ert Popular Trends

Supercharge Your Reporting: The Journalist's AI Prompt Playbook

Share the Knowledge

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The cursor blinks on a bla[...] but the headline doesn't Y[...] di[...]g for a fresh angle on a story everyone is already c[...] rson to talk to, and you need them yesterday. A de[...] and you have an hour to find the lead.

Learn more

Replay

These are not just challeng[...] st. The pressure to be fast, accurate, and origina[...]
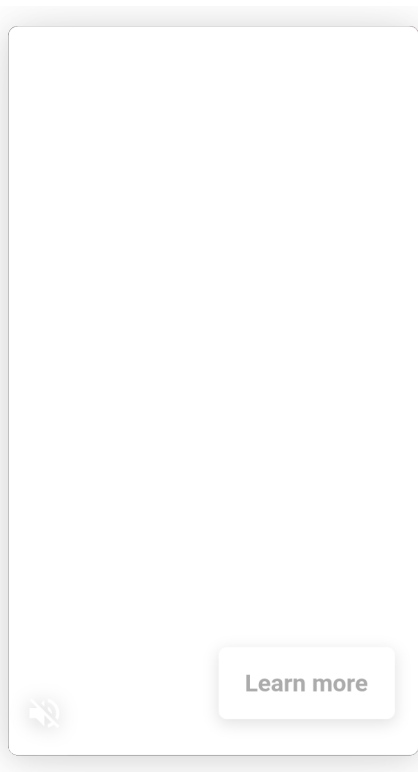
These prompts are designed to tackle these very problems. It's not about replacing your instincts or outsourcing your ethics. Think of AI as your tireless research assistant, a creative sparring partner, and an efficiency tool that handles the grunt work. This frees you up to focus on what truly matters: asking the right questions, finding the truth, and telling a powerful story.

To use these prompts, simply copy the text, replace the information inside the brackets `[like this]` with your own details, and paste it into ChatGPT.

1. Research, Ideation, and Angle Development
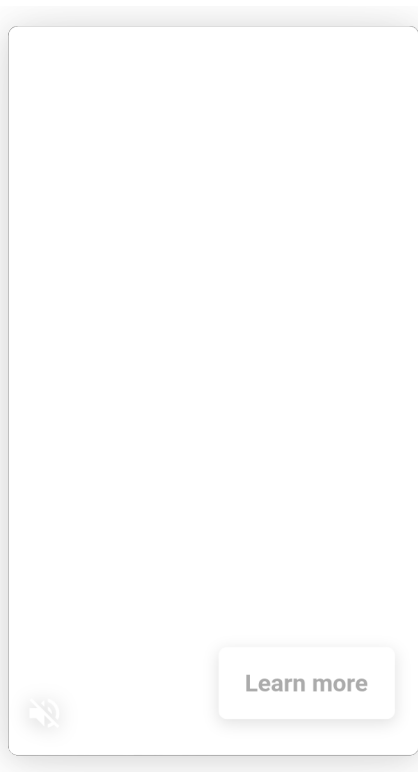
This is where stories are born. Use ChatGPT to move beyond the obvious, discover unique angles, and structure your investigation.

1. **Broad Topic Exploration:**
   Act as an investigative journalist. I'm exploring the topic of `[e.g., the global semiconductor shortage]`. Browse the latest news, academic papers, and industry reports from the last `[e.g., 3 months]`. Synthesize 5 unique and underreported story angles a general audience would find compelling.

2. **Geographic Focus:**
   What are the most significant `[e.g., environmental, political, economic]` issues currently affecting `[city, region, or country]`? For each issue, provide a brief summary and a potential human-interest angle.

3. **Following the Money:**   ✕
   I'm investigating `[company, industry, or government initiative]`. Browse the web to identify its primary funding sources, key investors, and recent government contracts. Outline any potential conflicts of interest or noteworthy financial relationships.

4. **Connecting Seemingly Unrelated Events:**
   I've noticed two recent events: `[Event A, e.g., a new local zoning law]` and `[Event B, e.g., a major tech company opening a new office]`. Analyze potential causal or correlational links between these two events. What questions should I be asking to investigate a potential connection?

5. **Historical Context:**
   Provide a concise historical timeline of `[topic, e.g., labor union movements in the US auto industry]`, focusing on key turning points and legislation that have shaped the current situation.

6. **Finding the Counter-Narrative:**
   The dominant narrative around `[topic]` is that `[describe the common viewpoint]`. Act as a skeptical editor. What are the main counter-arguments or alternative perspectives? Who are the key people or groups promoting these alternative views?

7. **Identifying Key Stakeholders:**
   For a story about `[topic, e.g., a proposed city-wide bike lane network]`, identify all the key stakeholders. For each one (e.g., city government, local business owners, cycling advocates, resident associations), outline their likely position, primary concerns, and what they have to gain or lose.

2. Sourcing and Interview Preparation

Learn more
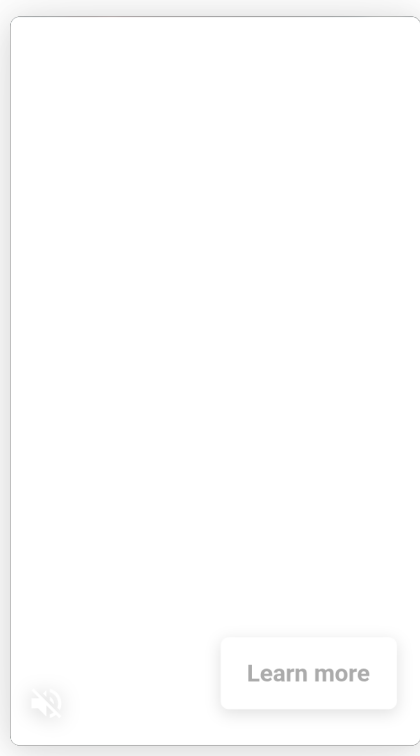
Find the right people to talk to and go into every interview fully prepared.

1. **Finding Experts:**
   I'm writing an article about `[specific scientific or technical topic, e.g.,`

mRNA vaccine technology]. Identify 5 leading researchers, academics, or authors in this field who have published recently. Provide their institutional affiliation and a link to their recent work.

2. **Finding 'Real People':**
   I need to find people personally affected by [issue, e.g., rising rental costs in downtown Austin]. Suggest 5 online communities, forums, or local advocacy groups (e.g., on Reddit, Facebook, or local organizations) where I might find individuals willing to share their stories.

3. **Analyzing a Source's Background:**
   I'm preparing to interview [Person's Name], the CEO of [Company Name]. Browse the web to create a backgrounder on them. Include their career history, past controversial statements, notable achievements, and links to 3 of their most revealing past interviews or public appearances.

4. **Generating Interview Questions (Basic):**
   Generate 10 insightful interview questions for a [role, e.g., city mayor] about [topic, e.g., the city's new homelessness policy]. The questions should be open-ended and non-leading.

5. **Generating Interview Questions (Advanced/Tough):**
   Act as a seasoned investigative reporter like Christiane Amanpour. I am about to interview [Person's Name] about [sensitive topic, e.g., their company's recent data breach]. Based on publicly available information, what are 5 tough but fair questions that would hold them accountable? For each question, provide the likely evasive answer and suggest a follow-up question.

6. **Organizing Interview Notes:**
   Here are my raw interview notes from a conversation with [Person's Name]: [paste your messy notes here]. Organize these notes into key themes. Pull out the 5 most powerful quotes and identify any potential contradictions or areas that require follow-up.

3. Data Analysis and Interpretation
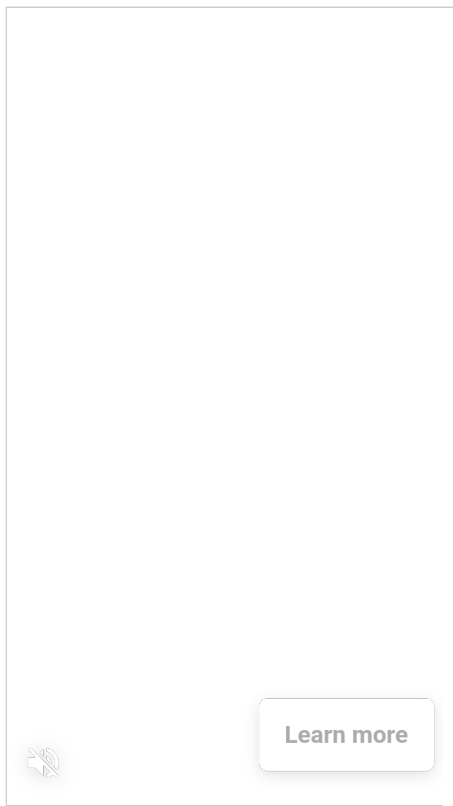
Turn raw data, reports, and spreadsheets into compelling, understandable narratives.

1. **Understanding Reports:**
   I have a dense, 50-page report titled `[Report Title]` from `[Organization]`. Here is the text: `[paste key sections or provide a link if public]`. Summarize the key findings in 5 bullet points. What is the single most surprising or significant data point in this report?

2. **Brainstorming Data Visualizations:**
   Based on the following data summary: `[describe the data, e.g., 'A 30% increase in traffic accidents at a specific intersection over 2 years']`, suggest 3 different ways to visualize this data for an online article. For example, a bar chart, a map overlay, or an infographic.

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3. **Interpreting Data (for non-coders):**
   I have a spreadsheet with the following columns: `[list column names, e.g., 'Date', 'Neighborhood', 'Type of Crime']`. I've noticed `[describe a trend, e.g., a spike in burglaries in the 'Northwood' neighborhood in May']`. What are some potential social, economic, or policy-related reasons for this trend that I could investigate further?

4. Drafting and Content Creation
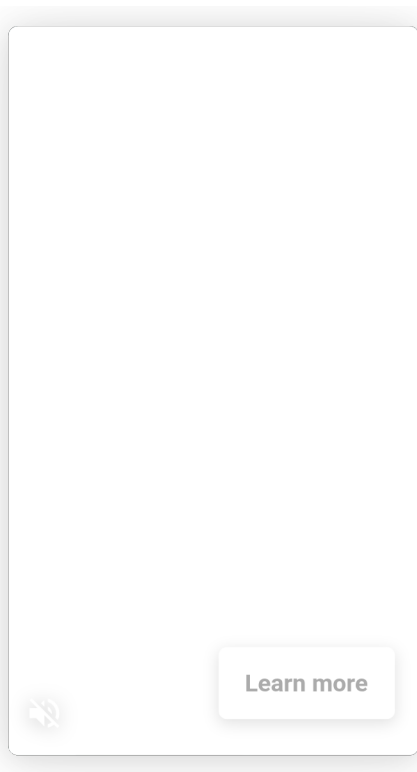
Transform your research and interviews into a coherent and compelling narrative.

1. **Structuring Your Article:**
   I'm writing a `[e.g., 1500-word feature story]` about `[topic]`. My key findings are: `[bullet point list of main points]`. My central interview is with `[Person's Name]`. Propose three different narrative structures for this article (e.g., Chronological, Thematic, Character-driven) and briefly explain the pros and cons of each.

2. **Crafting Compelling Leads:**
   Here is the key point of my article: `[one-sentence summary of the story's core]`. Write 5 different opening paragraphs (ledes) to hook the reader. Include an anecdotal lede, a startling statistic lede, and a direct summary lede. The target publication is `[e.g., The New York Times, WIRED, a local newspaper]`.

3. **Overcoming Writer's Block:**
   I'm stuck writing a section about `[difficult or dry subject, e.g., the technical process of desalination]`. Explain this concept using a simple analogy that a high school student could understand. Then, rephrase that explanation into a clear and concise paragraph suitable for a news article.

4. **Adapting Tone and Style:**
   Rewrite the following paragraph in the style of `[Publication Name, e.g., The Economist, Buzzfeed News, The Atlantic]`. Pay close attention to sentence structure, vocabulary, and tone. Paragraph: `[paste your paragraph here]`.

5. Editing and Refinement

Learn more
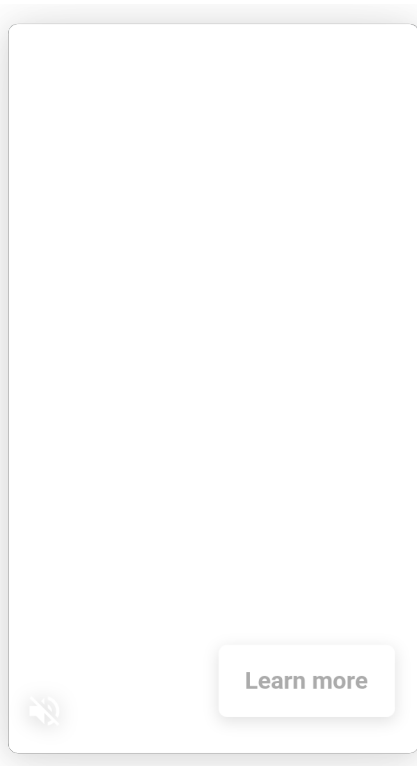
Polish your draft until it shines, from the headline down to the last sentence.

1. **Headline and Sub-heading Generation:**
   My article is about `[briefly describe the article's main argument and topic]`. Generate 10 potential headlines that are SEO-friendly, engaging, and accurate. Also, provide 3 sub-heading options.

2. **Improving Clarity and Flow:**
   Review the following text and identify any jargon, clichés, or convoluted sentences. Suggest specific edits to make the writing clearer, more concise, and more powerful. Text: `[paste your draft text here]`.

3. **Strengthening an Argument:**
   Act as a critical editor. Read the following draft. Where is the central argument weakest? What evidence is missing? What questions does the text leave unanswered for the reader? Draft: `[paste your article draft here]`.

6. Fact-Checking and Verification (Assistant Role)

Use ChatGPT as a powerful assistant to speed up the verification process. **Disclaimer: AI is a starting point for fact-checking, not the final authority. Always verify with primary sources.**

1. **Targeted Claim Verification:**
   For the following claim, browse the web to find three independent, credible sources (e.g., academic studies, official government reports, reputable news organizations) that support or refute it. Provide a link and a one-sentence summary for each source. Claim: `[paste the specific claim, e.g., 'Solar power is now cheaper than coal in Texas.']`

2. **Identifying the Origin of a Quote:**
   Find the original source and context for this quote: `[paste quote]`. Who said it, when, and in what circumstances? Is it often misquoted?

3. **Checking for Information Updates:**
   This article I'm referencing was published in `[Year]`. Browse the web to find more recent data, events, or studies that might have changed the situation regarding `[topic]`. Has the expert `[Expert's Name]` quoted in the article published any updated research or changed their position?

7. Audience Engagement and Distribution

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Maximize the reach and impact of your published work by tailoring it for different platforms.

1. **Social Media Copy:**
   My article, `[Headline]`, is about `[Topic]`. Create a promotional package for social

media. Include:

- Two compelling tweets, one with a question and one with a key statistic.

- A longer, more narrative post for LinkedIn or Facebook.

- A script for a 30-second TikTok or Instagram Reel summarizing the story.

- Five relevant hashtags.

2. **Newsletter Blurb:**
   Write a 150-word blurb for an email newsletter summarizing my article `[Headline]`. The tone should be personal and direct, encouraging readers to click through and understand why this story matters to them.

3. **Generating Discussion Questions:**
   To foster engagement in the comments section of my article, generate 5 open-ended discussion questions related to its themes. The article is about `[topic]`.

8. Ethical Considerations and Bias Detection

Use AI as a mirror to check your own work for fairness, balance, and potential blind spots.

1. **Identifying Loaded Language:**
   Analyze the following text for loaded language, unintentional bias, or framing that might unfairly favor one perspective. Highlight specific words or phrases and suggest more neutral alternatives. Text: `[paste your draft here]`.

2. **Ensuring Balanced Representation:**
   My article on `[topic]` currently quotes `[list of quoted sources]`. Analyze this list. Are there any perspectives or demographic groups central to this story that are missing? Suggest types of people or organizations I should also seek out to ensure fair and balanced reporting.

3. **Exploring Potential Unintended Consequences:**
   My story reveals that `[describe the core revelation of your story]`. Act as a media ethics expert. What are the potential negative or unintended consequences of publishing this information? What steps can I take in my reporting and framing to mitigate potential harm while still reporting the truth?

Also, Check These Prompts:

- Many stories require a strong viewpoint. Sharpen your arguments with our **Prompts for Opinion Writing**.
- The most important skill for a journalist is connecting with the reader. Use our **Prompts for Genuinely Human Writing**.
- From research to interview prep, these prompts can help you build a story. For more on storytelling, see our **Prompts for Creative Writing**.

Share the Knowledge

Leave a Comment

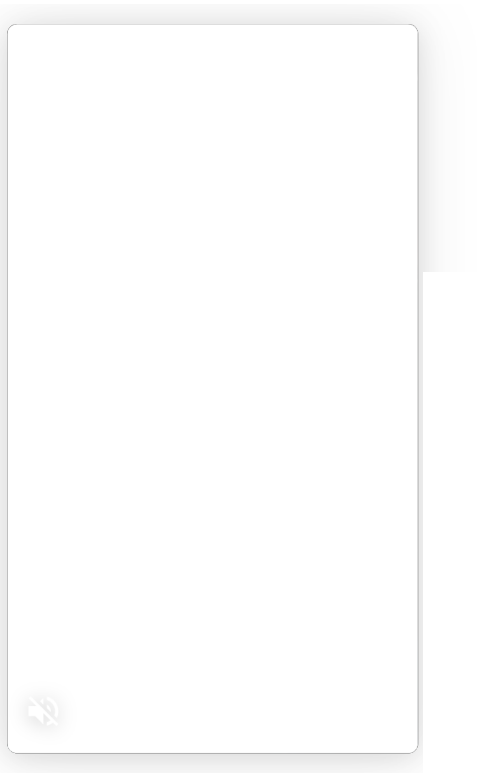Your email address will not be published. Required fields are marked *

Type here..

✕

Name*

Email*

Website

☐ Save my name, email, and website in this browser for the next time I comment.

Check These Prompts

×

Privacy and cookie settings
Managed by Google. Complies with IAB TCF. CMP ID: 300