

ULTIMATE BEGINNER'S GUIDE TO CHATGPT

A practical cheat sheet for turning ChatGPT from a chatbot into an AI workspace.

Projects, memory, custom instructions, files, images, GPTs, Codex, voice prompting, workflows, pricing guidance, and copy-paste prompts.

How to use this PDF: Copy the prompts into ChatGPT, answer the questions, and use the templates to build your own setup. The goal is not to memorize every feature. The goal is to build a repeatable system.

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1. What this guide is

This is the practical version of the video: a copy-paste guide for setting up and using ChatGPT properly. It is designed for beginners, but it is not basic. The goal is to help you move from random prompting to a repeatable AI workflow.

Core idea: Do not just use ChatGPT as a chatbot. Set it up as a workspace with memory, instructions, Projects, files, GPTs, images, voice, research, and Codex.

The three levels

Level	What it means	What most people miss
Level 1: Chatbot	You ask questions and get answers.	Useful, but often generic.
Level 2: Tool suite	You use files, images, research, voice, data analysis, GPTs, and Codex.	Each tool is more powerful when you give it context.
Level 3: AI workspace	You organize ChatGPT with memory, custom instructions, Projects, files, and repeatable workflows.	This is where ChatGPT starts compounding over time.

In the video, the levels are mainly a framing device. You do not need to label every action as Level 1, 2, or 3. The real point is simple: the more context and structure you give ChatGPT, the more useful it becomes.

2. The quick app map

Before using ChatGPT seriously, understand where the main areas live. The exact interface changes over time, but the mental model stays the same.

Area	What it is for	Beginner takeaway
Chat bar	Typing, voice prompting, uploading files, adding images, and starting tool workflows.	This is your input layer.
Sidebar	Chat history, search, Projects, GPTs, Codex, and other app sections.	This is your workspace map.
Settings / Personalization	Custom instructions, memory, plan, data controls, voice, and preferences.	This is where you customize ChatGPT to you.
Projects	A workspace for a specific area: files, chats, and instructions together.	Use Projects to avoid one messy account.
GPTs	Custom assistants built for a repeated job.	Use GPTs when you repeat the same task often.
Codex	Coding agent/workflow for building, fixing, and improving software.	Use it to prototype apps, dashboards, tools, and automations.

Important distinction: The app map is not the tutorial. It is just orientation. The real tutorial is the order you set up and use the system.

3. Set ChatGPT up properly first

The biggest beginner mistake is trying to fix everything with better prompts. Prompts matter, but context matters more. Before you get deep into images, files, GPTs, or Codex, set up the foundation.

3.1 Custom instructions

Custom instructions are your global rules. They tell ChatGPT how you want it to behave across conversations. Use them for preferences that should apply most of the time.

- Your role or situation: student, founder, creator, operator, analyst, developer, etc.
- Your preferred tone: direct, simple, detailed, strategic, beginner-friendly, no fluff.

- Your default output style: frameworks, tables, bullets, action steps, examples.
- What ChatGPT should avoid: generic advice, excessive caveats, too much theory, etc.

Beginner custom instructions template

I am a beginner using ChatGPT to improve my productivity, learning, creativity, and decision-making.

When you respond:

- Be practical and clear
- Avoid fluff
- Explain things simply when needed
- Ask clarifying questions if the answer depends on missing context
- Give examples
- Break complex topics into steps
- Challenge my assumptions when useful
- End with the next best action when appropriate

Advanced creator/operator custom instructions

I am an entrepreneur and creator using ChatGPT as a thinking partner across content, business, productivity, learning, and strategy.

I prefer direct, practical, high-signal answers. Challenge weak assumptions. Give me frameworks, examples, and action steps. Avoid generic advice, excessive caveats, and motivational fluff.

When relevant, think like an operator: identify bottlenecks, trade-offs, risks, leverage points, and the next best action.

3.2 Memory

Memory is ChatGPT's lightweight understanding of you over time. It is not a hard drive. It is not the right place for huge documents, full templates, or anything that needs perfect recall.

Good things to save to memory	Bad things to save to memory
Your role, goals, and recurring projects	Huge documents or full scripts
Tone/style preferences	Sensitive private information you do not need recalled
Your learning style and skill level	One-off temporary details
Long-term constraints or preferences	Anything that belongs in a file or database

Memory setup prompt

Help me set up ChatGPT memory properly.

Ask me 10 questions that would help you personalize future answers for me. Focus on my goals, work, learning style, communication preferences, projects, and things you should avoid.

After I answer, turn my responses into a clean list of memory-worthy preferences.

Memory filter prompt

Based on my answers, create a list of things worth saving to memory and things that should not be saved to memory.

3.3 Projects

Projects are the most underrated feature for beginners. They let you organize chats, files, and instructions around a specific area of your life or work. Instead of one giant messy ChatGPT account, you create separate workspaces.

The key line: Memory tells ChatGPT who you are. Instructions tell it how to behave. Files tell it what to reference. Projects keep everything organized.

Project	Use it for	Files to upload
Personal OS	Planning, routines, reflections, tasks, weekly reviews.	Goals, routines, habit tracker, task lists, personal principles.
Work / Business	Strategy, hiring, operations, product, meetings.	Company overview, SOPs, team roles, meeting notes, product docs.
Content	Scripts, hooks, thumbnails, titles, repurposing.	Best scripts, brand voice, audience avatar, examples, content calendar.
Learning	Courses, books, studying, skill acquisition.	Notes, syllabus, saved articles, learning goals.
Health	Fitness, diet, sleep, habits, training plans.	Workout plan, food preferences, tracking sheets.
Finance	Budgets, portfolio notes, invoices, decisions.	Budget, investment notes, portfolio snapshots, financial goals.

Project setup prompt

Help me design my ChatGPT Projects setup.

I want to use ChatGPT for:

- Personal productivity
- Work/business
- Learning
- Content creation
- Health/fitness
- Finance

For each Project, give me:

1. The Project name
2. What I should use it for
3. The custom instructions for that Project
4. The files I should upload
5. Example prompts I should use inside it

4. How to prompt better

Prompting is not about magic words. It is about giving context, constraints, and direction. Bad prompts ask for generic answers. Good prompts give ChatGPT the information it needs to act like a useful assistant.

The simple prompt formula

Element	What to include
Role	Who should ChatGPT act as? Example: tutor, strategist, editor, analyst.
Context	What is the situation? What should it know before answering?
Task	What exactly do you want it to do?
Constraints	Tone, length, audience, format, what to avoid.
Output	Table, checklist, plan, script, prompt, summary, etc.

Question-based prompting

One of the highest-leverage beginner tricks is to ask ChatGPT to ask you questions first. This gives it the missing context before it tries to answer.

Question-first prompt

Before answering, ask me the 5-10 most important questions you need to understand my situation properly.

After I answer, give me a tailored recommendation instead of a generic one.

Decision prompt

Help me make this decision: [insert decision].

First, ask me any missing questions.

Then give me:

1. The strongest argument for option A
2. The strongest argument for option B
3. The hidden risks
4. The opportunity cost
5. What I am probably not considering
6. Your final recommendation

Critique prompt

Be brutally honest.

Review this idea and tell me:

1. What is strong
2. What is weak
3. What assumptions might be wrong
4. What would make this 10x better
5. What a smart skeptic would say
6. Your final recommendation

Voice prompting

Voice prompting is underrated because people think of prompting as typing. In reality, voice is often better for messy thinking. Use it when walking, driving, planning your day, debriefing after a meeting, or brain-dumping ideas.

- Start with context: "I am going to ramble. Turn this into a clean plan."
- Tell ChatGPT what to do with the messy input before you start speaking.
- Use voice to capture thoughts quickly, then ask for structure, priorities, and next actions.
- After a long voice note, ask for a summary, action list, and unanswered questions.

Voice brain dump prompt

I am going to voice dump a messy thought process.

Do not respond until I am finished. Then turn it into:

1. A clean summary
2. The key insights
3. The action items
4. The unanswered questions
5. The next 3 steps

Keep my tone, but organize the thinking.

Daily planning voice prompt

I am going to talk through my day.

After I finish, create:

1. A prioritized task list
2. A time-blocked plan
3. The one thing that matters most today
4. What I should delegate or ignore
5. Any risks to staying focused

5. GPT Images

Images are one of the most visually compelling ChatGPT features. Do not think of them as just "AI art." Use them for thumbnails, ads, logos, pitch decks, product ideas, mockups, interior design, creative direction, and brand concepts.

Image prompt formula

Part	Example
Subject	A YouTube thumbnail for a ChatGPT beginner guide
Style	Premium, futuristic, clean, high-contrast
Composition	Large readable text, centered AI interface, creator-tech aesthetic
Lighting/mood	Dark background, glowing UI, cinematic lighting
Format	16:9, no clutter, text must be readable

Thumbnail prompt

Create a cinematic YouTube thumbnail for a video called "The Ultimate Beginner's Guide to ChatGPT."

Style: premium, futuristic, high contrast, dark background, glowing AI interface, clean composition, modern creator-tech aesthetic.

Include large readable text: "CHATGPT GUIDE"

Aspect ratio: 16:9.

Thumbnail variations prompt

Create 4 different YouTube thumbnail concepts for the same video.

Each concept should have a different visual angle:

1. Futuristic AI dashboard
2. Beginner-to-power-user transformation
3. ChatGPT as an operating system
4. Human creator controlling multiple AI tools

Keep the style premium, clean, high-contrast, and clickable.

Image editing prompt

Make this image look more cinematic and premium.

Improve the lighting, clean up the background, add subtle depth, make the colors richer, and keep the subject realistic. Do not make it look AI-generated.

6. Files, documents, spreadsheets, and research

Files are how you stop getting generic answers. Instead of asking ChatGPT from scratch, give it documents, PDFs, spreadsheets, notes, transcripts, reports, or examples. Then ask it to extract decisions, risks, opportunities, and next actions.

Documents and PDFs

Useful document analysis prompt

Analyze this document for me.

Do not just summarize it. Give me:

1. The key points
2. The decisions I need to make
3. The risks
4. The opportunities
5. The hidden assumptions
6. The action items
7. The unanswered questions
8. What I should do next

Beginner explanation prompt

Explain this document like I am a beginner.

First give me the simple version, then the more detailed version, then create a glossary of any confusing terms.

Document to action plan prompt

Turn this document into a practical action plan.

Separate it into:

- Do now
- Do later
- Delegate
- Research further
- Ignore

Then give me the top 3 actions to take first.

Spreadsheets and data

Upload a CSV or spreadsheet and ask ChatGPT to find trends, anomalies, opportunities, and charts. This is especially useful for content analytics, expenses, sales, habits, workouts, finance, or business metrics.

Spreadsheet analysis prompt

Analyze this spreadsheet.

Find:

1. The biggest trends
2. The biggest anomalies
3. What is working
4. What is not working
5. The highest-leverage opportunities
6. A simple chart that helps explain the data
7. My recommended next actions

Creator analytics prompt

Analyze this YouTube performance data.

Tell me:

1. Which videos performed best
2. What patterns appear in the titles, thumbnails, topics, and formats
3. Which videos underperformed
4. What I should make more of
5. Which videos deserve follow-ups
6. 10 new video ideas based on the data

Search and research

Use normal ChatGPT for thinking and drafting. Use search when the answer needs current information. Use deeper research workflows when you need a more serious briefing, report, or source-backed answer.

Research briefing prompt

Research this topic and give me a beginner-friendly briefing.

I want:

1. The simple explanation
2. The key facts
3. The latest developments
4. The main risks or debates
5. The most useful sources
6. What a beginner should understand first

7. GPTs

GPTs are custom versions of ChatGPT configured for a specific purpose. The easiest way to think about them: Projects are workspaces, GPTs are repeatable assistants.

Use Projects when...	Use GPTs when...
You are organizing an ongoing area of life or work.	You repeat the same task over and over.
You need files, chats, and instructions together.	You want a specialized assistant with a specific job.

Use Projects when...	Use GPTs when...
Example: Content Project, Business Project, Learning Project.	Example: Scriptwriter GPT, Thumbnail Critic GPT, Meeting Summarizer GPT.

Starter GPT ideas

- YouTube strategist GPT: turns rough ideas into hooks, titles, outlines, thumbnails, and clips.
- Writing editor GPT: rewrites text in your tone with clarity, punch, and flow.
- Research analyst GPT: summarizes topics, compares sources, and creates briefings.
- Meeting summarizer GPT: turns notes/transcripts into decisions, owners, and next actions.
- Fitness coach GPT: adapts workouts, tracks habits, and explains training decisions.
- Business operator GPT: converts messy notes into SOPs, hiring briefs, and execution plans.

GPT builder prompt

Help me create a custom GPT for YouTube content strategy.

The GPT should help me turn rough ideas into high-retention YouTube videos.

It should ask for:

- Topic
- Target viewer
- Desired outcome
- Tone
- Examples of videos I like

Then it should produce:

1. Strong title ideas
2. Hook options
3. Video structure
4. Retention notes
5. Thumbnail concepts
6. Short-form clip ideas
7. A final recommended angle

Write the full GPT instructions for me.

8. Codex and vibe coding

Codex is where ChatGPT starts to feel like a builder, not just an answer engine. You do not need to be a developer to understand the opportunity. Beginners can use Codex to explain errors, build small tools, improve websites, prototype dashboards, and automate workflows.

Beginner framing: Do not start by trying to build a complex startup. Start with small personal tools: habit trackers, dashboards, content planners, calculators, note systems, and simple automations.

Three beginner Codex levels

Level	What to do	Example
1. Explain	Paste an error or code snippet and ask what it means.	"Explain this error like I am a beginner."
2. Build	Ask Codex to create a small app or tool.	Habit tracker, content dashboard, finance tracker.
3. Improve	Give Codex an existing project and ask for fixes or upgrades.	Review this app and implement the top improvement.

Local memory systems

A more advanced use case is using Codex to build or connect a local memory system. For example: a personal database of notes, transcripts, documents, and reflections that your AI tools can search. This can be done with tools like Supabase, Supermemory, or other database/memory layers.

For beginners, do not overcomplicate it. The important idea is that your best AI system needs a place to store context. ChatGPT memory is useful, but a structured memory/database can be more powerful for long-term workflows.

Codex error prompt

Explain this error like I am a beginner.

Tell me:

1. What went wrong
2. Why it happened
3. The exact file or line likely causing it
4. The simplest fix
5. How to avoid this error in the future

Habit tracker app prompt

Build me a simple habit tracker web app.

Requirements:

- Users can add habits
- Users can check off habits each day
- Show current streak
- Show longest streak
- Show weekly completion rate
- Clean minimal UI
- Mobile-friendly design

Keep it simple and explain how to run it.

Dashboard vibe-coding prompt

Build me a clean personal dashboard.

It should include:

- Today's priorities
- Habit checkboxes
- Weekly score
- Notes / brain dump area
- Simple analytics cards
- Clean minimal UI
- Mobile-friendly layout

Start with a simple version that works, then suggest the next 5 upgrades.

Local memory system prompt

Help me design a simple local memory system for my personal AI workflow.

I want to store:

- Notes
- Daily reflections
- Content ideas
- Important documents
- Meeting summaries
- Useful links

Give me:

1. The simplest architecture
2. The database tables I need
3. What each table stores
4. How retrieval should work
5. A beginner-friendly build plan
6. What to avoid overbuilding

9. Practical workflows

The real power of ChatGPT is not any single prompt. It is combining features into workflows. Here are a few simple workflows beginners can copy.

Workflow 1: Personal OS

1. Create a Personal OS Project.
2. Add custom instructions for planning, prioritization, and reflection.

3. Upload your goals, routines, task lists, and habit tracker.
4. Use voice to brain dump daily thoughts.
5. Ask ChatGPT to turn the dump into priorities, time blocks, and next actions.

Workflow 2: Content creation

1. Create a Content Project.
2. Upload best scripts, brand voice, audience notes, and examples of content you like.
3. Use ChatGPT for hooks, titles, outlines, scripts, thumbnails, and repurposing.
4. Use GPT Images for visual concepts.
5. Create a custom GPT for repeated video ideation.

Workflow 3: Learning

1. Create a Learning Project.
2. Upload notes, syllabus, saved articles, or PDFs.
3. Ask ChatGPT to explain concepts simply.
4. Use the quiz-and-correct loop.
5. Ask for a 7-day learning plan and daily review questions.

Workflow 4: Business/operator

1. Create a Work/Business Project.
2. Upload company context, product docs, SOPs, and meeting notes.
3. Ask ChatGPT to extract decisions, blockers, risks, and next actions.
4. Use it to draft SOPs, hiring scorecards, meeting agendas, and strategy briefs.
5. Use Codex to prototype internal dashboards and simple automations.

10. Pricing and plan guidance

AI plans and limits change quickly, so always check the current pricing page before making a buying decision. The practical principle is simple: do not let plan limits become the bottleneck if ChatGPT is genuinely helping you think, create, code, research, or operate faster.

Type of user	Suggested starting point	Why
Curious / casual	Free plan	Good for testing the basics, but limits can appear quickly.
Serious student, creator, operator, founder, or professional	Paid individual plan, usually Plus as the minimum	Better access to advanced models, files, images, memory/context, Projects, GPTs, Codex, and higher limits than Free.
Heavy user hitting limits or doing long Codex/research sessions	Pro \$100 tier if available in your account	More usage headroom, especially for heavier Codex and advanced workflows.
Team or company	Business / Enterprise	Collaboration, admin controls, connectors, and business-grade workspace features.

My practical take: If you are going to use ChatGPT seriously, do not rely on the free plan. Start with the paid plan that gives you the best model access and enough limits for real work. Upgrade when limits cost you more time than the subscription saves.

As of this guide, OpenAI lists Plus at \$20/month on official help pages, and has introduced a \$100/month Pro tier designed for longer, high-intensity Codex sessions. Pricing, plan names, and usage limits can change, so treat exact numbers as time-sensitive.

11. Tips and tricks

1. Use Projects instead of endless random chats.
2. Set custom instructions before trying to become a prompt expert.
3. Use memory for durable preferences, not giant documents.
4. Upload files when context matters.
5. Give examples of what good looks like.
6. Ask ChatGPT to ask you questions before answering.
7. Use voice for messy thoughts and planning.
8. Use GPT Images for thumbnails, mockups, ads, and product concepts, not just art.
9. Use GPTs for repeated tasks.
10. Use Codex to build small personal tools before trying complex apps.
11. Ask for critique, not just output.
12. Verify anything current, financial, legal, medical, or high-stakes.
13. When the output is bad, add more context, constraints, examples, and a clearer role.
14. Keep a file of your best prompts and outputs, then upload it into the relevant Project.
15. Build workflows, not one-off prompts.

12. Master prompt library

Copy these prompts into ChatGPT and adapt the bracketed sections. These are designed to make the guide useful even if you paste it directly into your own GPT or Project.

Master setup prompt

Use this guide to help me set up ChatGPT properly.

First, ask me the questions you need to understand my goals, work, learning style, projects, and preferred response style.

Then create:

1. My custom instructions
2. My memory-worthy preferences
3. My recommended Projects
4. Files I should upload to each Project
5. GPTs I should create
6. Daily prompts I should use
7. A 7-day plan to become a better ChatGPT user

Learning prompt

Teach me [topic] from scratch.

Start with the 20% of concepts that explain 80% of the topic.

Then:

1. Explain it simply
2. Give me examples
3. Quiz me
4. Correct my answers
5. Give me a 7-day learning plan

Writing prompt

Rewrite this for clarity, punch, and flow.

Keep my original meaning and tone, but:

- Remove fluff
- Make it more concise
- Make the opening stronger
- Make it easier to read

Give me 3 versions:

1. Clean
2. Punchy
3. More persuasive

Brain dump prompt

Turn this messy brain dump into a clear action plan.

Organize it into:

- Urgent
- Important
- Delegated
- Later
- Delete/ignore

Then give me:

1. The top 3 priorities
2. The next 3 actions
3. What I should do first today

Meeting notes prompt

Turn these meeting notes into an operator summary.

Give me:

1. Key decisions
2. Action items
3. Owners
4. Deadlines
5. Risks
6. Open questions
7. Follow-up message I can send to the team

Content idea prompt

Turn this rough idea into a high-retention content concept.

Give me:

1. A sharper angle
2. 10 hook options
3. 5 title options
4. A simple video outline
5. Retention beats
6. Thumbnail concepts
7. Short-form clip ideas
8. The strongest version to film first

Image prompt

Create [asset type] for [purpose].

Style: [premium/minimal/futuristic/cinematic/etc.]

Composition: [what should be visible]

Mood: [emotional tone]

Text: [exact text, if any]

Format: [16:9 / 9:16 / 1:1 / transparent background]

Avoid: [anything you do not want]

Custom GPT instructions prompt

Help me write instructions for a custom GPT that does [specific job].

It should ask me for any missing context, then produce [specific output].

The GPT should follow these rules:

- [rule 1]
- [rule 2]
- [rule 3]

Give me the final GPT instructions in a clean copy-paste format.

Codex build prompt

Build me a simple [type of app/tool].

Requirements:

- [requirement 1]
- [requirement 2]
- [requirement 3]

Keep it simple, make it mobile-friendly, explain how to run it, and suggest the next 5 upgrades after the basic version works.

Improve my ChatGPT usage prompt

Review how I am currently using ChatGPT and help me improve.

Ask me questions about my workflow, then recommend:

1. Which Projects I should create
2. What memories I should save
3. What files I should upload
4. What custom GPTs I should build
5. What prompts I should use daily
6. What habits would make me a power user

13. Final cheat sheet

Need	Use this
Quick question or brainstorm	Normal chat
Ongoing area of work/life	Project
Personal preferences	Memory + custom instructions
Exact reference material	Uploaded files
Repeatable assistant	Custom GPT
Current information	Search / research
Data, CSVs, spreadsheets	Data analysis
Visual ideas, thumbnails, mockups	GPT Images
Messy thoughts	Voice prompting
Apps, dashboards, tools, automations	Codex

The real takeaway: Beginners ask ChatGPT for answers. Power users build systems around ChatGPT.

14. Sources and feature notes

This guide was written for practical education and is not official OpenAI documentation. Feature names, limits, availability, and prices can change. Check the official OpenAI help center and pricing pages before making plan decisions or filming feature-specific claims.

- OpenAI pricing page: <https://chatgpt.com/pricing/>

- ChatGPT Plus help page: <https://help.openai.com/en/articles/6950777-what-is-chatgpt-plus>
- ChatGPT Pro tiers: <https://help.openai.com/en/articles/9793128-about-chatgpt-pro-tiers>
- Projects in ChatGPT: <https://help.openai.com/en/articles/10169521-projects-in-chatgpt>
- Custom Instructions: <https://help.openai.com/en/articles/8096356-chatgpt-custom-instructions>
- Memory FAQ: <https://help.openai.com/en/articles/8590148-memory-faq>
- GPTs in ChatGPT: <https://help.openai.com/en/articles/8554407-gpts-in-chatgpt>
- Creating and editing GPTs: <https://help.openai.com/en/articles/8554397-creating-and-editing-gpts>
- Images in ChatGPT: <https://help.openai.com/en/articles/11084440-chatgpt-images-faq>
- File uploads FAQ: <https://help.openai.com/en/articles/8555545-file-uploads-faq>
- Data analysis: <https://help.openai.com/en/articles/8437071-data-analysis-with-chatgpt>
- Using Codex with your ChatGPT plan: <https://help.openai.com/en/articles/11369540-using-codex-with-your-chatgpt-plan>