HOW TO AI

ChatGPT Prompts for Small Business Owners

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Every prompt from the guide, ready to print. Replace anything in [BRACKETS] with your own details before you send it. These work in ChatGPT, Claude and Gemini.

Marketing prompts

1. Describe your ideal customer. Use it before any other marketing prompt, so the AI knows who it's writing for.

> I run [BUSINESS TYPE] in [LOCATION]. My best customers tend to be: [WHAT YOU KNOW: who they are, what they buy, why they buy, how they found you].
>
> Write a one-paragraph profile of my ideal customer. Then list:
> - The top 3 problems my business solves for them
> - The words they'd type into a search bar to find a business like mine
> - 3 reasons they might hesitate to buy
> - Where I'm most likely to reach them
>
> Label anything you're guessing as a guess.

2. Fill a slow week without slashing prices. Use it when next week looks quiet and you need people through the door.

> Next week looks slow for my [BUSINESS TYPE]. What I sell and typical prices: [DETAILS]. What's worked before: [PAST PROMOTIONS].
>
> Give me 5 promotion ideas that don't depend on big discounts: bundles, limited-time items, events, referral nudges, or loyalty perks. For each: what it is, rough cost to me, and a one-line message I could post. Then write the email for the idea that fits best: 3 subject lines and a body under 120 words.

3. A month of social posts. Use it when you only post when you remember to.

> Create a 4-week social media plan for my [BUSINESS TYPE] on [PLATFORM]. I can realistically post [NUMBER] times a week. Mix: behind-the-scenes, a product or service spotlight, a customer question answered, a local tie-in, and a simple offer.
>
> Format it as a table: week, day, post idea, caption (under 50 words), and the photo or video I'd need to take. Match my voice: [PASTE ONE OF YOUR PAST POSTS].

4. Rewrite your About page. Use it when your website's About page says "passionate about quality" and not much else.

> Rewrite my website's About page.
> Facts: [HOW YOU STARTED, YEARS IN BUSINESS, WHO YOU SERVE, WHAT MAKES YOU DIFFERENT, ONE REAL STORY OR DETAIL]
> Current version: [PASTE]
>
> Make it specific and human, under 250 words, and written to the customer ("you") more than about us. Cut clichés like "passionate," "quality," and "one-stop shop." End with one clear next step.

5. Win back lapsed customers. Use it when you have a list of past customers who haven't been back in a while.

> Write a short email to customers who haven't bought from us in [TIME PERIOD]. Tone: friendly, not desperate. Remind them what they liked about [PRODUCT OR SERVICE], mention what's new: [WHAT'S NEW], and give one simple reason to come back this month: [OFFER OR EVENT].
>
> Give me 3 subject lines and a body under 120 words.

Customer service and review prompts

6. Reply to a negative review. Use it when a bad review stings and you want to answer like a pro, not like you feel.

> Help me reply publicly to this review: [PASTE REVIEW, reviewer's name removed].
> What actually happened, from my side: [FACTS].
>
> Write a reply under 100 words that thanks them, acknowledges the specific problem, doesn't argue or share private details, says what we've changed or will do, and invites them to contact me directly at [CONTACT METHOD]. Give me two versions: one for when they have a point, and one for when the facts are in dispute.

7. Replies to good reviews that aren't all "Thanks!". Use it when you have a stack of positive reviews to answer.

> Write short, varied replies (under 40 words each) to these positive reviews. Mention something specific each person said, sound like a real owner, and never repeat the same opening twice. No sales pitch.
>
> [PASTE REVIEWS, names removed]

8. Build an FAQ from repeat questions. Use it when you answer the same five questions by phone every day.

> Here are questions customers ask us over and over, in their own words: [LIST]. Here are my usual answers: [NOTES].
>
> Turn them into a website FAQ: group similar questions, write clear answers under 60 words each, and suggest 3 questions I'm probably missing. Keep my policies exactly as I've stated them.

9. Say no to a refund, nicely. Use it when a customer wants something your policy doesn't allow and you want to hold the line without losing them.

> A customer asked for [REQUEST, e.g. a full refund on a custom order after 45 days]. Our policy: [PASTE POLICY]. What I'm willing to offer: [e.g. store credit, a partial refund, a repair].
>
> Write a reply that's kind and clear, explains the policy in one sentence without hiding behind it, and offers the alternative. Under 120 words. Don't use the phrase "per our policy."

Operations and staff prompts

10. Turn what's in your head into a checklist. Use it when you're the only person who knows how something gets done.

> I'm going to describe how I [TASK, e.g. open the shop, pack an online order, close out the register]. Turn it into a numbered procedure a new employee could follow on day one. Add a "common mistakes" note and a short checklist version for the wall. Ask me about any step that's unclear before you write it.
>
> My description: [TALK IT THROUGH IN ROUGH NOTES]

11. A first-week plan for a new hire. Use it when you've hired someone and realize there's no plan for day one.

> I'm hiring a [ROLE] for my [BUSINESS TYPE], [HOURS PER WEEK] hours a week. Build a first-week plan: what they learn each day, who shows them, what they should be able to do alone by Friday, and a short welcome message I can send before their first day. Keep it realistic for a small team with no HR department.

12. A job post that gets applicants. Use it when you need to fill a part-time role this month.

> Write a job post for a [ROLE] at [BUSINESS], [LOCATION].
> Pay: [RANGE]. Hours: [SCHEDULE].
> What they'll actually do: [LIST].
> Must-haves: [SHORT LIST].
> Why people like working here: [HONEST REASONS].
>
> Under 250 words, clear and friendly. Keep requirements to what's truly needed, avoid biased or exclusionary wording, and end with exactly how to apply.

13. Push back on a supplier. Use it when a supplier raises prices or you want better terms.

> Help me write an email to my [SUPPLIER TYPE] supplier.
> Situation: [e.g. they raised prices 8%, I've ordered monthly for 3 years, a competitor quoted less].
> What I want: [e.g. current pricing for 6 more months, or longer payment terms].
>
> Firm and friendly, one or two reasons they should agree, and a specific proposal. Under 150 words. Then give me 2 likely responses and how I could answer each.

14. Staff a busy season with a small team. Use it before a rush when you're already short-handed.

> My [BUSINESS TYPE] gets busy during [SEASON OR DAYS]. Team: [NUMBER OF STAFF AND THEIR AVAILABILITY, NO NAMES NEEDED]. Busiest hours: [TIMES].
>
> Suggest a staffing plan for a typical busy week: shifts, who covers which job, where I need backup, and 3 ways to handle a no-show. List the tasks we should finish before the rush starts. Flag anything that could affect overtime or break rules so I can check my local labor laws.

Money and pricing prompts

15. Pricing sanity check. Use it when you suspect you're underpriced but haven't done the math.

> Check my pricing for [PRODUCT OR SERVICE].
> My costs per unit: materials [$], labor [HOURS] hours at [$ RATE], overhead share [$ OR %].
> Current price: [$]. Competitors charge about: [RANGE, IF YOU KNOW IT].
>
> Show the math step by step: my total cost, my margin in dollars and percent, and the price I'd need for a [TARGET]% margin. Then give me 3 ways to add value that would justify a higher price. Show every calculation so I can check it.

16. Announce a price increase. Use it once you've decided to raise prices and need to tell customers.

> I'm raising prices on [WHAT] from [OLD PRICE] to [NEW PRICE], starting [DATE]. Reasons: [e.g. ingredient costs, wages].
>
> Write a short, honest announcement for [EMAIL / SIGN / SOCIAL POST] that gives notice, explains briefly without over-apologizing, and mentions [ANY PERK, e.g. prepaid orders keep the old price until DATE]. Under 100 words.

17. Cash-flow what-if. Use it before a big decision like a new hire or a piece of equipment.

> Help me think through a cash-flow what-if.
> Monthly revenue: [$, OR A RANGE IF IT VARIES]
> Fixed costs: [LIST]
> Variable costs: [LIST OR %]
> Cash on hand: [$]
>
> Scenario: [e.g. hire a part-timer at $X a month / buy a $Y machine / sales drop 20% for 3 months].
>
> Build a simple month-by-month table for 6 months showing cash in, cash out, and ending balance. Show every calculation. Then list the questions I should ask my accountant before deciding.

18. Read your P&L like an owner. Use it when your bookkeeper sends a profit and loss statement and you nod without really knowing what it says.

> Here's my profit and loss statement for [PERIOD], with the business name removed: [PASTE NUMBERS].
>
> Explain in plain English: where the money came from, where it went, the 3 numbers I should watch most closely, and anything that looks unusual compared with [PREVIOUS PERIOD, IF YOU PASTED IT]. Don't give tax advice; list questions for my accountant instead.

Planning and strategy prompts

19. Turn quarterly goals into weekly actions. Use it at the start of each quarter.

> My goals for next quarter: [2 TO 3 GOALS, e.g. 30 new customers, launch catering, cut food waste]. Time I have for work outside daily operations: about [HOURS] hours a week.
>
> For each goal, give me: how I'll measure it, 3 to 5 actions, and a week-by-week plan across 13 weeks. Tell me if the goals don't fit my time, and suggest what to cut.

20. Stress-test a new idea. Use it before you spend money on a new product, location or service.

> I'm considering [IDEA]. My thinking: [WHY, EXPECTED COST, EXPECTED REVENUE, WHO IT'S FOR].
>
> Act as a skeptical but fair advisor. List the 5 biggest risks, the assumptions I haven't tested, and a cheap way to test each assumption in 30 days or less before I commit. Be direct; I'd rather hear it now than after I've spent the money.

21. Size up your competitors honestly. Use it when you know your competitors exist but haven't thought hard about how you differ.

> Here are my notes on 3 competitors, from their websites and my own experience: [FOR EACH: prices, offer, themes in their reviews, strengths, weaknesses].
> My business: [SAME DETAILS].
>
> Make a comparison table. Then tell me where I clearly win, where I'm behind, and one gap none of us fill. Use only the information I gave you; don't guess about competitors.

22. One-page business plan. Use it once a year, or when a lender or partner asks where the business is going.

> Help me write a one-page plan for my [BUSINESS TYPE] in [LOCATION]. Who will read it: [e.g. just me, a lender, a new partner]. Ask me up to 8 questions first, one at a time, about customers, offer, pricing, marketing, team, and money. Then write the plan in these sections: what we do and for whom, what makes us different, goals for the next 12 months, how we'll get customers, key numbers to track, and the biggest risks.

Paperwork and admin prompts

23. Understand a contract before you sign. Use it when you're handed a lease, vendor agreement or service contract.

> Explain this contract section in plain English for a small business owner: [PASTE SECTION, names and account numbers removed].
>
> Tell me what I'm agreeing to, what it costs me or could cost me, how I can get out of it, and anything unusual or one-sided. Then list questions to ask the other party or my lawyer. This is to help me understand it; I'll get legal advice before signing.

24. Draft a grant or loan answer. Use it when an application asks for a "business description" or "use of funds" and the blank box stares back.

> I'm applying for [GRANT OR LOAN TYPE]. The question: [PASTE QUESTION AND WORD LIMIT]. My facts: [BUSINESS DETAILS, NUMBERS, HOW I'D USE THE FUNDS, EXPECTED IMPACT].
>
> Draft an answer within the word limit using only my facts. Be concrete, answer exactly what's asked, and point out any part of the question my facts don't cover yet.

25. Clear the email backlog. Use it when 40 unanswered messages are sitting in your inbox.

> Here are short summaries of emails I need to answer (no personal details): [LIST: who they are and what they want].
>
> Sort them into: answer today, answer this week, hand to someone else, or archive. For the "today" ones, draft short replies I can edit, under 80 words each.

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