Formulating Good Prompts

One of the key factors for the success of a ChatGPT conversation is the quality of the prompts that initiate and guide the interaction. There are several important principles to consider:

— Clarity and conciseness: Clear and concise prompts help ensure that ChatGPT understands the topic or task and can provide an appropriate response. Overly complex or ambiguous phrasing, as well as jargon, should be avoided.
— Context and focus: Prompts should always begin with context and have a clear focus. Prompts that are too general or open-ended may lead to incoherent or imprecise conversations.
— Examples: Providing example texts helps ChatGPT understand the desired outcome of the conversation.
— Incorporating thoughts or facts: Instead of only asking questions or giving instructions, include your own thoughts or facts in the prompts, which ChatGPT can then integrate into its output.
— Step-by-step approach: A prompt doesn't need to achieve the desired result immediately. It can make sense to proceed gradually. Refining the question step by step is a useful method to keep ChatGPT focused on the task. This also allows you to review the output incrementally.
— Full sentences: Unlike search engines like Google, natural language in full sentences is more suitable than keywords.
— New question, New Prompt: Since all inputs from previous prompts and generated content influence the conversation, a new chat should be started for each new question or request.
— Format: ChatGPT can present results not only in continuous text but also in formats such as tables or lists. Therefore, a specific desired output format should be explicitly stated in the prompt.
— Language: By now, ChatGPT delivers good results in many languages. However, depending on the context – such as when language-specific culture or concepts play a role – it can be useful to formulate the prompt in the corresponding language.
— Avoiding bias in results: If the result is intended to be as neutral as possible, the question or task formulation should also be neutral.
— Testing and improving: Don't give up right away! Experimenting with different phrasings and formats is effective for continuously improving the result. Language models can react to even small changes in wording. The goal is not to create a "perfect" prompt from the start but to arrive at the desired result interactively (e.g., "Can you elaborate on this?" or "Please use a different example.").
— Active phrasing: Active formulations, such as the use of "Let's," tend to yield better results.

One of the most useful techniques for formulating effective ChatGPT prompts is the "Act as Hack." This technique uses the phrase "act as" in a prompt to instruct ChatGPT to take on a specific role or persona in the conversation. This can be particularly useful for simulating real scenarios and generating the best possible output for a specific application.

Useful "Act As" roles include the following:

— **"Act as a narrator"**: "Create an engaging and educational story to introduce the topic of 'corporate ethics.' The story should be imaginative and captivating yet grounded and explain why the topic is important. The target audience is university students. Keep it under 1,000 characters. Ask me for specific materials or

context to shape the story as effectively as possible. If you have the necessary context, develop the story step by step."

— **"Act as an idea generator"**: "Generate a startup idea for the University of Zurich on the topic of sustainability. Develop a business plan including the name, description, target audience, main value proposition, revenue streams, cost structures, key activities, key resources, key partners, and potential challenges. Write the result in a table."

— **"Act as a tutor"**: "I need help understanding how probability works. Explain it to me using simple, step-by-step explanations."

— **"Act as a strict critic"**: "Critique what I am about to write and point out where my reasoning is weak. Start by asking which text I want feedback on. Then ask questions about my context to provide the best possible feedback. Once you have the necessary context, create the feedback step by step."

— **"Act as a job interviewer"**: "I am the applicant, and you are conducting an interview with me for an internship at a hospital. Ask me one question at a time and wait for my response before proceeding to the next question."