



SAN RAMON VALLEY GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE SIG

Prompt Engineering for ChatBots

Agenda

- Tips
- Definition
- Approaches (Steve Little, Andrew Redfern, Thomas MacEntee)
- Quick References and Cheat Sheets
- Example Prompts

Monday, April 28, 2025, 7pm

Bill George SIG Leader

Meeting will be recorded and summarized

Website <https://aisig.ancstor.org>



Tips

- Genealogy Bargains - [Family Tree Webinars 50% off at \\$25/yr](#)
- [RootsTech AI Videos](#) - Search for "Artificial Intelligence" or "AI"
- Good Podcast - [The Family History AI Show](#)
- Good General Purpose Newsletter (Not just genealogy) - [The Neuron](#)



Definition

Definition

Prompt engineering is the practice of crafting and refining inputs (prompts) to guide AI models toward producing accurate, relevant, and useful outputs. It optimizes interactions with large language models (LLMs) to achieve specific goals.

Key Aspects:

- Clarity and Specificity
- Context Provision: (**few-shot, zero-shot**)
- Iterative Refinement
- Output Formatting Guidance
- Role assignments

Ref. Modified definitions by several ChatBots



What is Few Shots, Zero Shot?

Zero Shot

No extra information provided with a prompt

Few Shots:

One or more examples provided with the prompt to give guidance

AI has memory of previous prompts (ChatGPT specifically)

Ask AI what memories it has of you?

AI Chatbots let you save preferences

Usually within the Chatbot's Settings



Steve Little's Approach

Design a Prompt

- Role - Voice, expertise and point of view AI should adopt
- Goal - Outcome you want AI to achieve
- Text - Background or source material to draw from
- Task - Specific action you want performed
- Flask - Fine tune the output's tone, format or length

- Then Iterate

Ref: [AI and Genealogy: New Beginnings in Jan 3, 2024 and my documentation](#)



Andrew Redfern's Approach

Writing Better Prompts for Family Historians

1. Role - Sets context for response
2. Task - Clearly define what to do
3. Format - Table, Bullets, etc.
4. Restrictions - Set limits

Principles of Using ChatGPT & AI

1. Probability, not facts
2. Not a search engine
3. It's all about the prompt
4. Choose your verbs wisely
5. New Chat for each Task
6. Edit & check
7. Massage, manipulate & refine

Ref. [Artificial Intelligence & Family History: An introduction and my documentation](#)



Uses

Some uses for AI Chatbots in Genealogy?

Text

- Answering how-to questions
- Search for facts in documents
- Summarize Text
- Educate about Genealogy Topics
- Create Research Plans

Images

- Creating Images
- Modifying images
- Interpreting Images (transcribing)



Advice

How to Learn

- Google and subscribe to [AI Newsletters](#) - They give Tips for example [Medium](#) (\$5/mo) or the free [Neuron](#)
- Google [AI Prompt Cheat Sheets](#) - Try some Cheat Sheets



Advice

Example Prompt Tip 1

Stuck in analysis paralysis? Break the overthinking loop and let AI help you step back and see the bigger picture. Try:

- "I'm overthinking this situation. What are three logical perspectives I might be missing?" (Great for challenging assumptions.)
- "What would a completely neutral third party say about this situation?" (Helps remove emotions and focus on facts.)
- "Give me two optimistic and two realistic ways to look at this." (Balances positivity with practicality.)

A little outside perspective-even from AI - can make all the difference.

Ref: [medium.com](https://www.medium.com) search for "AI Prompt Tip of the Day"



Advice

Example Prompt Tip 2

Rewrite these sentences using 100 voices, "Today is a sunny day".
Provided voices: 1. Sentimental, 2. Whimsical, 3. Gruff, 4. Sardonic, 5. Satirical

Prompt Response

- Sentimental: "The sun graces the sky today, wrapping the world in a warm, golden embrace."
- Whimsical: "The sun's thrown a glittering party in the sky, and everyone's invited!"
- Gruff: "Sun's out. Deal with it."
- Sardonic: "Oh great, the sun decided to show up – must be feeling generous today."
- Satirical: "In a shocking turn of events, the weather remembered how to be pleasant – today is sunny, and somewhere, a politician is taking credit."

Ref: [Medium.com article complete list](#)



Advice

Example Cheat Sheets

- From [Medium.com](#)'s Artificial Corner by Pycoach a [ChatGPT Cheat Sheet](#)
- [Writing AI Prompts for Dummies Cheat Sheet](#)
- From [Reddit](#) [The Complete ChatGPT Cheat Sheet](#)

Ref: [Medium.com](#)



Example Prompts with Files

Summarize the Constitution

Summarize the U.S. Constitution https://www.senate.gov/civics/resources/pdf/US_Constitution-Senate_Publication_103-21.pdf, Listing in two sections, the names of each numbered article with the date ratified and the names of each numbered amendment with the date ratified.



Example Prompts with Files

Convert an Italian Death Record into English

The file "Italian Death Record.jpg" is click/dragged into the prompt window, then the following prompt is typed in. "Transcribe the enclosed Italian Death record, convert into American English.

Document separately any Italian words that needed some guessing to complete this task. "



Example Prompts with Files

Summarize a Blaine Bettinger Video about ten prompts everyone should know about.

Summarize the video at this URL (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EbRXzd2SmNM&ab_channel=Findmypast) and list the ten ChatGPT prompts every genealogist needs to know.



Problem is...

(Similar to How do you Google something...)

Are there any general rules for writing AI prompts? I asked three Chatbots (ChatGPT, Grok, Gemini)

- <https://aisig.ancstor.org/docs/2025-04-28-aisig-general-rules-for-prompts.pdf>



Blaine Bettinger's 10 Prompts Everyone Needs to know

From [Blaine Bettinger Video w/FindMyPast YouTube Group](#) May 10,2023

1. Please Draft (email asking 2nd cousin to take a DNA test)
2. Please Extract (names and relationships from an obituary)
3. Please Generate (a 3-5 paragraph personal narrative)
4. Please Help me brainstorm (A title, summary, outline, topic, catchy titles)
5. Please Provide information about (Why people left Ireland in 1840s)
6. Please Calculate (Easier to use than a calculator)
7. Please Translate (From English to x)
8. Please Help me remember (word I can't remember)
9. Please Help me learn (Middle school teacher, how govt. transferred land)
10. Please Transcribe (Italian death record) also please abstract.