ChatGPT

**FREE GUIDE**

# ChatGPT Hacks

Nine habits and ready-to-paste prompts that get sharper, more useful answers from ChatGPT, for code, writing and research.

**How to use this guide**

- Tap any line in Contents to jump to that step; the footer link brings you back.
- Copy the prompt in each grey box and swap the [brackets] for your details.
- Tick off the checklist at the end as you try each habit.

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STEP 01

## Lead with context

Vague in, vague out. One short paragraph of context beats three rounds of follow-ups.

> **Say who it is for.** Name the audience and how much they already know

> **State the goal.** What will you do with the answer?

> **Add limits.** Length, tone, tools or stack you must stick to

TRY THIS PROMPT

```
You are helping me [goal]. The audience is [who].
They already know [x]. Keep it under [n] words,
in a [tone] tone. Avoid [things to skip].
```

STEP 02

## Let it interview you first

For anything open-ended, have ChatGPT ask the questions before it writes.

> **Cap the questions.** Ask for at most five, so it stays quick

> **Answer in one go.** Reply with numbered answers, then let it draft

TRY THIS PROMPT

```
Before you answer, ask me up to 5 questions that
would most change your answer. Wait for my replies.
```

STEP 03

## Ask for a shape, not just an answer

Tell it the exact format and you skip the cleanup.

> **Tables for comparisons.** Columns you name, rows you can scan

> **JSON for code.** Give the keys you expect

> **Steps for how-tos.** Numbered, one action per line

TRY THIS PROMPT

```
Compare [A] and [B] as a table with columns:
use case | cost | learning curve | when to avoid.
End with a one-line recommendation.
```

STEP 04

## Show one good example

A single example of what you want teaches style faster than any description.

> **Paste a sample.** A past post, email or function you liked

> **Say what to copy.** Tone and structure, not the topic

TRY THIS PROMPT

```
Here is an example I like:
"""[paste]"""
Write a new one about [topic] with the same tone
and structure. Do not reuse its sentences.
```

STEP 05

## Break big jobs into steps

Long tasks go better as a short plan you approve, then one step at a time.

> **Plan first.** Ask for an outline and edit it

> **One step per message.** Review each part before moving on

TRY THIS PROMPT

```
Give me a 5-step plan for [task]. Stop after the
plan. When I say 'go 1', do only step 1.
```

STEP 06

## Make it critique itself

A second pass catches gaps the first draft missed.

> **Name the critic.** A senior reviewer, a sceptical customer

> **Ask for the fix too.** Not just a list of problems

TRY THIS PROMPT

```
Review your last answer as a strict senior
[engineer/editor]. List the 3 biggest weaknesses,
then give me an improved version.
```

STEP 07

## Debug code the fast way

Give it the error, the code and what you expected, all in one message.

> **Paste the real error.** The full stack trace, not a summary

> **Say what you tried.** So it does not suggest it again

**TRY THIS PROMPT**

```
This [language] code fails with:
[error]
Expected: [x]. Actual: [y]. I already tried [z].
Explain the cause in 2 lines, then show the fix.
```

STEP 08

## Check facts before you trust them

ChatGPT can sound sure and still be wrong. Make checking part of the prompt.

> **Ask for sources.** Then open them yourself

> **Ask for confidence.** Which claims are solid, which are guesses

**TRY THIS PROMPT**

```
Answer [question]. Mark each claim as
'confident' or 'check this', and list sources
I can verify.
```

STEP 09

## Save your defaults

Stop retyping the same preferences in every chat.

> **Custom instructions.** Your role, stack and preferred style, set once

> **Projects or GPTs.** Keep files and instructions for a repeated workflow together

**TRY THIS PROMPT**

```
About me: [role], I work with [stack].
How to answer: concise, code first, no filler,
ask when something is ambiguous.
```

CHECKLIST

# Your checklist

Tick each box as you try it. The boxes are real form fields, so most PDF viewers save your ticks.

- [ ] Wrote a prompt with audience, goal and limits
- [ ] Let ChatGPT ask me questions before answering
- [ ] Asked for a table or JSON instead of free text
- [ ] Gave one example and asked it to match the style
- [ ] Ran a big task as plan first, then step by step
- [ ] Asked for a self-critique and an improved version
- [ ] Debugged with the full error, expected vs actual
- [ ] Checked at least one claim against a real source
- [ ] Saved my custom instructions

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