

FREE RESOURCE

# The Five-Part Prompt Formula

The single most useful idea from Catching Up — and the fastest way to start.

Think of AI as a brilliant new executive assistant — intelligent and fast, but they know nothing about your situation unless you tell them. This framework is Chapter 5 of Catching Up; the rest of the book covers everything from your first five minutes to knowing when not to use it — clearly, calmly, without jargon.

THE FRAMEWORK

|   |                                               |                                                                                                                                                               |
|---|-----------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1 | <b>Task</b><br>What do you want it to do?     | Specify the action — draft, summarise, analyse, compare, rewrite. Not “write something about X” but “write a two-paragraph introduction to X for [audience].” |
| 2 | <b>Context</b><br>What does it need to know?  | Background, relevant history, current situation. The element most people skip — and the one that most often determines quality.                               |
| 3 | <b>Audience</b><br>Who is this for?           | A board member, a close colleague, a first-time customer. Tone and detail varies enormously depending on the reader.                                          |
| 4 | <b>Format</b><br>How should it be structured? | Bullet points, flowing paragraphs, a table, a single sentence. If you don’t specify, AI will choose — and it may not be right.                                |
| 5 | <b>Constraints</b><br>Any limits to observe?  | Word count, tone, phrases to include or avoid, UK not US English, reading age.                                                                                |

BEFORE & AFTER

|                                                             |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
|-------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p>Before</p> <p>“Write an email about AI for my team.”</p> | <p>After</p> <p>Draft a short email to my team [task] introducing AI tools in our work. We’re a small team and most people haven’t used AI before — some may be sceptical [context]. Write for a mixed group of colleagues [audience], friendly in tone, under 150 words, UK English [format + constraints].</p> <p>Labels in blue are for reference only — write the prompt as natural prose.</p> |
|-------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

QUICK REFERENCE

| Element     | Ask yourself...              | Example                                 |
|-------------|------------------------------|-----------------------------------------|
| Task        | What do you want it to do?   | “Draft a two-paragraph summary...”      |
| Context     | What does it need to know?   | “We are a small charity...”             |
| Audience    | Who is this for?             | “For a board member new to this...”     |
| Format      | How should it be structured? | “Three short paragraphs, no bullets...” |
| Constraints | Any limits to observe?       | “Under 200 words. UK spelling.”         |

Found this useful?

Catching Up: AI Confidence is a one-hour guide for 40+ professionals — jargon-free, with nine editions for law firms, charities and more. Available on Amazon.

Ready to go further?

Book an AI Clarity Call: a private 60-minute one-to-one session focused on one real piece of work. Book at [catchingup.wilsonlevy.net](https://catchingup.wilsonlevy.net).