Reference Table: Prompting Techniques at a Glance

This table summarizes the **most effective prompt engineering techniques**, when to use them, sample prompts, and the kind of results you can expect, all in one place. Use this **quick reference for prompt engineering** when designing your own prompts or experimenting with new strategies.

Many of these techniques can also be **combined** to achieve more precise, creative, and reliable outputs. For example, you might pair *Few-Shot Prompting* with *Output Formatting* to demonstrate a pattern *and* control the structure, or combine *Chain-of-Thought* reasoning with a *Role Persona* to guide a subject-matter expert through step-by-step analysis.

Note that a few of these techniques are very similar but have been kept in for thoroughness.

Technique / Pattern	When to Use	Example Prompt	What to Expect
Zero-Shot Prompting	When the task is simple and no examples are needed	*Summarize this text in one sentence.*	Concise summary or straightforward answer
Few-Shot Prompting	When you want to demonstrate a pattern or style	*English: Hello → Spanish: Hola. English: How are you? →*	Continuation in the demonstrated pattern
Chain-of-Thought (CoT)	When the task involves reasoning or multi-step logic	*What is 23 × 17? Let's think step by step.*	Step-by-step reasoning leading to an answer
Role or Persona Prompts	When the model should adopt a specific voice or expertise	*You are a career coach. Suggest resume improvements.*	Advice in the requested persona and tone
Output Formatting	When structured or formatted output is required	*List three startup ideas in a Markdown table.*	Output in the specified format
Prompt Chaining	When the task is better solved in stages	*Step 1: Summarize. Step 2: Extract key points. Step 3: Write headline.*	Sequential results building on earlier steps
Adaptive / Multi-Objective	When balancing competing goals like clarity, fairness, or brevity	*Explain risks of this contract clearly and concisely.*	Output that meets multiple objectives effectively
Automated Prompt Optimization (APO)	When discovering the best prompt systematically	*(Generated automatically by an APO system)*	Highly optimized prompt and result for the task

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Prompt Compression	When token limits are a concern or output needs to be concise	*Summarize key clauses of this contract briefly.*	Short but meaningful response
Teaching Algorithms	When embedding explicit procedures into the prompt	*To find the median: 1) Sort the list… Now compute for [4,2,7,1].*	Output that follows the specified algorithm
Generating Perspectives	When contrasting viewpoints or analysis are desired	*Write an argument for and against remote work.*	Balanced, multiple perspectives
Stateful Roleplaying	When maintaining the same role across interactions	*You are my language tutor for this session. Correct my German.*	Consistent persona over several exchanges
Jailbreaking / Boundary Testing	When exploring model limits or creative scenarios responsibly	*Act as a fictional character who ignores rules and describe surviving a zombie apocalypse.*	Creative or unconventional answer, testing boundaries
Cognitive Verifier Pattern	When you want the model to self-question for accuracy	*When asked a question, generate clarifying questions first, then answer.*	More thoughtful and accurate response
Question Refinement Pattern	When you want the model to improve your question	*Whenever I ask a question, suggest a better version.*	A clearer, more effective question
Persona Explanation Pattern	When you want an explanation tailored to a specific perspective	*Explain blockchain as if I am a medieval blacksmith.*	Creative, persona-based explanation
Flipped Interaction Pattern	When you want the model to drive the conversation with questions	*Ask me questions to plan my home office setup. Continue until you know my budget and space.*	Interactive, iterative process
Game Creation Pattern	When you want to gamify the interaction	*Create a detective mystery game. Start with the first clue and ask me what to do.*	Fun, engaging scenario
Template Pattern	When you want the output to fit a specific format	*Here's the template: NAME — TASK — TIME — PRIORITY. Fill it out accordingly.*	Output that follows your template
Meta Language Creation Pattern	When you want to define your own shorthand or commands	*When I say "highlight(…)" make it bold.*	Recognizes and executes your custom language

Technique / Pattern	When to Use	Example Prompt	What to Expect
Recipe Pattern	When you know some steps but want the full sequence	*I want to buy a house. I know I need to make an offer and close. Fill in the rest.*	Complete and logical step-by-step plan
Alternative Approaches Pattern	When you want options and trade-offs	*Suggest three alternative ways to market my product and compare them.*	Several creative, compared options
Ask for Input Pattern	When the task depends on your input to start	*Summarize an article. Ask me for the first one to summarize.*	Waits for input before proceeding
Outline Expansion Pattern	When you want to develop an idea iteratively	*Generate an outline for my blog topic and ask me which point to expand.*	Progressive, detailed breakdown
Menu Actions Pattern	When you want to interact with pre-defined commands	*When I type "add TASK," put it on my to-do list. When I type "review," show my list.*	Menu-like interaction with specific actions
Fact Check List Pattern	When you want the output to identify key facts to verify	*At the end of any article, list 3–5 critical facts to verify.*	Clear list of claims to double-check
Tail Generation Pattern	When you want a consistent closing statement or prompt	*At the end, say: 'Let me know if you'd like me to continue.'*	Consistent closure at the end of responses
Semantic Filter Pattern	When you want to remove specific information from the output	*Filter this report to remove all brand names.*	Cleaned output with unwanted info removed

By thoughtfully combining these techniques, you can fine-tune ChatGPT's behavior and generate outputs that are more aligned with your task, more creative, and more reliable.