

THE USA SALARY REPORT · 2026

USA Prompt Engineering Salary Report

All **20 pay grids in print**. Five prompt-engineering roles across four USA regions, shown at the 25th, 50th, 75th and 90th percentile. Plus frontier-lab total comp (Anthropic · OpenAI · Google), the ROI math vs a \$98K baseline, the **CPE module map** per role, and a usable negotiation script.

Inside the report

✓ 5x4 pay grid (Glassdoor May 2026)	✓ 25th-90th percentile bands per cell
✓ SF / NYC / Seattle / Austin premium	✓ Frontier-lab total comp · 3 labs
✓ ROI math vs \$98K baseline	✓ 17-module CPE syllabus reference
✓ Negotiation script + interview prep	✓ Printable salary-negotiation checklist

20
Pay grids
5 roles x 4 regions

4
Percentiles
25 · 50 · 75 · 90

+45%
Reported uplift
Median post-CPE

Credential: **CPE - Certified Prompt Engineer** · Issued by **Global Skill Development Council** · Recognized in 100+ countries.

Page one carries no calls-to-action by design. The pay grid begins on page two.

READING GUIDE

How to read this salary report

Six blocks. Find your cell in the 5x4 grid on pages 5-6. Read the percentile breakdown on page 7. Then trace your city premium, ROI math and negotiation script.

Block	Pages	What you'll find
1 · Methodology & framing	3–4	Glassdoor May 2026 framing · what the percentiles mean · how to use bands.
2 · The 5x4 pay grid	5–6	All 20 cells. 5 roles x 4 regions. Percentile bars per cell.
3 · Percentile breakdown	7–8	What p25 / p50 / p75 / p90 mean for your career and your offer letter.
4 · City premium tables	9–12	Deep-dive per city: SF Bay · NYC · Seattle · Austin. Plus frontier-lab comp.
5 · ROI math vs \$98K baseline	13–14	Upskill ROI for content / marketing readers starting near \$98K.
6 · Negotiation script + interview prep	15–17	Counter-script · CPE module map per role · printable checklist.
7 · Syllabus, exam & closer	18–28	17-module CPE syllabus · exam · sample certificate · FAQ · enrollment.

Methodology note: Figures triangulated from Glassdoor postings as of May 2026, weighted by employer tier and adjusted for total-comp mix. All numbers are USA annual base in USD, before bonus, equity and sign-on. NYC / SF Bay sits at the high end; Austin sets the regional floor. Use percentile bands directionally — your actual offer depends on city tier, employer segment, and how strong your capstone is.

PERCENTILES · PRIMER

What the percentiles mean

Each cell in the 5x4 grid (pages 5-6) shows four numbers. Here's what they actually represent — and which one you should anchor against.

Percentile	What it means	Who lands here
25th (p25)	One in four people in this role / region earns this or less.	Entry-level · no credential · no production artifacts.
50th (p50, median)	Half earn this or less · half earn this or more.	Typical mid-tier worker · 3-5 yrs · standard credential.
75th (p75, top quartile)	Top quartile · the “strong candidate” band.	Credentialed + working capstone + eval evidence.
90th (p90)	Top tenth · usually frontier labs or staff-level roles.	Senior · multi-year prompt-craft + leadership.

Which percentile should you anchor against?

- **For your first AI prompt-engineering offer:** aim for p50, not p25. Credentialed candidates clear p50 routinely.
- **For a re-band conversation at your current employer:** anchor at p50 of your role-region cell, not the company's internal band.
- **For a senior move or a frontier-lab interview:** anchor at p75. You have to *earn* p90 — usually through specific artifact evidence.
- **For freelance / contract day rates:** use p75 of your role-region cell as your day-rate anchor (then multiply by your day count).

The rule of thumb: the credential moves you from p25 → p50 in your role-region cell. The capstone moves you from p50 → p75. Senior eval craft + leadership moves you toward p90. Most CPE candidates report finishing in the p50-p75 band on their first move.

OVERVIEW

Headline numbers - 2026



Three signals from the 2026 prompt-engineering market

- **The credential effect is most visible at p50.** Credentialed candidates clear p50 in their role-region cell on their first move; uncredentialed candidates routinely land at p25.
- **City premium narrowed slightly in 2026.** Remote-friendly hiring brought SF/NYC's p50 closer to Seattle/Austin (within 10-15% rather than 25-30%).
- **The biggest spreads are at p90.** Frontier labs (Anthropic, OpenAI, Google) routinely place senior prompt-engineering roles 30-50% above the public p90 for those roles.

Three signals readers report after credentialing

- **Re-band within 90 days** — many readers move from p25 to p50 in their current role, without changing employer.
- **External offer within 6 months** — typical landing band is p50-p75 of the target role-region cell.
- **Negotiation power compounds** — the gap between p50 and p75 is the gap most readers leave on the table by not anchoring against the data.

RELATED · NEXT STEP

[50% OFF]

Step into the bands you're about to read

Every cell in the 5x4 grid is reachable through CPE. Enroll while the half-price window is open.

[Enroll & Save 50% →](#)

Tap anywhere on this card →

20 PAY GRIDS

The 5x4 pay grid - part 1 of 2

Three roles below; two more on page 6. Each cell shows the 25th-90th percentile band for the role in that region. Blue ticks mark the median (p50). Gold ticks mark the top-quartile (p75) — the band most credentialed candidates anchor against.

ROLE	SF Bay	NYC	Seattle	Austin
Prompt Engineer	<p>\$145-\$260k</p> <p>p25 p90</p> <p>p50 \$175k p75 \$215k</p>	<p>\$140-\$250k</p> <p>p25 p90</p> <p>p50 \$168k p75 \$205k</p>	<p>\$135-\$235k</p> <p>p25 p90</p> <p>p50 \$160k p75 \$195k</p>	<p>\$120-\$210k</p> <p>p25 p90</p> <p>p50 \$145k p75 \$175k</p>
AI Content Strategist	<p>\$110-\$195k</p> <p>p25 p90</p> <p>p50 \$135k p75 \$165k</p>	<p>\$105-\$185k</p> <p>p25 p90</p> <p>p50 \$128k p75 \$155k</p>	<p>\$100-\$175k</p> <p>p25 p90</p> <p>p50 \$120k p75 \$145k</p>	<p>\$88-\$155k</p> <p>p25 p90</p> <p>p50 \$108k p75 \$130k</p>
LLM Developer	<p>\$160-\$290k</p> <p>p25 p90</p> <p>p50 \$195k p75 \$240k</p>	<p>\$155-\$275k</p> <p>p25 p90</p> <p>p50 \$185k p75 \$225k</p>	<p>\$145-\$260k</p> <p>p25 p90</p> <p>p50 \$175k p75 \$215k</p>	<p>\$130-\$230k</p> <p>p25 p90</p> <p>p50 \$158k p75 \$190k</p>

Reader hint: the *p50* → *p75* jump within a single cell is consistently USD 30-45k. That's the band most readers leave on the table by anchoring at p50 rather than p75 during negotiation.

20 PAY GRIDS

The 5x4 pay grid - part 2 of 2

Roles four and five — Conversational AI Designer and AI Automation Specialist. Both sit closer to the AI Content Strategist band than to the engineering roles, but with meaningful spreads across regions.

ROLE	SF Bay	NYC	Seattle	Austin
Conv. AI Designer	<p>\$120-\$210k</p> <p>p25 p90</p> <p>p50 \$145k p75 \$175k</p>	<p>\$115-\$200k</p> <p>p25 p90</p> <p>p50 \$138k p75 \$168k</p>	<p>\$110-\$190k</p> <p>p25 p90</p> <p>p50 \$130k p75 \$158k</p>	<p>\$95-\$168k</p> <p>p25 p90</p> <p>p50 \$118k p75 \$140k</p>
AI Automation Specialist	<p>\$110-\$195k</p> <p>p25 p90</p> <p>p50 \$135k p75 \$165k</p>	<p>\$105-\$185k</p> <p>p25 p90</p> <p>p50 \$128k p75 \$155k</p>	<p>\$100-\$178k</p> <p>p25 p90</p> <p>p50 \$122k p75 \$148k</p>	<p>\$88-\$155k</p> <p>p25 p90</p> <p>p50 \$108k p75 \$130k</p>

Two patterns across all 20 cells

- **The Austin discount is consistent.** Across all 5 roles, Austin sits roughly 15-20% below SF Bay at every percentile.
- **The role spread widens with seniority.** p25 across all 5 roles spans ~USD 45k. p90 spans ~USD 120k. Seniority amplifies role choice.

The pattern that matters most: within a single cell, the gap between p25 and p90 averages USD 110-130k. That single cell's spread is wider than the gap between Austin and SF Bay at the same percentile. *Your career band — not your city — is the biggest lever.*

ANCHORING

How to anchor against percentile data

The 5x4 grid is only useful if you translate it into a specific anchoring number for your conversation. Below: the 5-step process readers use.

Step	What you do	Example
1 · Pick your cell	Identify your role on the 5-row axis and your region on the 4-col axis.	Prompt Engineer · NYC.
2 · Read all 4 percentiles	Note p25 / p50 / p75 / p90 for that cell.	p25 \$140 · p50 \$168 · p75 \$205 · p90 \$250.
3 · Identify your honest tier	Where do you actually sit today? Be honest, not aspirational.	First AI role · credentialed · capstone shipped = p50-p60.
4 · Set your target anchor	Anchor your ask 5-10 above your honest tier — one step toward p75.	\$175-185 (slightly above p50, reaching toward p75).
5 · Cite the source	Anchor explicitly against the data in conversation, not in your head.	“Glassdoor May 2026 puts mid-band at \$168k. I’m asking \$180k.”

Three anchoring mistakes that cost readers the most money

- **Anchoring at p50 by default.** The credentialed + capstone candidate routinely deserves p60-p75.
- **Citing the wrong region.** If you're remote, anchor at *your home city*, not the employer HQ city.
- **Not naming the source.** “Glassdoor May 2026 reports...” lands stronger than “I’ve seen numbers around...”

THE CPE EFFECT

The credential effect - what CPE actually moves

The 5x4 grid is the same for everyone. What changes when you credential is *where you sit within your cell*. Below: the distribution shift reported by CPE credential-holders in their first move.

Move type	Before CPE	After CPE + capstone	Net shift
First AI role (career-switcher)	Off the grid · not eligible	p25-p50 of target cell	New entry
Re-band at current employer	p25-p40 of cell	p50-p60 of cell	+15-20 percentile points
External move · upskill	p40-p50 of cell	p60-p75 of cell	+15-25 percentile points
External move · senior level	p50-p60 of cell	p70-p85 of cell	+15-25 percentile points
Frontier-lab move	p60-p75 of public grid	p85-p95+ (incl. equity)	Largest jumps

LIMITED-TIME OFFER

[LIMITED TIME]

The half-price window is open — for now

The current enrollment bracket sits inside a limited-time discount window. Lock in your seat before it closes for the quarter.

[Reserve My Seat →](#)

Tap anywhere on this card →

SF BAY DEEP-DIVE

City premium - SF Bay

The SF Bay premium remains the largest in 2026 — but with one nuance: the premium comes more from equity and sign-on than from base. The table below shows base + total comp signals.

Role	p50 base	p75 base	Total comp signal (incl. equity / sign-on)
Prompt Engineer	\$175k	\$215k	+25-40% on top of base at senior tiers
AI Content Strategist	\$135k	\$165k	+10-20% on top of base
LLM Developer	\$195k	\$240k	+30-50% on top of base at senior tiers
Conv. AI Designer	\$145k	\$175k	+15-25% on top of base
AI Automation Specialist	\$135k	\$165k	+15-25% on top of base

SF Bay-specific signals to watch

- **The frontier-lab presence** (Anthropic, OpenAI in SF; Google in Mountain View) pulls all 5 roles ~10% above the rest of the Bay.
- **RSUs vest over 4 yrs** — total-comp signal is materially smoothed over a 4-year window.
- **Cost-of-living offsets** some of the premium — the “real” SF premium net of housing is closer to 15-20% than the headline 30%.
- **Remote roles often peg to SF Bay base** — even when you're working from another city, your home base may track Bay numbers if the employer is HQ'd here.

NYC DEEP-DIVE

City premium - NYC

NYC is the second-largest market for USA prompt-engineering hiring. The mix tilts toward banks, fintech, top-tier consulting and big SaaS — fewer frontier labs but more enterprise programs.

Role	p50 base	p75 base	Where the hiring concentrates
Prompt Engineer	\$168k	\$205k	Banks · fintech · top consulting
AI Content Strategist	\$128k	\$155k	Big media · SaaS · agencies
LLM Developer	\$185k	\$225k	Banks · fintech · trading firms
Conv. AI Designer	\$138k	\$168k	Retail banking · insurance · luxury
AI Automation Specialist	\$128k	\$155k	Banks · consulting · agencies

NYC-specific signals

- **Banks pay heavily in bonus + deferred comp.** Sometimes 30-50% of total comp arrives as bonus tranches, not base.
- **Consulting firms anchor differently.** Top-tier consulting bands look lower in base but include partner-track / profit-share that compounds.
- **Hybrid is the standard work mode.** Fewer fully-remote roles in NYC than SF; 3-day in-office is typical.
- **Cost-of-living is the highest in the country.** Real take-home is meaningfully lower than headline base suggests.

SEATTLE DEEP-DIVE

City premium - Seattle

Seattle anchors around big tech (Amazon, Microsoft) and a growing ecosystem of AI-first startups. Base salaries trail SF Bay by ~10-15% but total-comp through Amazon / Microsoft equity is close to parity at senior tiers.

Role	p50 base	p75 base	Where the hiring concentrates
Prompt Engineer	\$160k	\$195k	Amazon · Microsoft · AI-first startups
AI Content Strategist	\$120k	\$145k	Amazon · enterprise SaaS
LLM Developer	\$175k	\$215k	AWS · Azure · Microsoft AI
Conv. AI Designer	\$130k	\$158k	Amazon · big tech voice / chat
AI Automation Specialist	\$122k	\$148k	Microsoft · AWS · enterprise SaaS

Seattle-specific signals

- **Amazon & Microsoft account for the majority of senior roles.** Two-employer dominance.
- **No state income tax (Washington).** Adds ~9-13% to take-home compared to California.
- **RSU-heavy total comp.** 4-year vesting cliffs at Amazon; refresh grants at Microsoft compound after year 2.
- **Hybrid is the standard.** Most Big Tech employers in Seattle require 2-3 days in office.

AUSTIN DEEP-DIVE

City premium - Austin

Austin is the regional value-anchor of the four. Lower base salaries but materially lower cost-of-living — and no state income tax. Take-home parity with the higher cities is closer than headline base suggests.

Role	p50 base	p75 base	Where the hiring concentrates
Prompt Engineer	\$145k	\$175k	Tesla · Indeed · startups · remote-first
AI Content Strategist	\$108k	\$130k	SaaS · marketing tech · agencies
LLM Developer	\$158k	\$190k	Tesla · Indeed · IBM · startups
Conv. AI Designer	\$118k	\$140k	SaaS · ecommerce · ad tech
AI Automation Specialist	\$108k	\$130k	SaaS · agencies · ecommerce ops

Austin-specific signals + frontier-lab cross-reference

- **No state income tax (Texas).** Adds ~9-13% to take-home vs California-based roles.
- **Cost-of-living ~30% below SF Bay.** A \$145k Austin base buys more than a \$180k SF base after taxes and rent.
- **Remote-first employers often peg to Austin bands for non-HQ-city hires.** Negotiate against Austin if you're remote in TX.
- **Frontier-lab presence is minimal.** See pages 13-14 for frontier-lab comp at Anthropic, OpenAI, Google specifically.

HALF-PRICE CERTIFICATION

[50% OFF]

Same credential, same exam — at half the cost

All 17 modules, hands-on labs, the live cohort, sample exams and the recognized digital badge — at fifty percent off.

[Claim My 50% Discount →](#)

Tap anywhere on this card →

FRONTIER LABS

Frontier-lab total comp - Anthropic, OpenAI, Google

The frontier labs sit at the top of the public pay grid — but the gap is more visible in *total comp* than in base. Below: indicative bands for senior prompt-engineering roles at the three named labs.

Lab	Base (mid-senior)	Equity (4-yr vest)	Sign-on	Total comp signal
Anthropic	\$220-330k	\$300-700k+ (4-yr)	\$50-150k	Senior PE total ~\$400-700k+ yr 1-2
OpenAI	\$240-360k	PPU-based (large, illiquid)	\$50-200k	Senior PE total ~\$450-800k+ in liquidity windows
Google (DeepMind & Cloud)	\$210-310k	GSU grants (4-yr)	\$25-100k	Senior PE total ~\$350-600k yr 1-2

How to read frontier-lab comp: base alone *understates* these roles by 2-3x. Equity vests over 4 years; the “true” annual run-rate depends on the share-price trajectory or liquidity-window assumptions you make.

How frontier labs hire prompt engineers in 2026

- **Anthropic** hires from research and applied-AI populations; demonstrated eval rigor matters.
- **OpenAI** hires across applied research, alignment and developer-platform teams; prompt-craft + production sense.
- **Google** hires into DeepMind and Cloud AI separately; DeepMind leans research-heavy, Cloud leans enterprise-applied.

ROI MATH

ROI math - against the \$98K baseline

Many CPE candidates start near a \$98K baseline — the content-marketer, ops, or marketing tech salary at a mid-cap firm. Below: the math for moving into the prompt-engineering grid from that baseline.

Move	Target cell	p50 of target	Delta vs \$98K	Payback at half-price
AI Content Strategist · Austin	Row 2 / Col 4	\$108k	+\$10k	≤ 6 months
AI Content Strategist · NYC	Row 2 / Col 2	\$128k	+\$30k	≤ 3 months
Conv. AI Designer · Austin	Row 4 / Col 4	\$118k	+\$20k	≤ 4 months
Prompt Engineer · Austin	Row 1 / Col 4	\$145k	+\$47k	≤ 2 months
Prompt Engineer · NYC	Row 1 / Col 2	\$168k	+\$70k	≤ 2 months
Prompt Engineer · SF Bay	Row 1 / Col 1	\$175k	+\$77k	≤ 1 month
LLM Developer · SF Bay	Row 3 / Col 1	\$195k	+\$97k	≤ 1 month

How to read this: “payback” means how long it takes the salary uplift to cover the CPE investment at the current half-price bracket. The math is indicative — your actual payback depends on which cell you land in, on what schedule.

The honest framing for the \$98K reader

- **You don't have to move to SF to make the math work.** Even the Austin Content Strategist target pays back inside 6 months.
- **The biggest ROI moves are the Prompt Engineer / LLM Developer cells.** But they require a working capstone, not just the credential.
- **Stay realistic about percentile.** The math assumes p50 of the target cell. If you land at p25, payback stretches; at p75, it accelerates.

NEGOTIATION

The negotiation script

What to actually say. Below is the script readers consistently report works — drawn from negotiation coaching calls inside CPE.

Phase 1 - After the verbal offer

“Thank you so much for the offer — I’m really excited about this. I’d love some time to review the full package. Can we schedule a follow-up tomorrow?”

Why it works: Never accept on the call. The 24-hour pause gives you negotiating leverage and rarely costs you anything.

Phase 2 - The counter (email or call)

“Thank you again. After looking at the full package, I’d like to discuss the base salary. Glassdoor May 2026 puts the role-region median at [p50 from the grid] with the top quartile at [p75 from the grid]. Given my [credential] and [capstone outcome], I’d love to land closer to [target between p50 and p75]. Can we discuss?”

Why it works: Cites a specific data source, an honest tier, and a defensible target. Hiring managers respect framework-backed counters.

Phase 3 - The close

“I really appreciate you working with me on this. I’d like to accept. One favor: a start date [N] days out so I can transition responsibly.”

Why it works: Locks in the new offer with grace, and protects the goodwill you’ll need at your new firm.

The 3-line summary: never accept on the call · always counter with framework-backed data · close with goodwill. Most readers leave \$10-25k on the table by skipping the counter.

INTERVIEW PREP

Interview prep - per role

The questions you'll be asked — by role. Below: the highest-frequency questions for each of the 5 grid roles, plus the answer shape that lands.

Role	Top 2 questions you'll get	Answer shape
Prompt Engineer	(1) Walk through your capstone evals. (2) Compare 3 prompt patterns.	STAR + PASS frameworks · cite gold-set size and eval results.
AI Content Strategist	(1) How do you scale brand-voice with AI? (2) Show a content QA program.	Use Maya-style story arc (see Story brochure) · cite brand-voice eval rubric.
LLM Developer	(1) Design a RAG system for X. (2) Trade-off fine-tune vs prompt.	PASS for case round · name modules + tools by exact term.
Conv. AI Designer	(1) Walk a chat flow with fallback paths. (2) Persona / voice design rubric.	Show a flow diagram · cite escalation triggers · safety guardrails.
AI Automation Specialist	(1) Design an LLM-in-the-loop workflow. (2) Cost / latency trade-offs.	Reference Zapier / Make / n8n by name · cite cost budgeting.

OFFER VALID FOR 48 HOURS

[48 HOURS ONLY]

Your 50% offer expires in 48 hours

This discount bracket runs for 48 hours from the moment you opened the report. Don't let these bands stay theoretical.

Activate Offer Now →

Tap anywhere on this card →

MODULE MAP

CPE module map - per role

Each row of the 5x4 grid maps to a specific subset of the 17-module CPE syllabus. Below: the modules that move you the most for each of the 5 grid roles.

Role	Core modules (deep)	Important modules
Prompt Engineer	M01-M07, M09-M12, M16, M17	M08, M14
AI Content Strategist	M01-M05, M09, M11, M14, M17	M06, M12
LLM Developer	M01-M12, M15, M16, M17	M13, M14
Conv. AI Designer	M01-M05, M09, M11, M12, M13, M17	M14
AI Automation Specialist	M01-M03, M06-M09, M12, M15, M17	M14, M16

Modules every grid role needs

- **M01** · Prompt-engineering foundations — shared by all 5.
- **M03** · Zero-shot, few-shot & CoT patterns — shared by all 5.
- **M09** · Eval design · gold sets & rubrics — shared by all 5; the single biggest interview-winning module.
- **M11** · Hallucination, grounding & truthfulness — shared by all 5.
- **M17** · Capstone, exam prep & viva — shared by all 5; the deliverable that lands offers.

SYLLABUS

The 17-module CPE syllabus - part 1 of 2

Modules 1-9. Phase, key topics. The credential that moves you through the percentile bands on pages 5-6.

#	Module	Phase
M01	Prompt-engineering foundations	Foundations
M02	LLM capabilities & limits	Foundations
M03	Zero-shot, few-shot & CoT patterns	Core skills
M04	System prompts & persona design	Core skills
M05	Prompt template libraries & versioning	Core skills
M06	Structured outputs & JSON schemas	Core skills
M07	Function calling & tool use	Core skills
M08	RAG · retrieval & embeddings	Core skills
M09	Eval design · gold sets & rubrics	Core skills

How the modules translate into salary movement: Modules 1-9 are the foundational tier. Completing them clears p25 → p50 in your role-region cell. Modules 10-17 (next page) are what compound into p50 → p75.

SYLLABUS

The 17-module CPE syllabus - part 2 of 2

#	Module	Phase
M10	LLM-as-judge & automated evals	Core skills
M11	Hallucination, grounding & truthfulness	Core skills
M12	Safety, abuse & injection defence	Build & ship
M13	Conversational AI design patterns	Build & ship
M14	AI content strategy & QA	Build & ship
M15	Automation workflows (Zapier · Make · n8n)	Build & ship
M16	Cost, latency & production ops	Build & ship
M17	Capstone, exam prep & viva	Capstone

Where each phase shows up in salary movement

- **Foundations (M01-M02):** moves you from off-grid to p25 of your target cell.
- **Core skills (M03-M11):** moves you from p25 to p50.
- **Build & ship (M12-M16):** moves you from p50 to p75 — the band most CPE candidates land in on their first move.
- **Capstone (M17):** the artifact that hiring managers open in interviews. Single biggest interview-winning lever.

EXAM

Exam details

The CPE exam tests application across the 17 modules. Same exam regardless of which grid role you target — the credential moves with you across cells.

Item	Detail
Credential code	CPE · Certified Prompt Engineer
Format	Multiple-choice + scenario items + applied mini-case
Items	Approx. 70-90 items
Duration	Approx. 90-120 minutes
Open book	No · closed-book online proctored
Passing line	Set by GSDC psychometric review · communicated at booking
Retake policy	Retakes allowed per the GSDC retake policy
Validity	Lifetime credential · refresh recommended every 2 years
Recognition	Recognized in 100+ countries
Money-back	7-day money-back guarantee per the GSDC refund policy

How the exam draws from the grid

- **Cell-agnostic.** The exam is the same across all 5 grid rows — same items, same passing line.
- **Applied mini-case** is the section that lets hiring-managers later differentiate p50 candidates from p75 candidates.
- **Sample exam questions** appear in the sister Hiring Report brochure (pages 14-16 there).

PAYBACK INSIDE 1 REVIEW

[50% OFF]

A credential that pays back in the first review

The ROI math on page 14 shows payback inside the first salary review for most readers. The half-price window pulls it faster.

[See the ROI →](#)

Tap anywhere on this card →

CERTIFICATE

Sample certificate

Below is a stylised preview of the digital certificate issued on completion. The live certificate is dated, individually numbered, and accompanied by a verifiable digital badge you can share on LinkedIn, your CV and email signature.



Verification: every certificate is independently verifiable at gsdcouncil.org/verify using the credential ID printed on the certificate.

CHECKLIST

Printable salary-negotiation checklist

Print this page. Tick each box before your salary conversation — review, offer, or internal re-band. The bands on pages 5-6 translate into real numbers only when you've prepared.

Section A - Pick your cell

- I have identified my role (row 1-5 on the 5x4 grid).
- I have identified my region (col 1-4 on the 5x4 grid).
- I have noted my cell's p25 / p50 / p75 / p90.
- I have considered the city-premium notes on pages 9-12.

Section B - Identify your honest tier

- I know whether I'm a credentialed candidate (most readers underestimate this).
- I have a working capstone artifact ready to share by link.
- I have eval evidence (gold set / scores / outcomes) to point to.
- I have decided my honest tier (p25 / p50 / p75 / p90).

Section C - Set your target anchor

- I have set a target salary 5-10 above my honest tier.
- I know the source I will cite (Glassdoor May 2026 + this report).
- I have practiced the counter-script on page 15 out loud.
- I have decided my walk-away number.

Section D - The conversation itself

- I will not accept on the call (always 24-hour pause).
- I will counter (always, even if the offer is good).
- I will counter once — gracefully — not multiple times.
- I will close with a goodwill ask (start date / transition).

PITFALLS

Common pitfalls in a USA salary negotiation

Eight pitfalls account for the majority of left-on-the-table money in USA prompt-engineering offers. Memorize them — knowing each one in advance is half the protection.

Pitfall	How to avoid it
Anchoring at p25 by default	Be honest about your tier. The credential moves you to p50 — anchor there.
Citing the wrong city	If you're remote, anchor at your home city — not the employer HQ city.
Not citing the source	“Glassdoor May 2026 reports...” lands stronger than “I’ve seen...”
Accepting on the call	Always take 24 hours. Always.
Skipping the counter	Most readers leave \$10-25k on the table by not countering. Counter once.
Counter-countering	A second counter rarely yields more and risks relationship damage.
Ignoring total comp	Base alone understates frontier-lab and big-tech offers by 2-3x.
Forgetting the credential signal	“Certified Prompt Engineer” should appear in your LinkedIn headline before the conversation.

EMPLOYER VIEW

The employer view in 2026

Hiring teams set bands against the same Glassdoor data you're using. They look at where you sit within the cell — and how credibly you can defend your anchor.

Stage	What employers actually compute
Recruiter screen	Are you in the band? Yes / no. CPE credential clears the band-fit question.
First-pass band placement	Where in the cell? p25 / p50 / p75? Credentialed + capstone places you at p50-p75.
Technical / case round	Capstone evidence + eval rigor decides whether p50 or p75 is defensible.
Final / hiring-manager round	Cultural fit + level conviction · is this a p75 or p50 anchor? Decisive moment.
Offer drafting	HR partner runs the comp band; manager decides the percentile within it.
Counter negotiation	Most managers have +5-10% headroom on base. They use it for candidates who ask credibly.

REACH THE 90TH PERCENTILE

[50% OFF]

Move from the 50th to the 90th percentile

The bands compound. CPE-credentialed candidates consistently anchor in the top quartile of their role-region cell.

Reach the Top Quartile →

Tap anywhere on this card →

FAQ

Frequently asked questions

Question	Short answer
How were the percentile bands derived?	Glassdoor May 2026 USA postings triangulated and adjusted by employer tier and total-comp mix.
Are the bands guaranteed?	No. Bands are directional. Your actual offer depends on city, employer segment, and capstone strength.
What if I'm not in SF / NYC / Seattle / Austin?	Use the closest comparable city. Remote roles typically peg to home city, not HQ.
What about cities outside the four covered?	Roughly: Boston ≈ NYC; LA ≈ Seattle; Chicago / Atlanta ≈ Austin. Adjust ±10%.
Does the credential really move me 15-25 percentile points?	On average, yes — credential + capstone + practice. The credential alone moves you ~5-10 pts; the capstone is the larger lever.
What about contract / freelance day rates?	Anchor at p75 of your role-region cell ÷ 200 working days. Adjust for deliverable risk.
How does this compare to the Hiring Report?	Hiring Report = market view (4,200+ jobs · 30 employers). Salary Report = data-rich pay grid view. Both target the same credential.
What about the Maya story?	Maya R.'s 90-day narrative lives in the sister Story brochure — the individual journey, not the aggregate data.
What if I fail the exam?	Retakes allowed per the GSDC retake policy. Two sample exams + mock viva included.
What if the program isn't a fit?	GSDC offers a 7-day money-back guarantee per its refund policy.

FAMILY

Sister credentials & brochures

CPE has three brochures in the family. CPE itself is one credential in a wider GSDC AI credential family. Below: where to read next, depending on what you need.

Brochure	Identity	When to read
Salary Report (this brochure)	5x4 pay grid · 4 percentiles per cell · ROI math.	When you're anchoring an offer or planning your target band.
Hiring Report 2026	Aggregate market view: 4,200+ jobs · 9 role variants · 30 employers · 50+ interview questions.	When you're picking a role and building a shortlist.
The Prompt Engineer Story (Maya R.)	5-chapter narrative · 90-day journey · \$98K → \$142K.	When you want the individual journey, not the aggregate data.

Other GSDC AI credentials worth knowing

Credential	What it adds	Typical reader
CGAIP · Certified Generative AI Professional	Foundation generative-AI credential.	Anyone working with or around generative AI.
AAIPC · Certified Agentic AI Professional	Specialism: multi-step agents, tool surfaces, agent ops, safety.	Engineers / PMs on autonomous agentic systems.
CGAIPM · Generative AI in Project Management	Specialism: how PMs run projects with generative AI in the loop.	Project managers in any function.

GETTING STARTED

How to start this week

Five moves to take this week — even before you enroll — that line up your salary conversation around the grid.

Move	What you do	Time
1 · Pick your cell	Identify your role row (1-5) and region col (1-4) on the 5x4 grid.	10 min
2 · Note your percentiles	Write down p25 / p50 / p75 / p90 for your cell.	5 min
3 · Pick your honest tier	Where do you actually sit? Credentialed? Capstone? Eval evidence?	15 min
4 · Practice the counter-script (page 15)	Read it out loud. Replace the brackets with your numbers.	20 min
5 · Block your weekly study slot	5-7 hours per week for CPE over 8-10 weeks.	5 min

By the time you start Module 1, you already know your cell, your percentile anchor, and your counter-script. The program accelerates everything else.

NEXT COHORT INTAKE

[50% OFF]

Join the next CPE cohort intake

Daily live sessions, peer cohort, capstone shipped end-to-end. Move from report reader to enrolled candidate in under two minutes.

[Join the Next Cohort →](#)

Tap anywhere on this card →

ENROLLMENT

Step into the bands

You've read the 5x4 grid, the percentile primer, the city deep-dives, the frontier-lab comp, the ROI math, the negotiation script and the syllabus. The next step is starting Module 1. Access opens immediately; your cohort is assigned within 24 hours.

Step	What happens
1 · Click any CTA in this report	You land on the official CPE program page.
2 · Apply your offer at checkout	Your 50% discount is auto-applied within the offer window.
3 · Complete enrolment	Your access details, cohort schedule and mentor introduction arrive in your inbox.
4 · Start Module 1	Open the GSDC Live Studio and begin the 8-10 week pathway.

Direct contact

Program page: gsdcouncil.org/certification-program/ai-prompt-engineer-salary

Issuing body: Global Skill Development Council (GSDC)

Recognition: 100+ countries · 250,000+ certified

Credential code: CPE · Certified Prompt Engineer

globally recognized

[50% OFF]

A credential recognized in 100+ countries

USA hiring teams scan globally. Add a recognized GSDC credential to your LinkedIn, CV and recruiter screens — at half the standard fee.

[Get Certified Globally →](#)

Tap anywhere on this card →

Thank you for reading the USA Salary Report. We'll see you inside Module 1 — and, soon after, inside the upper percentiles of your own cell.