

## PROMPT ENGINEERING FOR TEACHERS

# AI FOR GOOD

A quick, practical guide for teachers to get the most out of AI tools.

### What is Prompt Engineering?

Prompt engineering is just a fancy way of saying “asking questions well.” You can get heaps of value from AI just by talking to it in natural language. But just like giving clear instructions to students, the clearer and more structured your input, the better the output you’ll get. Phrase to remember: **Garbage in, garbage out.**

### Why it matters

- Saves you time by reducing trial and error
- Helps you get accurate, structured, and relevant results
- Makes it easier to adapt AI outputs for your teaching context

### Example: Asking AI to help with a lesson

Natural language (still works):

“Can you give me some ideas for teaching fractions to Year 7 students?”

Well-structured (much better):

“You are a New Zealand maths teacher. Create a 40-minute lesson plan for Year 7 on fractions. Include:

- A warm-up activity
- One hands-on exercise
- One worked example
- A quick quiz with 5 questions
- Format the plan as bullet points.”

### Example: Creating student feedback

Vague input:

“Write feedback for my student.”

Well-structured input:

“Act as a supportive teacher. Write feedback for a Year 10 student’s persuasive essay. Strengths: clear argument and strong vocabulary. Weaknesses: structure is unclear, conclusion is rushed. Keep tone encouraging and under 150 words.”

⚡ **Prompt engineering is just good questioning. Better questions = better answers**

The [Custom AI Tools we built for teachers](#) are essentially just very well written prompts and you’re welcome to look under the hood how they’ve been written.

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### **A Soundboard**

Use AI to bounce ideas around, the same way you'd brainstorm with a friend. It should support your thinking, not replace it.

### **Critical Thinking**

Always question AI answers: Is this accurate? What's missing? Do I agree?

### **Iterate and Refine**

Don't stop at the first answer. Ask follow-up questions, request examples, or say, "Explain it another way."

### **Customise for Context**

Be specific: mention year level, subject, and what format you want (bullet points, quiz, diagram). The more context you give, the more useful the output.

### **Language Flexibility**

Most AI tools support many languages. Switch to your native language whenever needed, or mix languages in the same session — the AI will adapt.

### **Human in the Loop**

AI is a helper, but human are the final check. Always apply judgement before using outputs.

### **\$ AI Tools: Paid vs Free**

- Free versions of AI tools work well for text, quizzes, and explanations.
- Paid versions often add advanced features like image generation, better memory, or live voice conversation.
- If using AI with voice, you can practise languages or oral presentations by speaking directly instead of typing.

### **Disclaimer**

AI is a powerful tool, but it is not a replacement for teachers or personal responsibility. Always check the accuracy, appropriateness, and cultural relevance of AI outputs before using them in your classroom. Keep in mind: human in the loop is essential.

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### Reasoning Instructions Teachers Can Use

#### 1. Show the working:

- “Explain your reasoning step by step.”
- “Show how you got to the answer.”

#### 2. Compare perspectives:

- “Give me pros and cons of this idea.”
- “Summarise two different viewpoints.”

#### 3. Encourage critical thinking:

- “List 3 questions I should ask to check if this is accurate.”
- “What’s a common mistake students make with this topic?”

#### 4. Scaffold learning:

- “Start with a simple example, then give a harder one.”
- “Explain it like I’m 10, then again like I’m 15.”

### Useful Limitations to Add in Prompts

#### 1. Length / format:

- “Summarise in 150 words.”
- “Give me 5 bullet points only.”

#### 2. Level / audience:

- “Explain as if to Year 7 students.”
- “Keep it at a beginner level with simple vocabulary.”

#### 3. Style / tone:

- “Use encouraging and supportive language.”
- “Make it sound like a news article.”

#### 4. Content restrictions:

- “Do not include sensitive or personal information.”
- “Avoid technical jargon.”

#### 5. Task boundaries:

- “Give me 3 possible answers, not a full essay.”
- “Don’t solve it — just give me hints.”

### Don’t assume AI outputs are always accurate — check for errors or bias.

AI has bias because it learns from human-generated data, which often contains historical errors, stereotypes, or cultural imbalances that get reflected in its outputs.

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## Frequently Asked Questions

### **Q: Will AI replace teachers?**

No. AI can support and save time, but it can't build relationships, inspire a love for learning, manage classrooms, know when other interventions are necessary, or guide the human side of learning. Teachers remain essential.

### **Q: Do I need to write perfect prompts?**

No. Natural language works fine — but more structure usually means better results.

### **Q: Can students use AI in any subject?**

Yes — maths, English, science, history, coding, art, languages and more. Just frame prompts around the topic and level.

### **Q: Is AI accurate?**

Not always. AI is a tool, not a textbook. Always double-check key facts. Encourage students to verify rather than accept blindly — that's critical thinking practice.

### **Q: Can AI switch languages?**

Yes. Most tools support many languages. You can switch part or all of a prompt to your native language and the AI will adapt.

### **Q: Free or paid — which do I need?**

Free versions are great for text, quizzes, and explanations. Paid versions often add image generation, better memory, or voice conversation.

### **Q: How do I stop students from using AI to cheat?**

Be clear about what's allowed (e.g., practice quizzes, idea generation) and what isn't (copy-paste essays). Design assessments that focus on process (oral explanations, step-by-step working, reflections) where AI alone won't cut it.

### **Q: What about privacy?**

Never put in personal student data, school records, or sensitive information. Treat AI like a public forum: safe with general queries, not private details.

### **Q: Isn't this just another fad?**

AI is now a foundational skill. Most workplaces will expect graduates to understand how to use it. Giving students safe, guided exposure now is preparing them for their future.