

THE FIELD GUIDE

# Generative AI for **Beginners**

A practical companion that picks up where the introductory article leaves off — with worked prompt examples, a quick-start tour of the major models, the GSDC certification syllabus, and a complete 8-week study plan you can start this weekend.

WHAT'S INSIDE

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6 rungs from tokens to agents, each with a worked example.

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20+ ready-to-use, fill-in-the-blank prompt templates.

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ChatGPT, Claude, Gemini & MidJourney, side by side.

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12 hands-on activities to build real fluency.

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Maya's complete 8-week path to certified.

**6**

CONCEPT RUNGS

**20+**

PROMPT TEMPLATES

**9**

SYLLABUS MODULES

**8**

WEEK PLAN

A companion resource to the GSDC introduction “*What is Generative AI?*”. No coding background required — only curiosity. Throughout the guide you'll follow **Maya**, a marketing analyst learning Gen AI from zero.

## START HERE

# How to use this guide

The introductory article answered “*what is generative AI?*”. This guide answers the harder question: **what do I actually do next?** Work through it in order, keep a chat window open in another tab, and try every worked example as you read it.

**READ ACTIVELY****Type, don't just skim**

Every prompt example is meant to be pasted into a real tool and tweaked. Fluency comes from doing, not from reading about doing.

**CLIMB IN ORDER****One rung at a time**

The concept ladder builds on itself. Tokens explain prompts; prompts explain context; context explains agents. Skipping leaves gaps.

**SAVE WHAT WORKS****Build a prompt vault**

Keep a personal document of prompts that worked. The 20+ templates here are your starter set — adapt and grow them.

**AIM FOR PROOF****Finish certified**

The 8-week plan maps directly onto the GSDC syllabus, so the skills you practise are the skills the certification validates.

## MEET YOUR GUIDE

## Maya, learning from zero

**Maya** is a marketing analyst. She's comfortable with spreadsheets and slide decks but has never written a line of code. Six weeks ago, generative AI felt like hype and jargon. Today she drafts campaign briefs, summarises research, and builds image concepts with AI — and she's preparing for her GSDC certification.

You'll see Maya's notes in the worked examples throughout this guide. Her path is the path the 8-week plan lays out for you.

**THE ONE IDEA TO HOLD ONTO**

A generative model is a very well-read assistant that predicts likely text or images from your instructions. It has no memory of you between sessions, no live access to the world unless connected to it, and no judgement of its own. Everything you'll learn is really about **communicating clearly** with that assistant — and knowing when to trust it.

## 01 · THE CONCEPT LADDER

# Six rungs from curious to capable

You don't need the maths behind large language models to use them well. You need six ideas, each building on the last. Climb them in order — every rung has a worked example you can run today.

1

## THE UNIT OF EVERYTHING

## Tokens — how a model reads

Models don't see words or letters; they see **tokens** — chunks of text roughly  $\frac{3}{4}$  of a word long. “Generative” might be two tokens. The model reads your tokens and predicts the next most likely token, again and again, until the answer is complete. This is why very long inputs cost more and why being concise often helps.

## MAYA TRIES IT

She pastes a paragraph and asks: How many tokens is this, roughly, and which words are wasteful? The model estimates the count and points out filler. Maya learns that **tight writing = cheaper, sharper answers**.

2

## YOUR HALF OF THE CONVERSATION

## Prompts — instruction + context + example

A strong prompt has three parts: a clear **instruction** (what to do), **context** (the material and constraints), and ideally an **example** of the output you want. Vague in, vague out. The single biggest beginner upgrade is adding context and a sample of the desired format.

## WEAK VS. STRONG

Weak: Write a product description.

Strong: You are a copywriter. Write a 40-word product description for a reusable steel water bottle, friendly tone, aimed at gym-goers. Match the style of this example: "...".

01 · THE CONCEPT LADDER

## Rungs 3 & 4

3

WHAT THE MODEL CAN “SEE”

### Context window — the model's short-term memory

The context window is everything the model can consider at once: your instructions, the documents you paste, and the conversation so far. When a chat “forgets” something from earlier, it's usually because older text scrolled out of the window. Put the most important material closest to your question.

#### MAYA TRIES IT

She pastes a long report, then asks her question **last**: `Using only the text above, list the three risks the author flags. Quote the sentence for each.` Anchoring the request to the pasted text keeps the answer grounded.

4

TURNING THE DIALS

### Controlling outputs — temperature, length & role

You steer style and reliability with plain language. Ask for a **role** (“act as an editor”), a **length** (“in 3 bullet points”), and a **tone** (“formal”). Where a tool exposes a *temperature* setting, lower means more predictable and factual; higher means more varied and creative.

#### SAME TASK, TWO DIALS

For a legal summary Maya asks for a **precise, low-variation** answer. For brainstorming slogans she asks for **ten wildly different options**. Same model — different instructions produce different behaviour.

50% OFF

## You've climbed the first rungs — turn them into a credential

The GSDC Generative AI Certification picks up exactly here: the same concepts, taught hands-on in the AI Studio, ending in a globally recognised credential. A natural next step from this guide.

[Explore the certification](#) →

Recognised in 90+ countries

01 · THE CONCEPT LADDER

## Rungs 5 & 6

5

### GROUNDING IN YOUR OWN FACTS

#### Retrieval (RAG) — giving the model your sources

A model only knows what it was trained on, up to a cut-off date, plus whatever you give it. **Retrieval-augmented generation** means fetching relevant documents and handing them to the model so its answer is grounded in *your* material — your policies, your product docs, today's data. It's the cure for confident-but-wrong answers.

##### MAYA TRIES IT

She uploads the company style guide and asks: *Rewrite this email to follow the attached style guide. Flag anything that breaks a rule.* The answer is now anchored to a real source, not the model's guesswork.

6

### FROM ANSWERS TO ACTIONS

#### Agents & tools — models that do, not just say

An **agent** is a model given tools (search, a calculator, your calendar, a code runner) and a goal. It plans steps, calls a tool, reads the result, and continues. Beginners don't build agents on day one — but understanding the idea explains where automation and “AI assistants that take actions” come from.

##### THE MENTAL MODEL

Plain chat = the model **talks**. An agent = the model **works**: “check the figures, draft the summary, schedule the send” — looping through tools until the goal is met, with you supervising.

#### LADDER RECAP

**1 Tokens** (how it reads) → **2 Prompts** (how you ask) → **3 Context** (what it sees) → **4 Controls** (how you steer) → **5 Retrieval** (how you ground it) → **6 Agents** (how it acts). Everything else in generative AI is a variation on these six.

## 02 · PROMPT TEMPLATE LIBRARY

## 20+ prompts you can use today

Copy a template, replace the **highlighted slots**, and paste it into any chat tool. Grouped by job-to-be-done. Start with these, then grow your own vault.

## A · WRITING &amp; COMMUNICATION

### 01 Polished rewrite

Rewrite the text below to be **[clear / formal / friendly]** for an audience of **[who]**. Keep it under **[N]** words. Preserve all facts. Text: **"[paste]"**.

### 02 Email in my voice

Draft an email to **[recipient]** about **[topic]**. Goal: **[what I want them to do]**. Tone: **[tone]**. Length: short. End with a clear call to action.

### 03 Tighten & cut

Cut this by **[30%]** without losing meaning. Mark removed ideas in a short list so I can confirm. Text: **"[paste]"**.

### 04 Explain to an audience

Explain **[concept]** to **[a 12-year-old / a busy executive]** in **[3]** short paragraphs, using one everyday analogy.

## B · ANALYSIS &amp; RESEARCH

### 05 Grounded summary

Using only the text above, summarise the key points in **[5]** bullets. For each, quote the sentence it came from. If something isn't stated, say "not stated".

### 06 Pros, cons & unknowns

Analyse the decision: **[describe]**. Give a table of pros, cons, and open questions I should research before deciding.

### 07 Compare options

Compare **[option A]** and **[option B]** across **[cost, effort, risk]**. Output a table, then one recommendation with its main caveat.

## 02 · PROMPT TEMPLATE LIBRARY

## More templates

## C · LEARNING &amp; STUDY

### 08 Teach me step by step

Teach me **[topic]** from scratch. Start with the simplest version, check my understanding with one question, then go deeper only after I answer.

### 09 Quiz me

Create a **[10]**-question quiz on **[topic]** at **[beginner]** level. Ask one at a time, wait for my answer, then explain why I was right or wrong.

### 10 Find my gaps

Here's my explanation of **[topic]**: "**[paste]**". Point out what's missing, wrong, or vague, and give me the corrected version.

## D · BUSINESS &amp; PRODUCTIVITY

### 11 Meeting to actions

Turn these notes into a summary, a list of decisions, and owner-tagged action items with due dates. Notes: "**[paste]**".

### 12 First draft of a plan

Draft a **[project / campaign]** plan for **[goal]** with phases, milestones, and risks. Mark assumptions clearly so I can correct them.

### 13 Brainstorm widely

Give me **[15]** distinctly different ideas for **[challenge]**. Group them by theme and flag the two most unconventional.

### 14 Red-team my idea

Argue against this plan as a sceptical stakeholder: "**[paste]**". List the strongest objections and how I'd answer each.

LIMITED TIME

## Templates are a start — structured practice makes it stick

For a limited time, enrolment in the GSDC Generative AI Certification is open with a special offer. Move from copy-pasting prompts to engineering them with confidence, guided by working practitioners.

[Enrol while the offer lasts →](#)

Offer ends soon

## 02 · PROMPT TEMPLATE LIBRARY

## Coding, data & image prompts

## E · CODING &amp; DATA (NO EXPERIENCE NEEDED)

### 15 Explain this code/formula

Explain what this does, line by line, in plain English, and tell me one thing that could go wrong: “[paste code or spreadsheet formula]”.

### 16 Spreadsheet helper

I have columns [describe]. Write the formula to [what I want] and explain how to paste it in.

### 17 Fix my error

I tried [what I did] and got this error: “[paste]”. What does it mean and what are the two most likely fixes?

## F · IMAGE GENERATION

### 18 Image concept (the recipe)

[subject], [setting], [style – e.g. flat vector / photoreal], [lighting], [mood], [aspect ratio]. – describe, don't command.

### 19 Vary a concept

Keep the same subject and composition but give me [4] variations in [colour palette / art style].

### 20 Marketing visual brief

Suggest [3] image concepts for [campaign]. For each, give a one-line prompt and the feeling it should evoke.

### 21 Refine, don't restart

Good direction, but make it [warmer / simpler / more premium] and remove [element]. Keep everything else the same.

### 22 Self-check before trusting

Review your previous answer. List anything you're unsure about, any claim I should verify independently, and any assumption you made.

That's 22 reusable templates. The certification's prompt-engineering module goes further — chaining, role design, and evaluation — but these will carry you through your first month.

## 03 · TOOL TOUR

## The four tools to know first

You don't need all of them — but knowing what each is best at saves hours. Three are conversational assistants; one is an image specialist. Try the free tiers before you pay for anything.

**CONVERSATIONAL · OPENAI****ChatGPT**

The household name and a great all-rounder for drafting, summarising, and brainstorming. Strong general knowledge and a gentle learning curve.

**Starter tip:** use it for first drafts and quick explanations. **Beginner gotcha:** it can sound confident while being wrong — verify facts and dates.

**CONVERSATIONAL · ANTHROPIC****Claude**

Known for careful, structured writing and comfort with long documents — handy when you paste in big reports and want a thorough, well-organised response.

**Starter tip:** reach for it on longer analysis and nuanced editing. **Beginner gotcha:** still confirm anything time-sensitive against a live source.

**HOW TO CHOOSE**

For most beginners the differences matter less than the habit. Pick one assistant, use it daily for two weeks, then try a second and feel the contrast. Fluency transfers between tools because the *skill* — clear prompting — is the same.

03 · TOOL TOUR

## Gemini, MidJourney & “which when”

CONVERSATIONAL · GOOGLE

### Gemini

Google's assistant, tightly woven into Search and Workspace (Docs, Gmail, Sheets). A strong pick if your day already lives in Google tools and you want AI close to your documents and email. **Gotcha:** features and availability vary by account type.

IMAGE GENERATION

### MidJourney

A specialist that turns text descriptions into striking images, prized for its artistic quality. You *describe* a scene rather than command it. **Starter tip:** use the image “recipe” template (#18). **Gotcha:** it's for visuals, not facts or writing — and mind usage rights for commercial work.

WHEN YOU WANT TO...	REACH FOR	WHY
Draft, summarise, brainstorm	ChatGPT	Fast, versatile all-rounder
Work through long documents	Claude	Structured, handles big inputs
Stay inside Google Workspace	Gemini	Lives next to your docs & mail
Create original visuals	MidJourney	Best-in-class image quality

The tool landscape moves fast and new options appear constantly. Treat this as a starting map, not a finish line — the GSDC program keeps a working catalogue of 30+ tools so you practise on what teams actually use.

50% OFF TODAY

### Get hands-on with 30+ AI tools at half the usual price

The GSDC certification's AI Studio lets you practise across ChatGPT, Claude, Gemini and more with real, AI-powered challenges. Enrol today and claim a flat 50% saving on your seat.

Claim 50% off →

Applied at enrolment

## 04 · CERTIFICATION SYLLABUS

## The full 9-module map

This is the structure the GSDC Generative AI Certification follows. Each module pairs concepts with Learn-by-Doing practice, and the 8-week plan later in this guide maps onto it.

### Module 1 Foundations of Generative AI

- What generative AI is — and how it differs from traditional, rule-based software
- Key terms: models, tokens, training, inference, the generation loop
- Where Gen AI creates value across industries and roles

### Module 2 How Large Language Models Work

- From data to predictions: an intuition for how models learn patterns
- Context windows, knowledge cut-offs, and why models “hallucinate”
- Strengths, limits, and reading a model's output critically

### Module 3 Prompt Engineering Essentials

- The instruction–context–example pattern and role prompting
- Step-by-step reasoning, formatting control, and prompt chaining
- Building and maintaining a reusable prompt library

## 04 · CERTIFICATION SYLLABUS

## Modules 4–6

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**Module 4** The Tool Landscape

- Hands-on with conversational assistants: ChatGPT, Claude, Gemini and more
- Choosing the right tool for the task; comparing outputs
- Working with files, context and tool-specific features

**Module 5** Multimodal & Image Generation

- Generating and refining images with tools such as MidJourney
- The “describe, then refine” workflow and visual prompt recipes
- Practical uses: concepts, marketing visuals, mock-ups; rights & attribution

**Module 6** Automation & Workflows

- Grounding answers in your own data (retrieval) and connecting sources
- From prompts to repeatable workflows; an intuition for AI agents
- Designing a small automation that saves real time each week

04 · CERTIFICATION SYLLABUS

## Modules 7–9

### Module 7 Evaluating AI Output

- Judging quality: accuracy, relevance, bias and tone
- Fact-checking workflows and knowing when to trust an answer
- Simple ways to measure whether a prompt is actually working

### Module 8 Responsible AI & Governance

- Ethics, privacy, data handling and intellectual-property basics
- Emerging governance roles and why organisations are hiring for them
- Building a personal checklist for safe, transparent AI use at work

### Module 9 Capstone — Apply It

- A real-world implementation project tying the modules together
- Documenting prompts, tools and decisions like a practitioner
- Preparing for the certification assessment with confidence

48 HOURS ONLY

## See the full syllabus you'll master — enrol within 48 hours

These nine modules are the exact path the GSDC certification walks you through. Act within the next 48 hours to lock in the current enrolment offer before it closes.

[Secure my seat now →](#)

Window closes in 48h

## 05 · LEARN BY DOING

# 12 hands-on activities

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Reading builds awareness; doing builds skill. Each activity takes 15–40 minutes and maps to a syllabus module. Do them in order — they double as your portfolio of evidence.

**1 Token hunt**

Paste a paragraph, ask the model to estimate its tokens and trim the filler. Notice how concise input sharpens output. (Module 1)

---

**2 Weak → strong prompt**

Take a one-line prompt and rebuild it with instruction, context and an example. Compare the two answers side by side. (Module 3)

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**3 Grounded summary**

Paste a long article and force quote-backed bullets using template #05. Spot any claim the model can't support. (Module 2)

---

**4 Dial experiment**

Run the same task asking first for a precise answer, then for ten creative variations. Feel how instructions change behaviour. (Module 3)

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**5 Tool face-off**

Give the identical prompt to two assistants and write three sentences on how the answers differ. (Module 4)

---

**6 Image recipe**

Use the recipe template (#18) to generate an image, then refine it twice without starting over. (Module 5)

## 05 · LEARN BY DOING

## Activities 7–12

7

**Ground it in your docs**

Upload a real document (a style guide, a policy) and make the model answer using only that source. (Module 6)

8

**Build a mini-workflow**

Chain two prompts: one to extract action items from notes, a second to draft the follow-up emails. (Module 6)

9

**Fact-check a claim**

Ask for three factual statements, then verify each against an independent source. Log what was wrong. (Module 7)

10

**Spot the bias**

Prompt for advice aimed at two different audiences and compare tone and assumptions critically. (Module 7)

11

**Write a use policy**

Draft a one-page personal checklist for using AI safely at work — privacy, sources, disclosure. (Module 8)

12

**Mini-capstone**

Pick one real task from your week and solve it end-to-end with AI. Document the prompts and tools you used. (Module 9)

RISK-FREE · 50% OFF

### Practise with guided challenges — backed by a 7-day guarantee

The GSDC program turns activities like these into structured, expert-reviewed challenges. And it's risk-free: if it isn't right for you within 7 days, there's a full money-back guarantee. Enrol with nothing to lose.

[Start risk-free →](#)

7-day money-back guarantee

## 06 · MAYA'S STUDY PLAN

# Eight weeks to certified

Maya gave this 3–4 hours a week. Each week pairs a concept with an activity and a small win you can show someone. Adjust the pace to your life — the order is what matters.

**Week 1****Foundations & your first prompts**

Read rungs 1–2. Run activities 1 & 2. Pick one assistant and use it once a day for a real task.

Win: a rewritten email that's noticeably better than your usual.

**Week 2****Context & grounded answers**

Read rung 3. Run activity 3. Practise putting your question last after pasted material.

Win: a quote-backed summary of a long document.

**Week 3****Steering the output**

Read rung 4. Run activity 4. Build your first five prompt-vault entries from the library.

Win: a personal prompt vault you actually reuse.

**Week 4****Compare the tools**

Work the Tool Tour. Run activity 5. Try a second assistant and note the contrast.

Win: a clear sense of which tool you'll default to.

06 · MAYA'S STUDY PLAN

## Weeks 5–8

**Week 5**

### Images & multimodal

Read module 5. Run activity 6. Generate and refine an image with the recipe template.

Win: an original visual you made from a text description.

**Week 6**

### Grounding & a mini-workflow

Read rungs 5–6. Run activities 7 & 8. Automate one small recurring task.

Win: a two-step workflow that saves you time weekly.

**Week 7**

### Evaluate & use responsibly

Read modules 7–8. Run activities 9–11. Write your one-page AI use checklist.

Win: the judgement to know when *not* to trust an answer.

**Week 8**

### Capstone & certify

Run activity 12 as a full project. Review the 9 modules. Book your certification.

Win: a documented project — and a credential to prove it.

**OFFER INSIDE**

## Finish week 8 with a credential recognised in 90+ countries

Maya's plan ends at certification for a reason: a globally recognised GSDC credential turns your new skills into something employers and peers can verify. An enrolment offer is waiting for you inside.

**Get certified** →

Globally recognised credential

REFERENCE

# Beginner's glossary

The words you'll meet most often, in plain language. Keep this page bookmarked for your first month.

## Token

A chunk of text (~¾ of a word) the model reads and predicts one at a time.

## Prompt

Your instruction to the model, ideally with context and an example.

## Context window

Everything the model can “see” at once — instructions, files, the chat so far.

## Hallucination

A confident but incorrect answer. Why grounding and fact-checking matter.

## Temperature

A dial for randomness — low for factual, high for creative output.

## Retrieval (RAG)

Feeding the model your own sources so answers are grounded in real data.

## Agent

A model given tools and a goal that can take multi-step actions.

## Multimodal

A model that works with more than text — images, audio or video too.

## Knowledge cut-off

The last date a model's training data covers; it isn't live by default.

## Fine-tuning

Further training a model on specific data to specialise its behaviour.

HALF PRICE

## Stop memorising terms — practise them in a live AI Studio

GSDC's Learn-by-Doing approach pairs every lesson with a built-in, AI-powered challenge so concepts become reflexes. Enrol now and the seat is half price.

[Try Learn by Doing](#) →

Hands-on from day one

WHERE TO GO NEXT

## You're past the beginning

If you've climbed the ladder, tried the templates, and toured the tools, you're no longer a beginner — you're a practitioner in training. Here's how Maya turned momentum into a credential.

**KEEP THE HABIT**

Use AI for one real task every day. Skill fades without reps.

**GROW YOUR VAULT**

Add a prompt every time something works well.

**MAKE IT COUNT**

Turn practice into proof with a recognised certification.

### Maya, eight weeks later

She drafts faster, summarises smarter, and builds visuals she'd have outsourced before. The jargon that once felt like a wall is now just vocabulary. The last step — the one that made it real on her résumé — was getting certified. Yours is one click away.

LAST CHANCE · 50% OFF

### Your plan is ready. Take the final step and get certified.

You have the ladder, the templates, the tools and an 8-week path. The only thing left is the credential that proves it. This is your last prompt in the guide — make it the one that counts, at 50% off.

**Enrol & get certified** →

Offer applied at checkout

© 2026 Global Skill Development Council (GSDC). This field guide is an educational companion to the article "What is Generative AI?". The tool landscape evolves rapidly; verify current features and usage rights before relying on any tool for production work.