

Prompting tips: Using AI tools to develop tailored reporting products.

Introduction

These tips aim to help Australian Public Service (APS) officers interested in using AI tools to develop tailored reporting products. This guidance is for **video 13** from the “Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools for Evaluation in the Australian Government” series.

This video series and resources are meant to inspire ideas and learning. They are not designed to be a manual. It aims to show how AI tools, especially generative AI (Gen AI) can support the evaluation process. The goal is to help evaluators and APS staff explore how AI can be useful, and where it is less useful.

AI can help with repetitive tasks but cannot replace expert knowledge. APS officers must carefully review AI outputs. Any AI-based decisions and products must be owned by the officers. This human oversight can help ensure that results are accurate, fair, and culturally appropriate.

Please note that you should only use AI tools that have been approved by your agency or department. Any documents that you upload to the tool should only be up to the security clearance level approved for the tool by your agency or department.

Prompt engineering

A prompt is an instruction in natural language that tells a Gen AI tool to perform a task. Prompt engineering is the process of creating and refining these prompts to get a suitable output from the tool.¹ Table 1 below shares some overarching tips for using Gen AI tools. This is derived from the AI Colab’s “AI for Policy People” course, available through APSLearn. These tips are organised along four pillars:



Share specifics and context



Provide examples



Avoid leading or biased prompts



Chat, not search

¹ [Prompts overview | Microsoft Learn](#)

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Table 1: Essential prompt engineering tips

Share specifics and context	Provide examples	Avoid leading or biased prompts	Chat, not search
Gen AI tools like Copilot are not search-engines, they don't work on keywords, they work on the meaning of words and how they are used, just like people. For more tailored, and useful responses from AI tools, you should provide as much context as you can, with specific requests. Vague prompts lead to generic answers.	Gen AI tools can "read between the lines" pick up a lot of indirect instructions when you share raw examples about your topic of interest. Examples help reinforce your specific requests.	Use balanced prompts/requests to get well-rounded responses. Avoid leading or biased prompts. If you are unsure that the Gen AI tool has considered all aspects of your query, simply ask it to be appropriately critical.	Use Gen AI tools conversationally. Ask clarifying questions, build on responses, and treat it like a colleague you're bouncing ideas off. Don't expect a perfect response in one go. Iterate, get a rough version, revise and refine through additional prompts.

Why should you tailor reporting products?

Different stakeholder groups have different needs when it comes to formats and levels of detail for evaluation reporting products. Ministers may prefer concise briefs, program managers may need detailed evaluation reports, and community members may benefit from plain-language summaries or videos. AI tools can help customise reporting products to suit these needs quickly.

Example prompts to develop a ministerial brief

Before prompting, please upload relevant reports. These are some example prompts that you to generate a ministerial brief. You can adjust these prompts to tailor to your choice of stakeholder group, and reporting product.

1. "Summarise this evaluation report in two pages."
2. "Summarise the Australian Government style manual"
3. "You are a policy advisor to a minister of the Australian Government. Please respond to any future prompts as the policy advisor."
4. "Draft a one-page ministerial brief for this evaluation report, following the Australian Government style manual. Use headings, bullet points and plain language. Provide page references from the report and citations for your statements."

You can tailor these prompts for a range of different stakeholder groups and reporting products, across a range of AI tools.

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Tips for effective prompting to develop tailored reporting products

Use the structure in table 2 to guide your prompt engineering for developing tailored reporting products.

Table 2: Elements of using AI tools to support tailored reporting.

Element	Description
Role	Specifying a role can help the AI tool adopt a “persona” when generating responses, which can lead to sharper and more specific responses. An example: “Act as a policy advisor preparing a ministerial brief.”
Context and input	Specifying documents to use while preparing responses can help guard against “hallucinations” or false statements when the AI tool generates a response. For example, “Use the uploaded report and/or documents to generate any responses.”
Task and format	Clearly setting parameters for the task, including format (summary, brief, infographic), length or duration (words, pages, minutes), and headings or topics can lead to a clearer and sharper product. For example: “Produce a 2-page plain language summary with infographics for community members highlighting the evaluation’s key findings and recommendations.”
Guardrails	It is also helpful to include instructions about what you do not want the AI tool to do. For example: “Avoid using jargon, provide in-text references and a reference list. Respond with “I don’t know” if you don’t have reference data. Do not make up a response.”

Policy and training

All use of AI tools must comply with the [Policy for the responsible use of AI in government](#). Your use of AI tools should also comply with any guidance and any specific requirements from your entity’s accountable official under the Policy for the responsible use of AI in government.

The ACE strongly recommends that you complete the APS Learn course, [AI in government fundamentals](#). This course has been designed to provide all APS staff with foundational knowledge of AI, and the principles of safe and responsible use. Lastly, you can test a suite of AI tools on [GovAI](#). This is a secure, APS-only platform designed to help APS officers learn about and use artificial intelligence (AI).