing the visual qualities you want instead (e.g., “soft pastel Japanese animation style with detailed nature backgrounds”).

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STYLE KEYWORDS

Add these style descriptions to any prompt. Verified on DALL-E, Gemini, Midjourney, Canva, and Firefly.

| Style keyword | What you get | Best for | Example prompt snippet |
|--|--|-------------------------------------|---|
| Pixar style / 3D animated | Friendly, rounded 3D characters (Pixar-like) | Character posters, story displays | "Pixar style friendly dinosaur teacher" |
| Photorealistic / hyperrealistic | Looks like a real photograph | Geography, science, history visuals | "Photorealistic rainforest ecosystem, 8K" |
| Watercolour painting | Soft, artistic, hand-painted feel | Story illustrations, calm displays | "Watercolour illustration of a village" |
| Flat design / vector illustration | Clean, simple, modern graphic style | Icons, infographics, worksheets | "Flat design icons of musical instruments" |
| Children's book illustration | Warm, friendly, age-appropriate | Reading corners, story resources | "Children's book illustration, cat in garden" |
| Line drawing / pencil sketch | B&W outlines — perfect for colouring in | Colouring sheets, sketch activities | "Line drawing of a Roman soldier, no shading" |
| Isometric / infographic | 3D technical diagram style | STEM visuals, process diagrams | "Isometric diagram of a plant cell" |
| Studio Ghibli style | Japanese animation, detailed backgrounds | Nature topics, creative writing | "Studio Ghibli style enchanted forest" |
| Pop art / retro poster | Bold colours, vintage graphic style | Classroom displays, topic headers | "Pop art poster about recycling" |
| Botanical illustration | Scientific, detailed, naturalistic | Science posters, nature displays | "Botanical illustration of British wildflowers" |

PHOTOGRAPHY & LIGHTING KEYWORDS — FOR PHOTOREALISTIC RESULTS

These keywords dramatically improve photorealistic images. Especially effective in Midjourney (with --style raw) and DALL-E / GPT-4o.

| Lighting Keywords | Camera & Composition | Pro Combos for Teachers |
|--|--|--|
| studio lighting — professional, even, controlled golden hour — warm sunset. Outdoor/nature Rembrandt lighting — dramatic face triangle. Portraits backlit / rim light — glowing edges. Silhouettes soft natural light — overcast, gentle. Indoor scenes cinematic lighting — dramatic, film-like. Displays flat lighting — no shadows. Clean diagrams | close-up / macro — detail of small things. Science wide shot — full scene view. Geography bird's eye view — looking down. Maps, layouts eye-level view — natural perspective. Characters 85mm portrait lens — blurred bg, subject focus 35mm wide lens — captures more. Environments shallow depth of field — dreamy bokeh. Headers | Clean diagram: --style raw --s 30 --ar 16:9 Portrait poster: --ar 2:3 --s 100 --q 1 Worksheet border: --tile --style raw --q 0.5 Storybook page: --ar 3:2 --s 200 --q 1 Quick draft: --draft --q 0.5 (fast + cheap) Explore options: --chaos 40 (varied results) Consistent char: --cref [URL] (same character) |

PLATFORM COMPARISON

Platform features and pricing change frequently. This comparison is accurate as of February 2026. Check each provider's website for the latest information.

| Feature | DALL-E / GPT-4o | Gemini / Imagen 4 | Midjourney V7 | Canva AI / Dream Lab | Adobe Firefly |
|-------------------------------|--|--|---|--|---|
| Best for | Quick images in chat (Age 13+, 18+ without parental consent) | Google schools + docs (Age 13+, 18+ for standalone Gemini app) | Stunning displays (Age 18+ no exceptions) | Finished worksheets (Age 13+ via Canva for Education) | Copyright-safe images (Age 13+, 18+ for full features) |
| Text in images | Improved (GPT-4o) | Best (Imagen 4) | Poor (avoid text) | Good (editor overlay) | Moderate |
| Platform specific tips | Just describe what you want in ChatGPT, it rewrites your prompt automatically. Use the Select Tool to fix parts of an image. | Best text-in-images (Imagen 4). Upload a worksheet + say "add illustrations". Available inside Google Slides. Enterprise-grade protection when using Google Workspace for Education does not use data for training. Admin controls by age group. | Highest quality. Add --style raw for educational materials. Use --tile for borders. | Generate image → drop into worksheet/poster. 14 graphic styles. Magic Edit to fix parts. | Trained on licensed content only = copyright safe. Generative Fill to edit parts. Credit-based pricing. |
| | <i>Free tier available (ChatGPT). Plus, from \$20/mo.</i> | <i>Free with Google account. Advanced features via Workspace.</i> | <i>Paid only. Plans from \$10/mo.</i> | <i>Free for Education (school signup). Pro from \$13/mo.</i> | <i>Free tier (limited credits). Paid from \$5/mo.</i> |

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MIDJOURNEY V7 — COMPLETE PARAMETER REFERENCE

Add these to the END of any Midjourney prompt after a space. These are Midjourney-specific — they won't work in DALL-E, Gemini, or Canva.

| Parameter | Values | What it does | Teacher example |
|-----------------|-----------------------|--|--|
| --ar | e.g. 16:9, 2:3, 1:1 | Sets aspect ratio (shape). Default 1:1. Over 2:1 is experimental. | "classroom poster" --ar 2:3 → portrait A3 poster |
| --style raw | (just add it) | Removes Midjourney's artistic flair. More literal, photographic, cleaner output. Essential for educational diagrams. | "water cycle diagram" --style raw |
| --stylize / --s | 0–1000 (default 100) | Controls artistic interpretation. Low = literal. High = very artistic. 50 = low, 250 = high, 750 = very high. | "food chain diagram" --s 30 → clean and literal |
| --chaos | 0–100 (default 0) | How different the 4 results are from each other. Higher = more variety. | "Victorian classroom" --chaos 40 → varied angles |
| --quality / --q | 0.5, 1, 2 (default 1) | Render quality & detail. 0.5 = fast draft. 2 = extra refinement (uses more credits). | "worksheet border" --q 0.5 → quick draft first |
| --no | items to exclude | Negative prompting — tells AI what NOT to include in the image. | "playground scene" --no text --no adults |
| --tile | (just add it) | Creates seamless repeating patterns. Perfect for borders, backgrounds, wrapping paper. | "floral pattern for worksheet border" --tile |
| --seed | 0–4294967295 | Same seed = same base pattern. Great for controlled comparisons when testing word changes. | "forest scene" --seed 12345 → consistent base |
| --stop | 10–100 (default 100) | Stops generation early. Lower = softer, sketch-like. Useful for concept drafts. | "castle sketch" --stop 60 → softer, sketchy feel |
| --draft | (just add it) | 10x faster, half the credits. Lower resolution. Perfect for rapid prototyping. | "history scene" --draft → quick idea check |
| --sref [URL] | image URL | Style reference — AI copies the visual style of the referenced image. | "forest" --sref [URL of watercolour painting] |
| --cref [URL] | image URL | Character reference — keeps a consistent character across multiple images. | "robot teacher" --cref [URL of previous robot] |

5 READY-TO-USE IMAGE PROMPTS

| Vocabulary Flashcards | Story Illustration | Science Diagram |
|--|---|---|
| <p>F A single large object matching the vocabulary word (e.g., apple, umbrella, elephant)</p> <p>R Flat design vector illustration, clean lines, bright primary colours</p> <p>A The object sitting still on a plain white background, no distractions</p> <p>M White background, no scenery, cheerful and bright</p> <p>E No text, square format (1:1), suitable for 4-year-olds, one object per image</p> <p><i>Flat design vector illustration of a single bright red apple sitting on a plain white background, clean lines, cheerful, primary colours, no text, square format, suitable for 4-year-olds</i></p> | <p>F A friendly dragon with small wings and big round eyes</p> <p>R Children's book illustration, warm watercolour style</p> <p>A Reading a large golden storybook to three diverse children sitting in a circle</p> <p>M In a cosy library corner with cushions, warm lamplight, magical sparkles in the air</p> <p>E No text, A4 landscape, suitable for 6-year-olds, inclusive representation</p> <p><i>Children's book illustration, warm watercolour style, a friendly dragon with small wings and big round eyes reading a large golden storybook to three diverse children sitting in a circle in a cosy library corner with cushions, warm lamplight, magical sparkles, no text, A4 landscape, suitable for 6-year-olds</i></p> | <p>F A complete water cycle showing evaporation, condensation, precipitation, and collection</p> <p>R Educational infographic, clean isometric style with labelled arrows</p> <p>A Water moving through each stage: ocean evaporating, clouds forming, rain falling, river flowing back</p> <p>M Cross-section of landscape showing ocean, mountains, sky, and underground, bright daytime colours</p> <p>E Include labelled arrows for each stage, A4 landscape, suitable for 8-year-olds, educational diagram</p> <p><i>Educational infographic, clean isometric style, a complete water cycle diagram showing evaporation from the ocean, condensation forming clouds, precipitation as rain, and collection in rivers, cross-section of landscape with labelled arrows for each stage, bright daytime colours, A4 landscape, suitable for 8-year-olds</i></p> |