

The parent's guide to actually using AI.

Eight parts. Six prompts you can paste tonight. Written for someone who has roughly eleven minutes and no interest in becoming technical.

Pick one tool

Prompt properly

Build its memory

Make it build things

Most people have used AI and quietly decided it's overrated. They're not wrong about what they experienced. They're just doing four small things that make it useless. This guide fixes all four. Read it in order, or skip to whatever's annoying you most. Every part ends with something you can **copy and paste**.

PART ONE

Stop tool-hopping

You downloaded ChatGPT. Then someone said Claude was better for writing. Then Gemini showed up free with your email. Now you've got three apps open and not one of them knows a single thing about you.

Here's the part nobody says out loud. These tools get dramatically better the longer you stay with one. They learn how you write. They remember your kids' names, your work, the thing you're stressed about. They keep the history. The advanced features only make sense once you've built something up inside them.

Switching every few weeks means you're permanently at day one. It's the difference between a friend who knows your family and a stranger you have to brief from scratch, every single time, forever.

THE RULE

Pick one. Stay two months. Not because the others are bad. Because depth is the whole thing, and you can't get depth while you're shopping.

PART TWO

So which one

Fair question, since I just told you to commit. Pick by what you actually do most, not by which one is winning this month.

Claude

IF YOU WRITE

The strongest for anything with words in it. Copy, emails, edits, honest critiques, hooks. If you make content or write a lot for work, this is the one.

ChatGPT

IF YOU WANT ONE OF EVERYTHING

The best all-rounder. Excellent image generation built in. A voice mode you can actually talk to while driving, and it can see through your camera.

Gemini

IF YOU LIVE IN GOOGLE

If your whole life is Gmail, Docs, and Drive, it's already there. Fastest at digesting a YouTube link and telling you what's in it.

BEING HONEST ABOUT MONEY

The free versions are a demo. The paid plans are the actual product, and most of what's in this guide needs one. It's about the cost of two coffees a week. I pay for mine. I'd rather tell you that than have you try this on a free tier and conclude AI doesn't work.

PART THREE

Talk to it like a new babysitter

Imagine handing someone your keys and saying "handle bedtime." Then being annoyed at how it went. They're not incompetent. You told them nothing.

That's a vague prompt. That's why you got a vague answer. You don't need prompt engineering, and you don't need to memorise tricks off the internet. The models are smart enough now. You need three things, in any order.

- I Instructions.** The actual task. One clear thing you want done.
- C Context.** Who's in your house. What's going on. What you're working with. This is the part everyone skips, and it's the part that does the work.
- C Constraints.** How long, what tone, what format. Budget, allergies, deadlines, anything non-negotiable. If you've seen a version of this done well, paste it in and say "match this."

FILLED IN

Instructions:

Plan five weeknight dinners and give me one grocery list, sorted by aisle.

Context:

Two adults, two kids under 4. I'm home at 5:30 and they melt down by 6:15. One of us is vegetarian, no eggs. Right now we have rice, canned chickpeas, frozen peas, and half a bag of spinach going soft.

Constraints:

Nothing over 30 minutes. One pan where possible. Keep the list under \$80. Plain list. No preamble, no "here's a great plan!"

YOUR TURN

Instructions:

[the task. one clear thing.]

Context:

[who's in your house, what's going on, what you're working with, what's gone wrong before. more is better. genuinely.]

Constraints:

[length, tone, format, budget, allergies, time you actually have. the non-negotiables.]

The one line that fixes a bad prompt

Here's the problem with what I just told you. Nobody remembers all their context up front. You're tired. You don't know what it needs to know.

So don't. Make it ask you. Add this to the end of any prompt and it stops guessing.

PASTE THIS AT THE END OF ANYTHING

It will come back with questions. Answer them. The output goes from generic to specifically yours, and you did almost no extra work.

```
Before you answer, ask me a series of questions to gather any context you need to do this really well.
```

AND THEN KEEP GOING

Treat the first answer as a rough draft. It might be bad. Say "shorter." Say "that's not it, more direct." Say "you missed the point, try again." It isn't offended, it doesn't sulk, and it doesn't need you to soften it. Most people give up at the first draft. That's the whole gap between the people who say AI is useless and the people who don't.

Don't get lied to

AI makes things up. Confidently, in full sentences, with the same tone it uses when it's right. It'll invent a statistic, a policy, a source, a refund window. This isn't a reason to avoid it. It's a reason to know the four moves that catch it.

Ask for confidence levels

"Mark each claim with your confidence: high, medium, or low." The low ones are where it's guessing.

Ask for sources

"Cite your sources with links so I can check them." Then actually click one. Sometimes they don't exist.

Make it argue with itself

"Now find an expert who disagrees with what you just told me." Watch how fast it finds one.

Get a second opinion

Paste its answer into a different AI: "Critique this. What's wrong or missing?" Rivals are brutal with each other.

THE LINE I DON'T CROSS

For anything medical, legal, or financial, AI is where you **start**. It is not where you stop. Use it to understand the thing and to work out what to ask. Then ask a person who is qualified and accountable.

PART SIX

Stop starting from zero every morning

If you open a fresh blank chat every day, you are firing and re-hiring the same employee daily and re-training them from scratch each time. No wonder it feels like a lot of effort for a mediocre result.

The fix is a workspace. Projects in Claude, Projects in ChatGPT, Notebooks in Gemini. Same idea in all three: a folder that remembers. Everything you chat about inside it carries context forward.

Then you fill it once. Run this, answer the questions, upload what it gives you.

PASTE THIS INTO A NEW WORKSPACE

Interview me about my household so you can actually help me going forward.

Ask me about my family, our routines, our constraints, what I'm juggling, what keeps going wrong, and what I'm trying to get better at.

Ask one section at a time so it doesn't overwhelm me. When we're done, write it all up as a reference document I can upload here, so you never have to ask me any of this again.

That document is now the thing that makes every future chat good. It knows the nap window. It knows one of you doesn't eat eggs. It knows you go back to work in March. You never explain it again.

AND WHEN SOMETHING FINALLY WORKS

You'll spend forty minutes getting one thing right. The meal plan, the daycare email, the budget breakdown. Don't lose it. In Claude, say "**package this conversation as a skill.**" It saves the whole working process. Next Sunday, it's one message instead of forty minutes. The other two call it Custom GPTs and Gems. Same move.

PART SEVEN

It can build things, not just talk

This is the part most people never find, and it's the part that changes what AI is actually for.

Ask for something that has standalone value, and it stops replying in paragraphs and builds you a real, working, interactive thing in a panel beside the chat. A tracker. A dashboard. A planner. Claude calls them Artifacts, ChatGPT and Gemini call it Canvas. You can drop in your own data and then just talk to it to change things. "Make the buttons bigger." "Add a column for who's picking up." It edits live. You can share a link with someone who doesn't even have an AI account.

Past that there's **vibe coding**, which is the ridiculous name for a genuinely useful thing: you describe a custom app in plain English and the AI writes, tests and debugs every line of code. All of it. You write none. Claude Code, ChatGPT Codex, Gemini Antigravity. Switch it to Plan Mode, describe what you want, answer its questions, walk away.

WHAT THAT LOOKS LIKE IN PRACTICE

A takeout deal tracker for a household with two kids. It knows one parent is vegetarian and one isn't. It pulls real weekday specials from the actual restaurants nearby, scores them green, amber, red, and syncs to a partner's phone with a six-character code.

Two prompts. One afternoon. Zero lines of code written by a human. That's not a demo. That's the free takeout kit on this account, and it was built exactly this way.

PART EIGHT

Do this tonight

Not this weekend. Not when things calm down. Things don't calm down.

- 1 **Pick one.** Based on part two. Commit for two months and stop reading comparison threads.
- 2 **Open a project and fill it.** Run the interview prompt from part six. Upload the document it writes you. This takes about twenty minutes and it is the single highest-value thing in this guide.
- 3 **Audit one real day.** Then paste the prompt below and find out what you never needed to be doing yourself.

THE AUDIT PROMPT

Here is everything I actually did today, in order:

[dump it all. the boring bits especially. the forms, the reminders, the looking things up, the texts you kept meaning to send.]

Which of these could be streamlined, automated, or turned into a tool I could reuse every week? Rank them by how much time I'd get back, and be honest about which ones aren't worth it.

Then walk me through the top one, step by step.

Then do one thing a day. Not ten. One. That's how this actually sticks.