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## User Guide

# Prompt Engineering: How to get the best answers from Generative AI / GPTs



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## 1 Document Control

### 1.1 Version History

Amended By	Version	Status	Date	Summary of Changes
Clinical Lead For Artificial Intelligence	0.1	Published	03/04/2025	Final document put into correct template
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### 1.2 Distribution

This document has been distributed to:

Name	Date	Version	Inform/ Review/ Approve
Assistant Director of Data and Analytics	03/04/2025	1.0	Approved
Head of Digital Transformation	03/04/2025	1.0	Approved
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### 1.3 Document Location

The master copy of this document is held at the following SharePoint location:

[Digital, Data and Engagement - User Guides - All Documents](#)

## 2 Prompt Engineering: how to get the best answers from Generative AI / GPTs

**When it comes to prompt engineering there is no one ‘right’ way, but a useful framework can help to get the best out of an (Large Language Model) LLM such as co-pilot or chat GPT. One example framework is the COSTAR framework detailed below. With practice you might develop your own style of prompt engineering and may find slightly different styles might yield results that may suit one task better than another.**

### 2.1 Enhancing AI Outputs with Structure and Formatting

To improve AI-generated responses, consider using delimiters, structured formats like XML, and consistent prompt templates. *Delimiters* (such as triple quotes `"""`, brackets `[ ]`, or XML tags `< >`) help AI models separate instructions from input text, ensuring clearer responses. For example, using:

**Summarise this report:**

---

**[Insert text here]**

prevents AI from misinterpreting instructions as part of the content.

XML-style tags can structure AI-generated outputs for readability and consistency, such as:

**<report>**

**<summary>Provide a brief overview of the document.</summary>**

**<analysis>Identify key themes and trends.</analysis>**

**<recommendations>Suggest three actionable next steps.</recommendations>**

**</report>**

This ensures AI follows a predefined structure, which is particularly useful for reports, summaries, and data extraction tasks.

Additionally, reward techniques such as literally offering a monetary tip and phrasing prompts to encourage specific behaviour, such as “Give a detailed yet concise response” help tailor the output.

Finally, saving and reusing prompt templates for common tasks (e.g., drafting emails, writing reports) improves efficiency while maintaining consistency in AI-assisted work.

## **The COSTAR Framework:**

**(Developed by GovTech Singapore's Data Science & AI team)**

### **(C) Context: Establish the background for the task**

*Provide the relevant details or scenario to help the LLM understand the situation. This ensures its response is tailored to the specifics of the discussion.*

### **(O) Objective: Clearly define the task to be performed**

*State your goal explicitly so the LLM can focus on delivering a response that aligns with your requirements.*

### **(S) Style: Specify the desired writing approach**

*Indicate the style of writing you want the LLM to use, whether it's inspired by a notable figure, a professional expert, or a specific industry standard. This ensures the response reflects the desired manner and word choice.*

### **(T) Tone: Establish the attitude or mood of the response**

*Set the emotional or professional tone to match your intended sentiment, such as formal, conversational, empathetic or light-hearted.*

### **(A) Audience: Identify the intended recipients**

*Define who the response is for: whether experts, beginners, children, or another group. This ensures the content is appropriate and understandable. Also mention the response being written in **UK English** to avoid unwanted 'Americanisms'.*

### **(R) Response: Specify the required output format**

*Determine the format of the response, such as a list, narrative, JSON, or professional document. This ensures the output is ready for your intended use, whether for direct application or further processing.*

*NB: useful prompting links:*

[\*How to use Generative AI and Prompt Engineering for Clinicians - BMJ Future Health Splashpage 2024\*](#)

[\*Getting started with AI: Good enough prompting\*](#) - a resource from Professor Ethan Mollick of Wharton, University of Pennsylvania

We also have the following COSTAR template you might wish to copy and replace placeholders with your specific details when using LLMs:

**Context → Background:** "Tell the AI what's happening."

**Objective → Goal:** "Explain what you want it to do."

**Style & Tone → Writing Style & Mood:** "Decide how it should sound."

**Audience → Who is this for?** "Tell the AI who will read this."

**Response → Format:** "Say how you want the answer to look."

## 2.2 Example 1 – a prompt for helping to create this document

Below is the prompt we might use to create a document helping staff to understand basic concepts of prompt engineering.

### **(C) Context: Establish the background for the task**

*"People within my organisation are now regularly using LLMs within their work. We want to help them to use AI as safely and ethically as possible and want to empower them to get the most out of the LLMs they use by encouraging safe and effective prompt engineering. Imagine you are expert at writing concise, understandable documents for dissemination to all staff within an organisation. Please consult with the Welsh Team if you're unsure as to whether the document needs to be produced in both English and Welsh."*

### **(O) Objective: Clearly define the task to be performed**

*"I am tasked with creating a document that helps people within my organisation learn a safe and effective way to prompt LLMs. I would like a concise, one page summary of an effective prompting technique such as COSTAR prompting. Explain that all prompts should contain: 1) task, 2) content, 3) examples, 4) persona, 5) format, 6) tone.*

\*\*\*

*We work in a special health authority, so the information has to be accurate. Reputational damage would be significant if errors were found within the document. As well as a specific prompting template, also advise them on use of delimiters, XML tags (and explain in layman's terms), capitals, reward techniques as well as others. Mention uploading examples and relevant documents that might be required as guardrails / important information that must be included / referenced to create the output. Also touch on the potential to save and reuse prompt templates, and how certain templates might be better for certain tasks. Touch on chain of thought options.*

**(S) Style: Specify the desired writing approach**

*“Write in a professional style and keep things concise. Avoid overly technical jargon. If technical terms are used, give a brief summary of their meaning in brackets after the term.”*

**(T) Tone: Establish the attitude or mood of the response**

*“The tone should be professional.”*

**(A) Audience: Identify the intended recipients**

*“This will be available for ALL staff within the organisation so ensure that the language is accessible and avoid jargon, or if unavoidable, explain what any technical terms mean.”*

**(R) Response: Specify the required output format**

*“Respond in a list / bullet points so that people can apply the principles suggested quickly and without having to assimilate large amounts of narrative or information. However, remember this is a professional document disseminated to all staff within the organisation so an intro and summary explaining the main principles and points around prompt engineering would be useful.”*