

Better Prompts, Better Results

Getting more from Copilot and Gemini

For staff in education and training

Prompts, and how to build your own assistants

Carla Roets | Crintus & Co. | August 2026

1

Start here

What this is, and how to use it.

How to use this

Five sections. Take what matches your job and leave the rest.

Section	What is in it
1 Start here	This page.
2 The rules	Two rules. Read these before anything else.
3 Prompts	How to ask for something and get it. Your tone and voice, and fifteen prompts you can use today.
4 Agents	A good prompt saved, so you never type it again. Prompt Builder, Lesson Plan Builder, and how to build your own.
5 Spotting AI content	Editing what comes back. Read in your own time.

How 3 and 4 fit together: section 3 is a good prompt. Section 4 is a good prompt you never have to type again. Do them in that order.

Bold brackets like [this] are blanks for you to fill in. Everything else you can copy exactly as it is.

Tip: If you only do one thing: build the Prompt Builder in section 4. It remembers the method from section 3 so you do not have to.

2

The rules

Two of them. They come before everything else in this guide.

Two rules

One. No personal information goes into an AI tool.

No names, dates of birth, PPSNs, addresses, attendance records or anything from a personal file.

How to work round it: describe the situation, not the person. "A 17-year-old who has missed three weeks and gets defensive when I ask why" tells the AI what it needs and identifies nobody.

Two. AI does not mark, grade or assess.

No learner work goes into an AI tool. Not anonymised, not as a second opinion.

The line, in one sentence: AI helps you prepare what goes to learners. It has no part in judging what comes back.

Both rules are in Donegal ETB's Artificial Intelligence (AI) Policy, which is the document that governs this. Read it.

Donegal ETB, Artificial Intelligence (AI) Policy, version 1.1. Implemented 9 June 2026, review date 1 May 2027. Owner: Head of ICT. To be read with the AI Policy Guidance Document.

Tip: You are the editor. AI can be confidently wrong, and it invents things that look completely real. Nothing goes out until you have read it.

3

Prompts

How to ask for something and get it.

Your tone and voice guide.

Fifteen prompts, in three sets.

Asking for something

You do not need all five every time. The more you give it, the better the answer.

[ROLE] + **[TASK]** + **[CONTEXT]** + **[FORMAT]** + **[TONE]**

Block	What it means
ROLE	Who should it act as?
TASK	What do you want done? One sentence.
CONTEXT	Who is it for, what level, what constraints. Attach documents or paste screenshots.
FORMAT	A table. Five bullets. Under 200 words. At a reading age of 11.
TONE	How should it sound?

The one worth remembering

Ask the chatbot to ask YOU questions

"Ask me any questions you need to give me the best result."

Instead of you guessing what context to give, it tells you what it needs. Every prompt in this section ends with a version of it.

Tip: Both tools take attachments. In Copilot type / or use the + button. In Gemini use +.

Your tone and voice guide

Paste this into a chat, answer its questions, and keep the guide it writes you. Save it wherever suits: your AI settings, a Gem, or a Word file you paste from. It is yours and it works in whichever tool you end up using.

I want you to interview me about how I write, then write me a tone and voice guide I can save and reuse.

About me

My role: **[describe it briefly]**.

I mostly write: **[e.g. emails to colleagues, letters home, session plans, feedback, reports]**.

My audience: **[e.g. learners, parents, colleagues, senior management, external bodies]**.

How to run the interview

Ask me three to five questions at a time, no more than four rounds. Cover:

- How formal I am, and whether that changes depending on who I am writing to.
- Words and phrases I use naturally.
- Words and phrases I dislike.
- How I write to a learner or student compared with how I write to a manager.
- How I handle difficult messages: bad news, chasing someone, saying no.
- How I open and how I sign off.
- How long I like things to be.

Before you write the guide, ask me one last question: is there anything else about how I write that you should know?

What the guide should contain

- Five things I always do.
- Five things I never do.
- Three example sentences written in my voice.
- Under 400 words in total.

Rules to write into the guide

UK and Irish English. No em dashes. No "it is not just X, it is Y". No grouping things in threes out of habit. No summary paragraph at the end unless asked. No corporate buzzwords.

How to treat me

Do not flatter me about my writing. If an answer I give you is vague, ask again.

Tip: Answer properly. One-word answers give you a guide that could describe anyone, which is the one way this fails.

Fifteen prompts

Swap the bold brackets for your own details. Find your set and ignore the other two.

Set	Who it is for
A	Admin and operations.
B	Teaching and training.
C	Supporting different abilities.

Notice: not one of these asks you to type a person's name.

SET A: ADMIN AND OPERATIONS

For administrators, coordinators, office and support staff.

1. Turning notes into a written record

[Paste your rough notes underneath the prompt]

ROLE: Act as an experienced administrator writing up a record.

TASK: Turn my rough notes below into a clear, factual record.

CONTEXT: This was a **[phone call / meeting / incident]**. Refer to people by role, not by name. My notes: **[paste them]**.

FORMAT: Date and time, who was involved by role, what happened in order, what was said, what was agreed, what happens next and by when.

TONE: Factual and neutral.

Flag anything I have written that reads as opinion rather than fact, so I can reword it before it goes on file.

2. Drafting a difficult email

TASK: Write an email to **[role or relationship]** about **[situation]**.

CONTEXT: Here is what happened: **[brief]**. What I need out of it is **[outcome]**. The sensitive part is **[what makes it difficult]**.

FORMAT: Under **[150]** words. Mark anything I need to fill in with **[BRACKETS]**.

TONE: **[Firm but fair / warm and direct / apologetic but not grovelling]**.

Give me two versions at different levels of directness.

3. Turning spreadsheet data into a report summary

[Attach the spreadsheet]

TASK: Read the attached figures and write the summary section of my **[monthly / quarterly / annual]** report.

CONTEXT: This goes to **[who]**. They care about **[what]**. Last period the figures were **[X]**, if that helps you spot a change.

Remove any name column before you attach the file. Totals and trends are all this needs.

FORMAT: Three or four short paragraphs, then a bullet list of anything that looks like it needs attention. Show me the numbers you used so I can check them.

TONE: Factual and plain. No spin.

4. A reusable reply for a recurring enquiry

TASK: Write me a reusable reply for **[type of enquiry]**.

CONTEXT: We are **[type of organisation]** in **[location]**. The reply must cover **[list what it has to say]**. The person asking is usually **[what they are like, what they are worried about]**.

FORMAT: Under **[200]** words. Mark anything I need to fill in with **[BRACKETS]**.

TONE: Welcoming and human. No official-speak.

5. Meeting notes into minutes and actions

[Paste or attach your notes]

ROLE: Act as an experienced administrator.

TASK: Turn these notes into minutes.

CONTEXT: This was a **[staff meeting / review / planning meeting]**. Present: **[list by role]**.

FORMAT: Date, who was there, what was discussed, decisions made, then an action table: action, who is doing it, by when.

TONE: Formal and brief.

Flag anything that was discussed but left undecided.

SET B: TEACHING AND TRAINING

For tutors, trainers, instructors and anyone in front of a group.

6. Planning a teaching session

ROLE: Act as an experienced **[subject]** tutor.

TASK: Plan a **[90]**-minute session on **[topic]**.

CONTEXT: **[Number]** learners at **[level]**. They can already **[what]**. What they find difficult: **[be specific, e.g. reading, sustained writing, working in a group]**. I have **[equipment, room, budget]**. It runs **[when in the week]**.

FORMAT: A five-minute starter that needs no reading, one hands-on thing they make or do, a way in for whoever is furthest behind, and a two-minute check at the end that does not feel like a test. Give me timings that add up.

TONE: Practical. Assume I have almost no prep time.

Then give me an alternative plan for a session where the group is unsettled or attendance is low.

7. Rewriting a document in plain English

[Attach the document]

TASK: Rewrite the attached so someone who struggles with reading can understand it.

CONTEXT: This is a **[brief / letter / policy / form]**. What they need to take from it is **[what]**.

FORMAT: Short sentences, common words, aim for a reading age of about **[11]**. Put whatever they have to DO in a numbered list. Keep all dates, deadlines and official wording exactly as they are.

TONE: Straight and respectful. Not babyish.

Tell me if anything cannot be simplified without changing what it means.

8. Explaining a concept three ways

ROLE: Act as an experienced **[subject]** tutor.

TASK: Explain **[concept]** three different ways, for a learner who did not get it the first time.

CONTEXT: **[Level]** learners. What I have already tried is **[what]**. Where they get stuck is **[what]**.

FORMAT: One everyday analogy, one worked example using a real situation or real numbers, and one thing they can do or handle to see it work. Under 100 words each.

TONE: Plain. No jargon.

Do not repeat the explanation that has already failed.

9. Building a slide outline

[Attach the document, notes or session plan]

ROLE: Act as an experienced trainer preparing a presentation.

TASK: Turn the attached into a slide-by-slide outline.

CONTEXT: **[Number]** slides, **[X]** minutes, for **[audience]**. The point I want them to leave with is **[what]**.

FORMAT: For each slide: a title, three or four short lines of content, and speaker notes underneath. Keep the on-slide text short enough to read from the back of the room.

TONE: **[Plain and practical / formal / conversational]**.

Give me the outline only. I will build the slides myself in our own template.

10. Creating a learner handout or worksheet

[Attach any source material]

ROLE: Act as a tutor making a learner resource.

TASK: Create a **[one-page handout / worksheet / checklist]** on **[topic]**.

CONTEXT: For **[level]** learners. It should help them **[do what, specifically]**. They will use it **[in class / at home / on placement]**.

FORMAT: **[Steps in order / key terms with plain definitions / a checklist they tick]**. Keep it to **[one side]**. Leave space for them to write.

TONE: Clear and practical. Plain language, no jargon.

SET C: SUPPORTING DIFFERENT ABILITIES

For anyone adapting materials for learners who need a different way in.

11. Differentiating a task for mixed abilities

[Attach the task or worksheet]

ROLE: Act as an experienced **[subject]** tutor.

TASK: Take this task and give me three versions of it at different levels.

CONTEXT: One group, mixed abilities, same room, same time. Nobody can be seen to be given the easy one.

FORMAT: Three versions that look and feel the same as each other, same length and same layout, all leading to the same outcome. Then tell me briefly what changes between them.

TONE: Practical.

12. Adapting a resource for learners with low literacy

[Attach the resource]

ROLE: Act as a literacy support specialist.

TASK: Adapt the attached so learners who find reading difficult can use it on their own.

CONTEXT: **[Level]** learners. This is a **[worksheet / handout / instruction sheet]**. What they have to be able to do with it is **[what]**.

FORMAT: Short sentences, common words, one instruction per line. Aim for a reading age of about **[11]**. Add a plain-language glossary for any term that has to stay. Keep the layout uncluttered and leave white space.

TONE: Age-appropriate and respectful. It must not look like an easier version. Tell me anything that cannot be simplified without losing its meaning.

13. Breaking a complex task into steps

TASK: Break **[task]** down into steps a learner can follow one at a time.

CONTEXT: **[Level]** learners. The finished thing should be **[what]**. They tend to give up at **[which point]**, usually because **[why]**.

FORMAT: Numbered steps, one action each, with a checkbox against every step. Say what finished looks like at each stage so they can check themselves.

TONE: Encouraging and matter-of-fact.

Flag any step that has two actions hidden inside it.

14. Adapting material for English as an additional language

[Attach the material]

ROLE: Act as a tutor experienced in teaching learners with English as an additional language.

TASK: Adapt the attached for learners who are still building their English.

CONTEXT: **[Level]**. Their first languages are **[list them, or say mixed]**. They are **[new to English / conversational but not confident in writing]**.

FORMAT: Plain sentence structures and common vocabulary. Keep the subject terms and explain them rather than removing them. Add a short glossary. Mark any idiom or cultural reference I should explain out loud.

TONE: Respectful. Simplify the language, never the subject content.

15. Making a practical task accessible

TASK: Suggest ways to adapt **[practical task]** for a learner who cannot **[do this part]** in the usual way.

CONTEXT: **[Level]**. The task normally involves **[describe it]**. We have **[equipment, space, support available]**. The outcome they still have to demonstrate is **[what]**.

FORMAT: Three or four options. For each one: what changes, what stays the same, and whether the learner still meets the same outcome.

TONE: Practical.

Do not suggest anything that would make the learner stand out in front of the group. Describe the barrier, not the person: never ask me for a name or a diagnosis.

4

Agents

A prompt you never have to type again.

What an agent is, and where to put it.

Prompt Builder.

Lesson Plan Builder.

Building your own.

What an agent is

Gemini calls it a Gem. Copilot calls it an agent. Same thing: instructions you write once and stop retyping.

Where to put it	Worth knowing
A Copilot agent	Look for New agent. Your organisation can switch this off.
A Gem	gemini.google.com, sidebar, Gems, New Gem. Free.
Top of a chat	Always works, nothing to set up.

How to build one: open a new agent or Gem, give it a name, paste the whole block into the instructions box, and save. That is the entire process. The blocks on the next pages are ready to paste.

Tip: Copilot will redraft your instructions on the right as you paste. Read what it produces before you save. If it dropped one of your rules, put it back.

Prompt Builder

Tell it the job in your own words. It asks what it needs, then hands back a prompt you can save and reuse. Nobody remembers five block names three weeks after a workshop, so this remembers them for you.

Purpose

You write prompts for people. The user tells you what they want done, in their own words. You ask for what is missing, then hand back one finished prompt they can copy, save and reuse.

You never do the task itself. You write the prompt for it.

Conversation style

- Plain UK English. Be brief. No preamble.
- Ask one short question at a time and wait for the answer.
- Never ask more than five questions in total. Fewer if you already have enough.
- If the user gives a short or vague answer, accept it and move on. Do not press.

The five blocks

Every prompt you write contains these, in this order.

- Role: who it should act as.
- Task: what it should do, in one sentence.
- Context: what it needs to know. Level, audience, subject, constraints.
- Format: how the answer should come back. A table, six bullets, an outline, an email.
- Tone: how it should sound.

Every prompt you write ends with the golden rule: Before you start, ask me anything you need.

Step 1: find out what is missing

Read what the user asked for. Work out which of the five blocks they have already given you. Ask only about the ones they have not, one question at a time, in plain words, never using the block names. Once you have all five, say: I have enough. Shall I write it?

Step 2: write the prompt

Produce the finished prompt in a code block, each block on its own line, labelled. Put anything they will change each time in **[square brackets]**. Underneath the code block add two short lines: what this does, in one sentence, and what to change each time, naming the brackets. Then say: Copy that into a new chat. If the answer is not right, tell me what was wrong and I will fix the prompt.

Step 3: fix it, only when asked

Ask what the answer got wrong. Change the prompt to fix it, and say in one line which block you changed and why. Improve the prompt, never the answer.

Hard rules

- Never do the task. If asked to write the email, write the prompt that writes the email. Say so once, plainly.
- Never write a prompt that asks for a person's name.
- Never put real names, student or staff details, or anything confidential in a prompt. Use **[square brackets]** instead, every time.
- Never write a prompt longer than it needs to be. Short and specific beats long and thorough.
- Never invent context. If you do not know the subject, level or audience, ask.

Output rules

- Plain, direct, no flattery.
- The prompt itself goes in a code block. Nothing else does.
- No opening pleasantries and no closing summary.

Lesson Plan Builder

For anyone who plans sessions. Fill in the learners section properly and every plan after that takes about ninety seconds.

Purpose

You write session plans for tutors and trainers. I give you a topic and the details, you give me a plan I can teach from.

About my learners

[Describe your learners in two or three lines: age range, the level they work at, what they find difficult, how long they have been out of education. This is the part worth writing properly, because everything else follows from it.]

Rules

- UK and Irish English. Plain language.
- Never invent an award code, a component code or a learning outcome. If I have not given you the exact wording, write **[CHECK AGAINST SPEC]** and carry on.
- Never use a learner's name. I will describe people by situation.
- One session per plan. No schemes of work unless I ask.
- If a plan depends on something I have not told you, ask. Maximum three questions, then write it.

What I will give you

The topic, the level, the group size, how long the session is, and what I have in the room. If I leave something out, ask.

What you give me back

1. Session title, level, length and date line.
2. Learning outcomes, written as "By the end of this session you will be able to..." Mark any I need to check against the spec.
3. Resources needed, and an honest estimate of my prep time.
4. Running order as a table, with timings that add up: a starter that needs no reading, short main input, the doing part as the longest block, and a close that does not feel like a test.
5. Differentiation: what the learner furthest behind does, and what the one who finishes first does. Neither visibly singled out.
6. Evidence: what this session produces that can go towards a portfolio, and what I need to keep or photograph on the day.
7. An alternative plan for a day when the group is unsettled or attendance is low.

Style

A table for the running order. Everything else short. Two sides of A4. No filler.

Tip: Add your own blank session plan template as a knowledge file when you build it. The agent then writes into your template instead of its own.

Building your own

Answer these six and you have an assistant.

1. What job does it do?

One sentence. If you need two, it is two agents.

2. What does it need to know about you and your place?

Everything you would otherwise retype at the start of every chat. Who you are, who you serve, what level, what constraints.

3. What are its rules?

How to write. What house style to follow. And the never-do list, which matters more than the rest.

4. What will you give it?

Documents, rough notes, a topic and a length. Say what you will hand over so it knows what to expect.

5. What shape do you want back?

A table. Two sides of A4. Under 150 words. Numbered steps. Be specific or you will get an essay.

6. What must it never invent?

Codes, figures, references, policy, outcome wording. Tell it to flag a gap instead of filling it.

Then paste your six answers into the Prompt Builder and ask it to turn them into agent instructions. One assistant builds the next.

5

Spotting AI content

What gives it away, what no longer does, and how to fix it.
Reference. Read it in your own time.

None of this proves anything. The models learned to write by reading us, so people write like this too. Use it on your own drafts, not to catch anyone out.

What still gives it away

- **Rectangle paragraphs.** Every sentence the same length. Human writing is jagged.
- **Everything in threes.** "Clear, practical and engaging."
- **"It is not just X, it is Y."** The most recognisable one going.
- **A transition on every paragraph.** Furthermore. Moreover. Additionally.
- **Trailing significance clauses.** ", highlighting its importance". Claims something matters without saying why.
- **Latin where plain would do.** Utilise, facilitate, leverage, robust, seamless.
- **Bold scattered mid-paragraph,** and a summary at the end that repeats what you just read.
- **Nothing specific in it.** No name, no date, no number, no place. The strongest signal of the lot.
- **Vague authority.** "Studies show", with nothing you could look up.
- **Invented detail that looks real.** Made-up references, figures and codes.

What is no longer true

Some of the advice going round has since reversed.

The old rule	Now
Em dash overload	Reversed. A 2026 study of 1.2 million words found ChatGPT now uses fewer em dashes than human writers.
Heavy punctuation	Also reversed. AI uses fewer commas and almost no brackets.
Rhetorical questions	Backwards for student work. Students use them freely, AI avoids them.
Delve, tapestry, realm	Peaked in early 2024 and dropped once publicised.
American spelling	One spellcheck removes it. A house style issue, not a tell.

Fixing it

1. Delete the first paragraph and the last paragraph. Usually nothing is lost.
2. Break every group of three.
3. Swap Latin for plain. Utilise becomes use.
4. Put one real thing in every section: a name, a date, a number, a place.
5. Check every fact and figure, starting with the convincing ones.
6. Vary your sentence lengths. Short one. Then a longer one that carries more detail.
7. Read it out loud. Anything you would never say, rewrite.

Can I not just use a detector?

No. QQI say so directly, which is the line to use if anyone asks you.

"Do not rely on GenAI 'detection systems'. None of the tools which are currently available are fully capable of detecting the use of GenAI."

QQI, National Academic Integrity Network

- Independent testing of 14 tools found every one scored under 80% accuracy, falling to 26% on paraphrased text.
- False positives ranged from near zero to around 50%.
- Writers whose first language is not English are flagged far more often. One study found 61% wrongly marked as AI.

In practice: somebody accused because a website said 87% is somebody you have lost. Read the work and talk to them.

The goal is not to hide that you used AI.

It is to get the boring half of the job done faster.