

AI STARTER GUIDE

Understand AI. Try it confidently. Keep people in control.

Practical tools, example prompts, and a seven-day action plan for individuals, small businesses, educators, and nonprofit teams.

YOUR FIRST WIN

By the end of this guide, you will be able to write a useful prompt, improve an AI-generated draft, identify common mistakes, and choose one responsible application for your life or work.

Welcome

Artificial intelligence can help you brainstorm, plan, learn, summarize, write, and organize. You do not have to be an expert to start. Think of AI as a capable assistant that can produce useful drafts—but still requires your direction and judgment.

Three principles to remember

- Start small: Choose one ordinary, low-risk task.
- Be specific: Give the AI a goal, context, and a preferred format.
- Stay responsible: Check facts, protect privacy, and approve the final result yourself.

Created for AI Made Simple: From Understanding to Real-World Impact, presented by Cornell Bunting with live ChatGPT demonstrations featuring Winfred.

Website: www.cornellbunting.com | Community impact: www.ehasinc.org

01 AI in plain language

What is AI?

Artificial intelligence (AI) describes computer systems that can perform tasks such as recognizing patterns, making predictions, and generating useful responses.

What is generative AI?

Generative AI produces new text, images, audio, or other content in response to instructions. ChatGPT is one example of an AI assistant that works through conversation.

What can I try first?

- Explain a confusing idea using everyday language.
- Outline an email, lesson, community event, or social media post.
- Summarize non-sensitive notes and suggest next steps.
- Brainstorm options for a project or organize a checklist.
- Practice an interview or improve a draft.

WHAT AI CANNOT PROMISE

AI can sound confident and still be wrong. It may misunderstand questions, invent facts or references, miss context, or produce biased results. Verify important claims using trusted sources.

Try this 30-second exercise

Open ChatGPT and type: “Explain generative AI to someone who has never used it. Use one everyday analogy and three examples.”

What made the explanation useful—or confusing?

02 The four-part prompting method

Good prompts provide instructions a helpful colleague could follow. Use G-C-O-R:

PART	WHAT TO INCLUDE
GOAL	What should AI accomplish?
CONTEXT	Who is this for? What background matters?
OUTPUT	What format, tone, and length do you want?
REVIEW	What must be checked or improved?

From vague to useful

Vague: "Write a fundraising email."

BETTER PROMPT

Act as a nonprofit communications assistant. Draft a 150-word email inviting community members to support a fictional 10-week youth leadership program in Southwest Florida. Audience: first-time donors. Tone: welcoming and hopeful. Include a subject line and one clear call to action. Do not invent costs, outcomes, or testimonials; mark missing facts [VERIFY].

Build your own prompt

My goal:

My audience and context:

Preferred format and tone:

What a human must review:

03 Five ready-to-use prompts

Learn a topic

“Explain [topic] in plain language. Start with an analogy, give three examples, and end with two questions to test my understanding.”

Polish your writing

“Improve this draft for clarity and warmth without changing my meaning. Keep it under [number] words. Identify any claims I should verify: [paste non-sensitive text].”

Plan a meeting

“Create a 30-minute agenda for [purpose], with outcomes, time blocks, and five discussion questions. List any assumptions separately.”

Support a small business

“Suggest five low-cost ways a [type of business] could improve customer communications. Rank them by effort and potential benefit. Do not invent financial results.”

Support a nonprofit

“Outline a volunteer recruitment campaign for a [mission] nonprofit. Include a message, sign-up steps, and a two-week schedule. Use only details provided and flag missing information.”

A POWERFUL FOLLOW-UP

“Review your previous response. Which parts are assumptions? What should I verify? Rewrite it in a clearer, more accessible format.”

04 From answer to action

AI works best as part of a short human-led workflow:

- 1. Define a small task and decide whether it is safe for AI.
- 2. Write a specific prompt using G-C-O-R.
- 3. Read the answer carefully. Ask what might be wrong or missing.
- 4. Revise the output using your expertise and verified facts.
- 5. Approve the finished work and measure whether it helped.

Practice: fictional team meeting

Notes: A community team is planning a November event. Approximately 50 volunteers may help. Jordan will ask a venue about availability. No budget or final date has been approved.

PASTE THIS PROMPT

Turn these fictional notes into a table with columns: action, owner, confirmed deadline, and missing information. Use “Not yet set” where details are unknown. Do not assume an event date or budget. End with three follow-up questions.

Which parts were confirmed, and which still require a person to decide?

05 Human-centered AI: the safety checklist

Using AI responsibly means people remain accountable for the decisions and the impact.

- **PRIVACY** — Do not paste private health, student, client, donor, or employee information into an unapproved tool.
- **ACCURACY** — Verify names, citations, calculations, laws, dates, and statistics against reliable sources.
- **FAIRNESS** — Check that responses do not stereotype, exclude, or disadvantage groups.
- **TRANSPARENCY** — Disclose AI assistance when appropriate for your audience and context.
- **HUMAN OVERSIGHT** — Have a qualified person approve high-stakes content and decisions.
- **SECURITY** — Follow your organization's technology, data retention, and access policies.

RED-LIGHT SITUATIONS

Do not rely on a chatbot alone for medical, legal, financial, hiring, or child-safety decisions. Seek qualified oversight. Avoid sharing confidential or identifying information without permission and an approved process.

Spot the issue

An AI draft says a youth program has “helped 500 children,” but the organization has not tracked that figure. What should happen before publication?

06 Your seven-day AI action plan

- Day 1: Pick one low-risk task.
- Day 2: Write a G-C-O-R prompt.
- Day 3: Try the prompt and review the response.
- Day 4: Improve the result using a follow-up prompt.
- Day 5: Verify any facts and remove sensitive details.
- Day 6: Share a reviewed result or test with a trusted colleague.
- Day 7: Assess the value: time saved, clarity improved, or work made easier.

My commitment

The task I will try:

How I will measure progress:

My human review or privacy safeguard:

07 Keep learning with Cornell Bunting

AI Made Simple is designed to help everyday people and organizations develop confidence with AI while protecting human dignity, judgment, and creativity.

Ways to continue

- Interactive AI workshops for businesses, nonprofits, schools, and community groups.
- Practical ChatGPT and prompting training.
- AI workflow planning and responsible-use education.
- Individual and small-group learning sessions.

TAKE THE NEXT STEP

Explore speaking, training, and consulting opportunities at www.cornellbunting.com. Ask about bringing AI Made Simple to your organization.

Learning resources

- OpenAI Help Center — <https://help.openai.com/>
- NIST AI Risk Management Framework — <https://www.nist.gov/itl/ai-risk-management-framework>
- Southwest Florida Human-Centered AI Innovation Hub — <https://collaboratory.org/swflhaihub/>

A final reminder

“Human intelligence leads. AI assists.”

This guide is educational; it is not a substitute for professional advice or organizational safeguards. Product capabilities and privacy controls can change—check the current terms and settings of any tool you use.