

The Secrets to a Great Gen-AI Prompt

with John Beaumont



*Learn how to ask better
questions and get
better results.*



Ask better questions.
Get better results.

Prompt



Better Results





Part 1:

Understanding Prompts

"What is a prompt?"

What Is a Prompt?

A prompt is simply how you communicate with AI.

You give information to the AI...



You

Summarize this article
in three bullet points.



AI

- Key point 1...
- Key point 2...
- Key point 3...

...and the **AI** responds.

A prompt can be almost **anything**:



Ask a **question**



Give an **instruction**



Upload a **document**



Share an **image**



Brainstorm **ideas**



Write an **email**



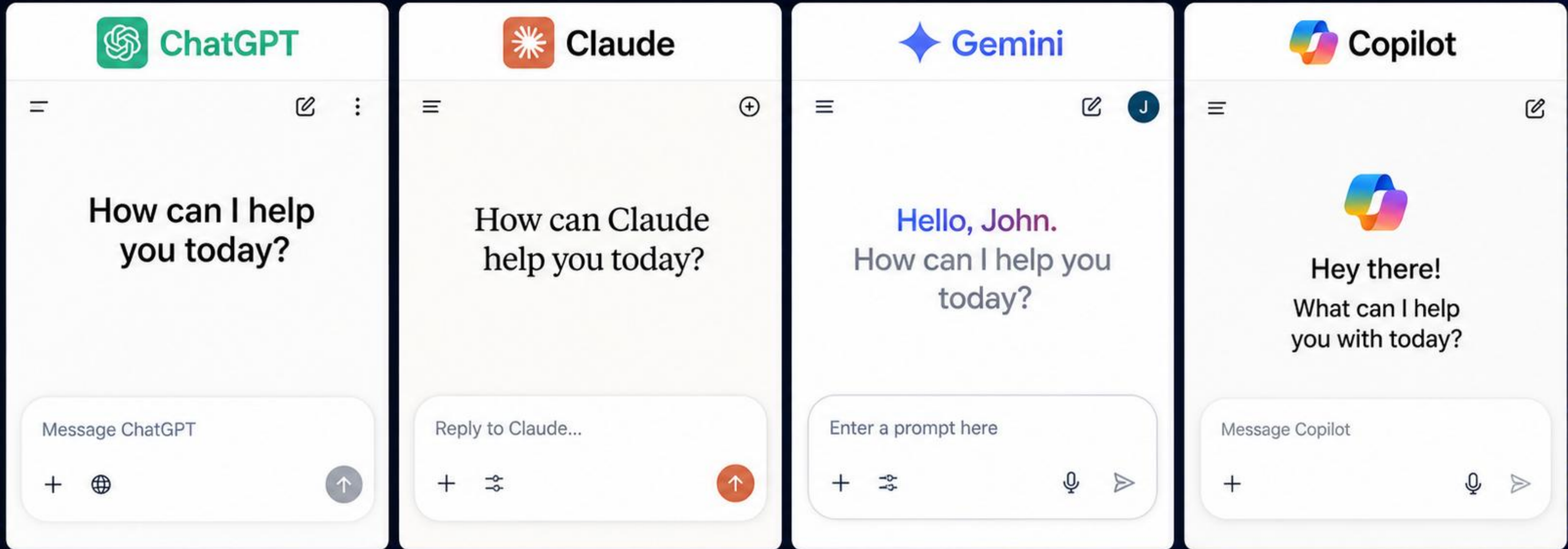
Plan a **trip**



If you're **communicating** with AI, you're using a **prompt**.

The Prompt Looks the Same—Everywhere

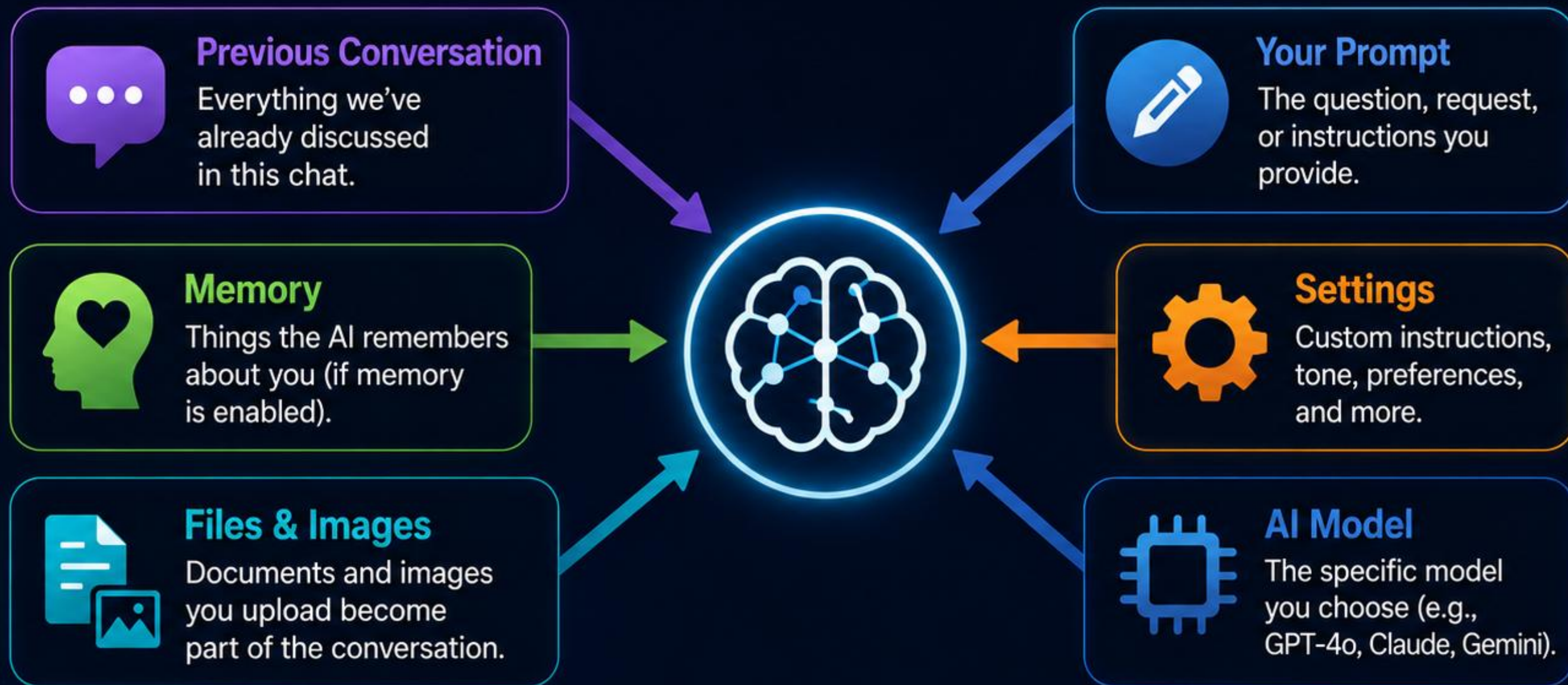
Different tools. Same idea. You type. They respond.



No matter the AI, you start the same way—a **prompt**.

What Shapes Every AI Response?

More than just your prompt.



Every AI response is shaped by all of these—*not just your prompt.*

Latest from ChatGPT

Updated October 15, 2026



Introducing
GPT-6



Smarter AI

Improved reasoning, understanding, and following instructions.



Interactive Answers

ChatGPT can create working calculators, charts, quizzes, and other interactive tools directly in your conversation.

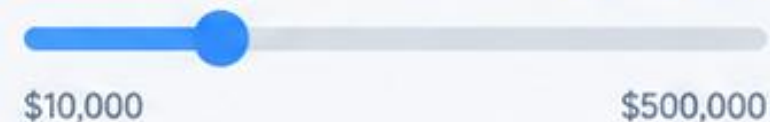


Better Research

More capable of handling complex questions, finding relevant information, and working with multiple sources.

Interactive Retirement Savings Calculator

Starting savings **\$100,000**



Annual return **5%**



Years invested **15**

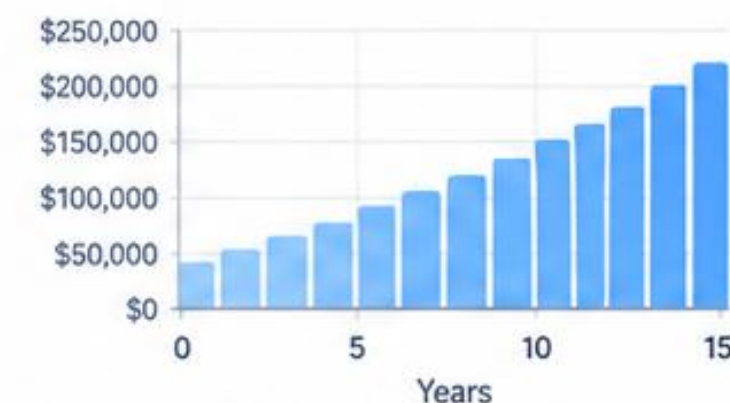


Projected total

\$207,892

Investment growth **\$107,892**

Projected Growth Over Time



Available to everyone — including Free users!

GPT-6 is now available for Free, Go, Plus, and Pro users (with different usage limits and options).



Part 2:

Prompts: Why Responses Change

“Settings have a huge impact on responses and conversations”

Settings Demo

ChatGPT Settings

Five minutes in Settings can dramatically improve every future conversation

The same prompt can produce different responses because of these settings.

Reasoning/Thinking Level: How much reasoning ChatGPT uses, paid version

Personalization: Overall response style and behavior

Custom Instructions: Details of how you want ChatGPT to behave

About You: Uses information about you to tailor responses

Memory: Can use information from previous conversations

Additional Tools:

Web search: Whether ChatGPT can search the web for answers

Connector search: Whether ChatGPT can search using connected Apps

ChatGPT Settings: Custom Instructions

Details of how you want ChatGPT to behave

Same Prompt

"Explain photosynthesis."

No Custom Instructions

Response:

Photosynthesis is the process by which plants convert sunlight, water, and carbon dioxide into glucose and oxygen. It occurs primarily in the chloroplasts...

Custom Instruction:

"Always explain things as if I were 12 years old."

Response:

Think of a plant as a tiny solar-powered food factory. It uses sunlight like electricity, takes in water through its roots and carbon dioxide from the air, then combines them to make its own food. As a bonus, it releases oxygen for us to breathe.



ChatGPT Settings: **About You**

Details of how you want ChatGPT to behave

Example 1 – Without "About You";

Prompt: "Suggest a weekend project."

Response: *Paint a room, build a bookshelf, learn photography, hike a trail...*

Example 2 – With "About You"

Prompt: "Suggest a weekend project."

Suppose "About You" says:

Retired

Lives in Florida

Enjoys genealogy

Teaches AI classes

The same prompt response might become: *Develop a new genealogy project, create a handout for your AI class, organize old family photos, or visit a local historical society.*



ChatGPT Settings: **Memory**

ChatGPT can use relevant information it has learned from previous conversations and other available sources*

Memory OFF

Prompt:

"How is my prompt engineering presentation coming along?"

Response:

I'd be happy to help. Could you tell me more about the presentation?

Memory ON

Same prompt:

"How is my prompt engineering presentation coming along?"

Response:

Last time we worked on your presentation, we were refining the section on what shapes a response. We discussed slides on Memory, About You, Higher Intelligence, and Custom Instructions, and we were looking at demonstrations for each. The next logical step is...

***Note: Memory doesn't mean ChatGPT remembers everything. It uses information it considers relevant.**

The Same Prompt... **Different Response**

Your prompt is important, but it's only part of the picture.



**"Recommend a project
for this weekend."**



Different Model

Different capabilities
and training



Thinking (memory)

More time to think
for harder questions



About You

Uses information
about you to tailor
the response



Memory

Can use information
from previous
conversations



Web Search

Access to current
information from
the internet



Connector Search

Access to your
connected files
and apps



Different Response



Understanding these settings helps you get **more consistent, relevant, and useful answers.**

Temporary Chats

Choose how much personal context a temporary chat uses



Personalized (default)

Can use existing memory, custom instructions, and plugins.



Temporary Chat



Unpersonalized

Does not use those sources to personalize answers.



Both options, while temporary

Stay out of chat history • Do not add memories • Are not used to improve models

You can save a temporary chat. It then becomes a regular chat.

Projects

Keep everything for a topic in one place.

A Project includes:



Related conversations
All your chats about this topic.



Files (sources)
Available in every chat in this project.



Project instructions
How you want ChatGPT to respond.



Shared resources
Links, notes, timelines, and more.



Share a Project

Work with other people using the same chats, files and instructions.

Why use Projects?



Pin your important projects
Keep your key projects at the top for quick access.



Keep everything organized
All related chats, files and instructions in one place.



Files are always available
Project files (sources) are included in every chat.



Add files to prompts
Attach extra files, images or PDFs just for that question.



Project level

Files and instructions you want available in every chat.



Prompt level

Files and images you add to a single chat when needed.



Think of a Project

as a digital binder for everything related to one subject.

Part 3:

Building Better Prompts

“John’s 12 Top Tips”

1. Give ChatGPT a Role
2. Name the Audience
3. Choose the Tone or Perspective
4. Specify the Format
5. Ask for Examples or Analogies
6. Ground the Answer in Your Material
7. Make It Interactive
8. Chain the Task
9. Ask for the Reasoning
10. Ask for a Self-Critique
11. Set a Rule
12. Give Context
13. Bonus: Ask ChatGPT to Write the Prompt



Define a Role or Persona for ChatGPT

Gives you a more focused and direct answer

Example: “*Acting as a CFO, please give me advice....*”

- Gives ChatGPT context and direction
- Produces more focused, practical responses
- Great for planning, coaching, reviewing, or creative work

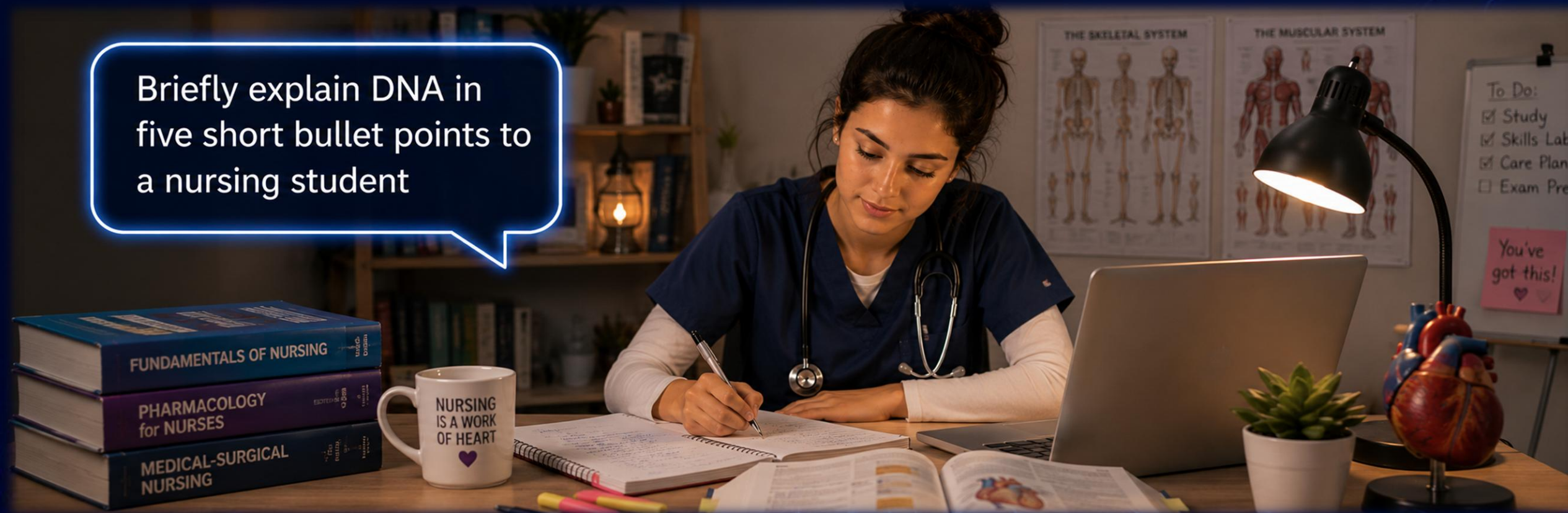


Name the Audience

Help ChatGPT tailor the response to their knowledge, interests, or needs

Example: “Briefly explain DNA in *five short bullet points* to a nursing student

- Matches tone and depth needed
- Makes responses easier to understand and more relevant
- Works well for studying, presentations and content creation



Choose a Style, Tone, or Perspective

Tell ChatGPT how you want the response to sound and be presented.

Example: “ Briefly explain DNA to a nursing student in *a friendly, conversational style*.”

- Match the tone to your purpose
- Make responses more engaging
- Create content that fits your audience

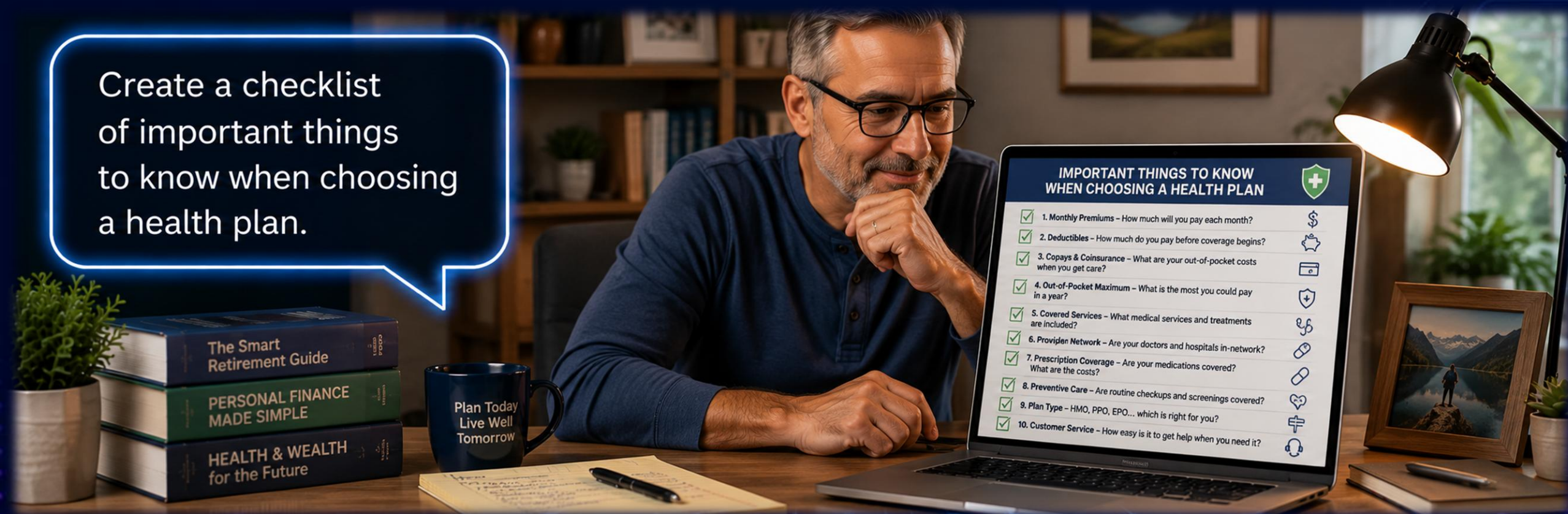


Specify The Format

Tells ChatGPT exactly how you want the information organized.

Example: “Create a *checklist* of important things to know when choosing a health plan.”

- Organize information the way you need it
- Save time by reducing editing
- Create ready-to-use content



Ask for Examples or Analogies

Examples and analogies make new or complex ideas easier to understand and remember.

Example: "Explain DNA using a *baking analogy* that a 12-year-old would understand."

- Turn complex ideas into simple explanations
- Learn new subjects more quickly
- Remember information more easily



Ground the Answer in Your Material

Give ChatGPT your documents or notes so it can answer using (only) your information.

Example: *Using ONLY the attached article, summarize SpaceX's IPO. Do not use outside information.*

- Producing answers based on your documents
- Getting more accurate and relevant responses
- Summarizing, comparing, or explaining complex information



Make it Interactive

Produces more accurate and personalized responses through a guided conversation.

Example: *What should I ask my doctor on my next visit?* **Ask me one question at a time** before making suggestions.

- More accurate recommendations
- Avoids overwhelming questions all at once
- Allows you to refine your answer as you go

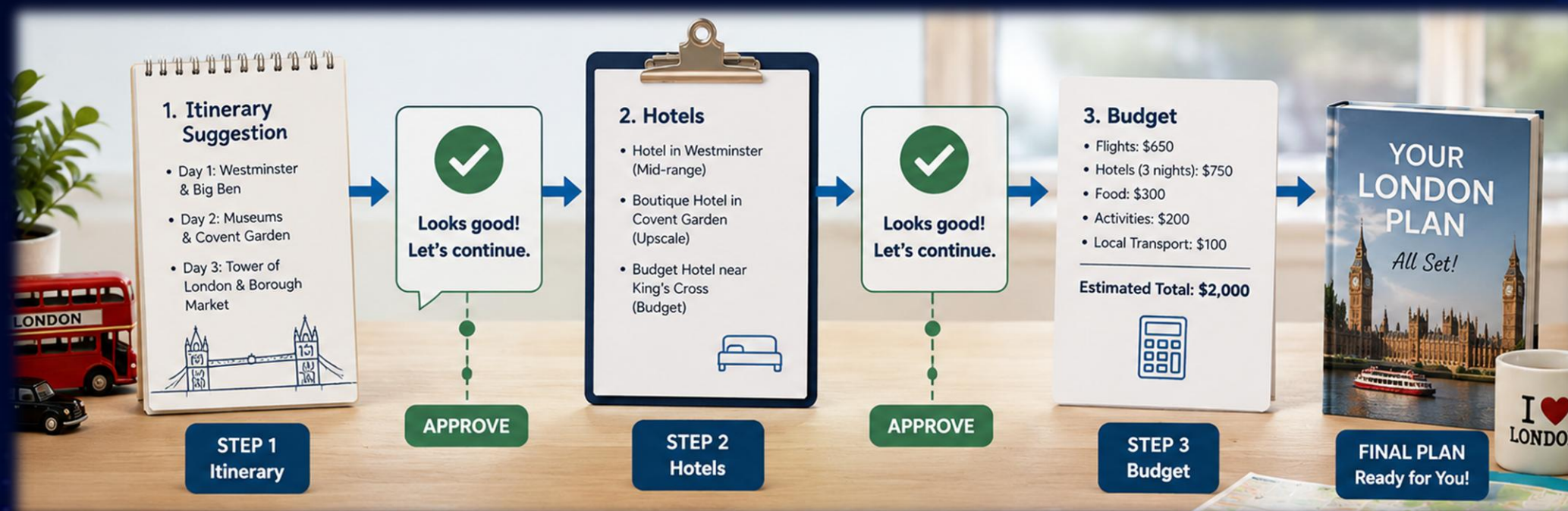


Chain The Task

Keeps complex simple by moving step by step, with your approval before continuing.

Example: *Help me plan a three-day trip to London. Suggest the itinerary first, **then stop and ask for my approval** before moving on to hotels and budget.*

- Keeps you in control
- Prevents wasted work
- Makes big tasks easier to manage



Ask for Reasoning

Helps you understand the answer instead of just accepting it..

Example: *Suggest the best computer tablet for a senior who will use it for day-to-day social activities.*
Show your reasoning in a table.

- Understands the "why" behind the answer
- Builds confidence in recommendations
- Helps you learn, not just receive answers

Reasoning: Best Tablet for a Senior for Day-to-Day Social Activities

Criteria	iPad (Option 1)	Galaxy Tab (Option 2)	Fire HD 10 (Option 3)
Ease of Use	✓ Very easy and intuitive	✓ Easy, Android based	○ Simple interface
Display Quality	✓ Excellent clear display	✓ Very good vibrant display	○ Good for price
Social Apps (Facebook, Zoom, etc.)	✓ All apps work seamlessly	✓ All apps work well	✓ All key apps available
Battery Life	✓ Up to 10 hrs	✓ Up to 12 hrs	✓ Up to 13 hrs
Price	○ Highest	○ Mid-range	✓ Most affordable
Best For Seniors	✓ Great, but higher cost	✓ Great balance of features	✓ Best value for basics

Best Choice
Samsung Galaxy Tab

Why?

- ✓ Easy to use
- ✓ Great display
- ✓ All social apps work well
- ✓ Long battery life
- ✓ Better value overall

Perfect for staying connected! ♥

Ask for a Self-Critique

Improves the answer by asking ChatGPT to review its own work.

Example: *Tell me which three careers are likely to be most impacted by AI. **Then critique your answer** and explain any limitations or alternative viewpoints.*

- Finds weaknesses or omissions
- Improves accuracy and balance
- Produces a stronger final answer



Set the Rules

Limits on where ChatGPT looks or what information it can use.

Example: *summarize the 2026 hurricane forecast for Tampa using non-government sources only.*

- Uses known sources
- Limits outdated information
- Produces more reliable answers



Give Context

Context helps the AI understand your situation so it can give specific rather than generic advice.

Example: *I have never gardened before. I live in Tampa, Florida, and I want to grow tomatoes in containers on a sunny patio. What should I do first?*

- More personalized answers
- More practical recommendations
- Fewer follow-up questions



Let ChatGPT Write the Prompt

You don't have to know how to write a perfect prompt. Describe what you want and ask ChatGPT to create the prompt for you.

Example: *Help me write the best prompt to research and compare Medicare Advantage plans. Ask me any questions you need first.*

- Better prompts with less effort
- More personalized responses
- Learning how to prompt over time



Prompt Cowboy

<https://www.promptcowboy.ai>

Pulling It All Together: Basic → Better → Best

The more helpful information you give, the better the response.

BASIC



Simple prompt.
Little detail.

Basic response.

Prompt:

"How do I plant tomatoes?"

Response:

Tomatoes need full sun, rich soil, and regular watering. Plant after the last frost. Space plants properly and stake or cage them as they grow."



BETTER



More context
and persona.

*More relevant,
more useful.*

Prompt:

"I live in Tampa, Florida. I'm new to gardening and want to grow tomatoes in containers on my patio."

Response:

Great choice! In Tampa, use large containers (5+ gallons), well-draining potting mix, and heat-tolerant varieties. Water consistently, provide support, and fertilize regularly.



BEST



Clearer context, specific request,
desired output.

Most helpful response.

Prompt:

"I live in Tampa, Florida. I'm a beginner gardener and want to grow tomatoes in containers on my patio. Provide a step-by-step guide from start to harvest. Include recommended varieties for Tampa, a list of supplies I'll need, and common problems to watch for."

Response:

Here's a complete guide with step-by-step instructions, best varieties for Tampa's climate, a shopping list, and tips to prevent common problems.



Remember: Start simple. Add detail. Get better results.



Great prompting is a conversation,
not a one-time command.

A Good Prompt Starts the Journey. The Conversation Helps You Reach the Destination.

Just like a GPS... better information leads to a better route.



DESTINATION
Be clear about what you want to achieve.

CONTEXT
Share relevant details about your situation and needs.

PREFERENCES
Include instructions, constraints, and format.

CONVERSATION
Keep the conversation going. Provide feedback.

**Better information.
Better route.
Better results.**



The more helpful information you provide—and the more you engage in the conversation—the more likely you are to **reach the destination you're aiming for.**

Prompts Demo

Part 4:

Beyond Prompting

Other Tools and Features

1. *Deep Research*
2. *Advanced Images*
3. *Connecting Apps*
4. *Custom Assistants (GPTs)*
5. *AI Agents*
6. *Work & Sites*
7. *Health & Finance*



1

Deep Research

When AI Needs More Than a Quick Answer

Instead of responding immediately, modern AI can spend several minutes researching a topic, reviewing multiple sources, and producing a structured report.

Why it matters

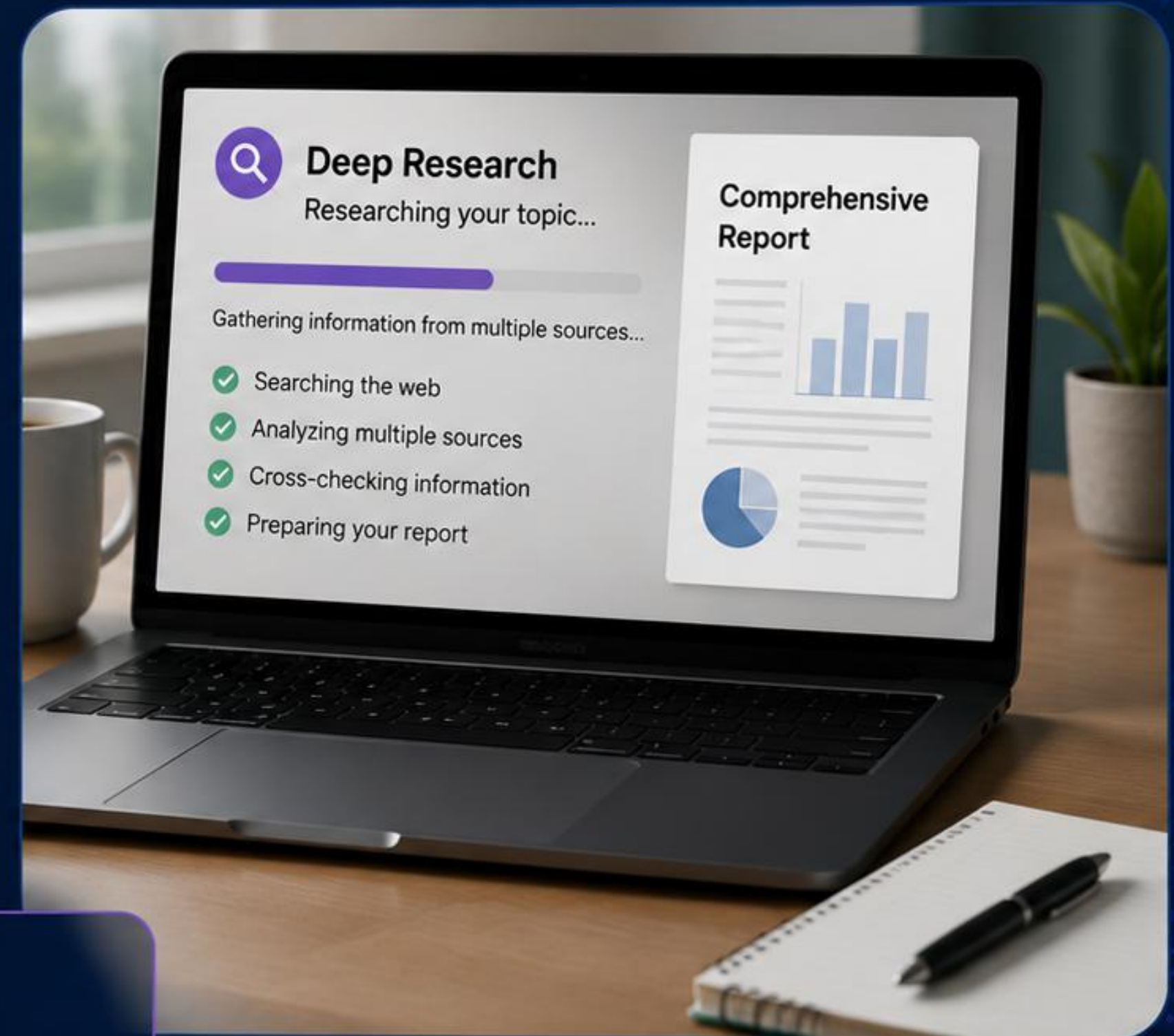
- ✓ Better for complex questions
- ✓ Compares multiple viewpoints
- ✓ Includes references
- ✓ Saves hours of research

Examples

- ✚ Choosing a Medicare plan
- 🧳 Planning a vacation
- ☀️ Comparing solar panels
- 🌳 Researching family history



Think of it as asking AI to **research a topic**—not just answer a question.



2 Working with Images

Images Are Becoming Prompts Too

You can now communicate with AI using photos, screenshots, diagrams, and documents—not just text.

What you can do



Identify a plant disease



Read handwritten notes



Explain a chart



Analyze an old family photograph



Improve a PowerPoint slide



Create entirely new images

Examples

What's wrong with this tomato plant?



Read this handwritten recipe.



Summarize this chart.



Date this old family photograph.



Improve this PowerPoint slide.



Create an image of a peaceful patio garden.



Images can be part of the conversation.



Images give AI more context—and can lead to better answers.

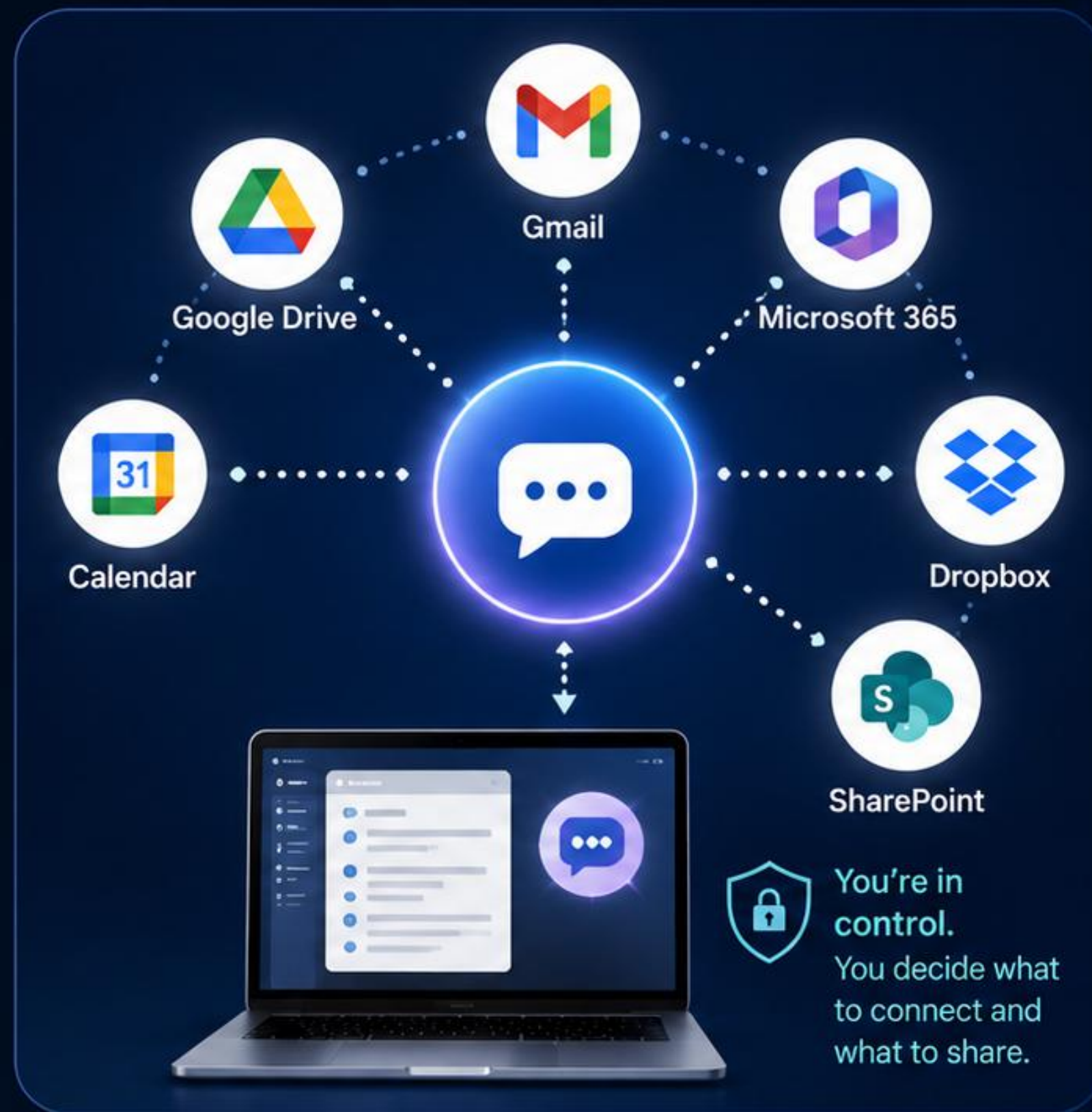
3 Connected Apps

AI Can Work With Your Information

Rather than constantly uploading files...
AI can (with your permission) work with
information stored in connected applications.

Examples

	Gmail	Search emails, find information, summarize conversations
	Google Drive	Access and analyze your documents and files
	Microsoft 365	Work with Word, Excel, PowerPoint, and OneNote content
	Calendar	Check your schedule, plan and organize
	Dropbox	Find and use your files and folders
	SharePoint	Search and summarize content from your organization



Key Message: AI becomes more useful when it can securely work with **information you already own.**



Less uploading. More productivity.
More insights. Better results.

4

Custom AI Assistants

Think of Them as “Pre-Written Prompt Apps”



A Custom AI Assistant is simply a collection of prompts, instructions, files and settings designed for **one specific job**.

Why they're helpful



Built for a purpose
Specialized for a task you do often.



Remembers your instructions and files
No need to start from scratch.



Saves time and gives consistent results
It already knows how you like things done.



Private and under your control
You decide what it can access.

What's inside



Pre-written prompts
Model the tone and style you want.



Instructions
Explain the role, rules and preferences.



Files and knowledge
Add documents or data it should use.



Settings and tools
Choose capabilities it can use.



Different name. Same idea.



ChatGPT calls them GPTs



Gemini calls them Gems



Other AI systems have similar features under different names.

Examples



Travel Planner

Finds destinations, compares options, and builds itineraries.



Recipe Assistant

Suggests recipes, creates meal plans, and builds shopping lists.



Genealogy Research Assistant

Helps find records, analyze details, and track your research.



Resume Coach

Improves your resume and prepares you for interviews.



Study Buddy

Explains concepts, quizzes you, and helps you learn.



You **don't need to build one** to benefit from them.



Use the ones created by others or build your own—your choice!

5

AI Agents

The Next Big Step

Today's AI usually answers questions. Tomorrow's AI will increasingly **complete tasks for you.**



What is an AI Agent?

An AI Agent can understand a goal, plan the steps needed, and take actions to get the job done—often with little or no supervision.

Examples of What AI Agents Can Do



Research a topic
Find, analyze, and summarize information from many sources.



Complete forms
Gather information and fill in forms or applications.



Compare options
Look at multiple choices and recommend the best one.



Book appointments
Find availability and make reservations for you.



Monitor and alert
Track changes or news and notify you automatically.



Multi-step workflows
Plan and carry out a series of steps to achieve a goal.

How an AI Agent Works



You give a goal



Agent plans the steps



Agent takes actions



You get results

Agent in Action

- ✓ Searching the web
- ✓ Comparing options
- ✓ Extracting information
- ✓ Filling out form
- ✓ Confirming details
- ✓ Delivering results



We're moving from AI that **answers questions** to AI that **helps get things done.**



The Future

AI Agents are just getting started. Expect more capabilities, more integrations, and more ways to make life easier.



6

Work & Sites

From a prompt to a finished result



Work

Handles multi-step tasks and creates finished files.



Sites

Builds and publishes a website from your description.



Describe the result you want. *ChatGPT can help build it.*

7

Health & Finances

Connect your accounts to work with your own information.



Health

Connect health records or patient portals to explore your information and prepare for appointments.



Finances

Connect financial accounts to explore spending, bills, and goals.



This is highly private information

Connections are optional. Review permissions and privacy settings before sharing.

My Fall OLLI Classes

 OCT 6 MAKING THE MOST OF CHATGPT EVERY DAY Practical ways to use ChatGPT to save time, solve problems, and get more done. 🕒 10:00 – 11:30 AM ET	 OCT 20 THE SECRETS TO A GREAT GEN-AI PROMPT Simple techniques for asking better questions and getting better AI responses. 🕒 10:00 AM – 12:00 PM ET	 NOV 3 LIVING IN AN AI-DRIVEN WORLD How AI is changing our lives, work, and society—today and tomorrow. 🕒 10:00 – 11:30 AM ET	 NOV 17 AVOIDING SCAMS IN AN AI WORLD Recognize red flags, social engineering tactics, and scams before they fool you. 🕒 10:00 – 11:30 AM ET	<i>And Something Completely Different...</i>  DEC 3 DICKENS AND DEBTORS' PRISONS Real stories from the 19th century in Britain and America. Prison for debt—not for crime. 🕒 10:00 – 11:30 AM ET
 REAL TOPICS. REAL STORIES.	 LIVELY DISCUSSION.	 NEW IDEAS. NEW PERSPECTIVES.	 ALL SKILL LEVELS WELCOME!	

Thank You

For Attending!



You've taken an important step toward becoming a **confident** and **effective** AI user.



Keep experimenting!
The best way to learn AI is to use it.



Great AI starts with great questions.
Every prompt is an opportunity to learn something new.



My YouTube Channel:

<https://www.youtube.com/@Beaumont-Genealogy/videos>



My Genealogy Website:

<https://www.beaumont-genealogy.com/classes>



My Email:

John.Beaumont@Outlook.com



Please complete the class survey.



Your feedback helps us make future classes even better!

Enjoy the rest of your day! 😊