One useful task.

A practical beginner guide to working with AI

Start small

Choose one task you already understand. Drafting a short email, summarising fictional notes or outlining a page is a better starting point than asking AI to run an entire business.

Define a useful output

Write down who will use the result, what they need and the format. A useful output is something you can inspect and improve, not simply a long or confident answer.

Use non-sensitive material

Practise with fictional or public information. Do not enter passwords, customer records or confidential documents. Check your chosen tool’s current data settings before any real business use.

Try this

Task: outline a page for a fictional local bookshop. Reader: someone visiting for the first time. Output: five section headings, one sentence per section and a list of missing facts.

Your first checkpoint

Could you recognise a wrong answer? If not, choose a simpler task or involve someone who understands the subject. Keep important decisions with a person.

A clearer brief.

Give the answer something useful to work with

Use five ingredients

Task: what should it do? Reader: who is it for? Facts: what can it rely on? Constraints: what must it avoid? Format: what should the result look like?

A starting request

Write a product description for our notebook.

A more useful request

Using only these fictional facts - A5 notebook, dotted pages, recycled-card cover - write 60 words for first-time stationery buyers. Use plain language. Do not invent durability or sustainability claims. List missing facts after the description.

Ask for uncertainty

Add: If a needed fact is missing, flag it instead of guessing. This instruction helps express your expectation; it does not guarantee the model will comply.

Improve one thing at a time

If the result is too broad, narrow the task. If it misses the reader, name the reader more clearly. If it invents details, reduce the allowed source material and review every claim.

Check before you use it.

Treat the output as a draft, not proof

Check facts

Compare names, dates, amounts and product details with the source material. Open and verify any cited source. A plausible citation or confident sentence may still be wrong.

Check purpose

Does the result answer the reader’s actual question? Remove impressive-looking sections that do not help. Prefer a useful next step to a large list of vague suggestions.

Check missing information

For the fictional notebook, waterproof is an unsupported claim. Delete it unless the supplied evidence establishes it. Keep uncertainty visible rather than hiding it in polished copy.

Check consequences

Use qualified human review for legal, medical, financial, employment or other important decisions. This guide covers general practice, not professional advice or a guarantee of accuracy.

Try this

Underline every factual claim in your draft. Mark each as supported, missing evidence or unnecessary. Revise the last two groups before sharing the output.

Make the method repeatable.

A small workflow you can explain and review

Prepare

Choose one bounded task. Write your brief. Select only the facts needed. Decide who will review the output and what would count as a useful result.

Draft

Ask for the agreed format. Keep the first response as a working draft. Do not add automations, external tools or customer data merely because the interface offers them.

Review

Compare the answer with your facts, purpose and constraints. Make one focused change. Record what you changed and why; keep a person responsible for approval.

A simple practice plan

First attempt: use fictional bookshop notes. Second attempt: change the audience. Third attempt: tighten the format. Compare what changed and whether the result became more useful.

Your next question

What single task would you like to improve? What facts can you safely supply? What would a useful output look like? Who can check it? Bring that short brief to a SearchScale conversation.