

Brief Your AI Like a New Hire

A Five-Part Prompt Guide for Water Utilities

The five parts of a good prompt

- 1 ROLE** Assign the professional perspective you want the AI to use.
- 2 SITUATION** Provide context, verified facts, sensitivities and what is still unknown.
- 3 TASK** Say exactly what you want the AI to produce or help you accomplish.
- 4 AUDIENCE + FORMAT** Name who it is for, where it will appear and what shape the answer should take.
- 5 TONE + GUARDRAILS** Define how it should sound, what it must include, what it must not claim, and when it should ask questions.

Two ready-to-adapt examples

Use with your utility's approved information. Replace all brackets before running.

Discolored water concern

1 ROLE

You're a public information officer experienced in water utility risk communication.

2 SITUATION

We are a mid-sized utility; a customer posted a discolored-water photo on Facebook. We test and monitor the water regularly and can confirm it is safe. We suggest customers run cold water for a few minutes until it clears; avoid hot water until the cold runs clear; if it doesn't clear, call our office.

3 TASK

Draft a Facebook post responding to the concern. Draft two short comment replies.

4 AUDIENCE + FORMAT

Residential customers with no technical background. Under 120 words.

5 TONE + GUARDRAILS

Calm, plain language. Use AWWA's Caring-Action-Perspective structure. Do not invent test results, causes, timelines or guarantees. If key info is missing, ask up to three questions first.

Proposed rate increase

1 ROLE

You are a public information officer experienced in water utility communications and explaining rate changes.

2 SITUATION

Our utility is proposing a rate increase and customers are asking why bills may go up; the proposal is not yet approved. Verified info: [bill impact], [reasons/what it funds], [decision process & public meetings], [customer assistance or none], [what's undecided].

3 TASK

Draft a customer update explaining the proposal, why it's considered, how it could affect bills, and how customers can participate.

4 AUDIENCE + FORMAT

Residential customers, no technical/financial background. Website update under 250 words, three short FAQs, four talking points for officials and staff.

5 TONE + GUARDRAILS

Direct, respectful of budgets. Acknowledge affordability without minimizing. Separate proposed from approved. Use only supplied figures. Don't invent programs, promise approval, or compare to coffee. Ask up to three questions if info is missing.