7 Days to Make AI Useful

A beginner workbook for everyday life and small business

Start with one small task you already do. Use AI to make a draft, check it yourself and keep only what genuinely helps. You do not need to code, connect your accounts or buy another subscription to try these exercises.

What you will make

Over seven short sessions, you will create a clearer request, a realistic plan, an options comparison, a message draft, a learning exercise, a checklist and one reusable routine.

How to use this workbook

Do one exercise a day, or move at your own pace. Copy the prompt, replace the bracketed details and review the result. Use fictional or non-sensitive information while learning.

Your first goal

Choose something low-stakes and easy to check. A household checklist or a draft appointment enquiry is a better first experiment than a medical, financial or legal decision.

One repetitive task I would like help with

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Before you begin

Keep the useful help and keep control

An AI chat tool can produce explanations, plans and drafts. A draft in a chat has not booked an appointment, sent a message or changed your calendar. Tools that can take actions need separate setup and permission; this workbook does not require them.

Set up a safe first session

- Use an AI tool you already have access to. Check its current privacy controls and whether your employer permits the intended use.
- Leave out passwords, access codes, identification numbers and payment details. Replace real names, addresses and customer details with placeholders.
- Do not paste private information about children, patients, clients or colleagues. Anonymizing a name alone may not remove identifying details.
- Keep your source notes. You need something reliable to compare with the answer.

Use this review loop

Ask → read → check → revise → decide. AI can sound confident while being wrong. Asking it to check itself is useful, but is not independent verification.

For changing facts, open the original source and check its date. For money, health, law or safety, consult the relevant authoritative source or qualified professional before acting.

My safe practice task and the information I will leave out

Day 1 Ask for one useful result

Give the task enough context to be workable

A vague request leaves the tool guessing. Tell it what you need, the limits that matter and the format you can use. You can improve the answer in a second message; you do not need a perfect first prompt.

Try this prompt

Help me make a checklist for [one ordinary task]. My situation is [brief non-sensitive context]. Keep it within [time, budget or other limit]. Give me [number] clear steps in the order I should do them. Ask up to two questions if a missing detail would change the answer. Do not invent facts about my situation.

Worked example

“Help me prepare for a weekend craft market. I sell handmade cards and have one table. Give me a packing checklist grouped into stock, display and payments. Flag anything I need to confirm with the organizer.”

If the answer assumes an outdoor event, correct it: “This is indoors. Remove weather equipment and add a reminder to confirm table dimensions.” The useful result is a revised checklist, not a longer answer.

Check before using

- Does it fit the actual task and limits? Remove steps that do not apply.
- Which details came from you, and which were assumptions? Confirm the assumptions that matter.

One detail I added that made the answer better

Day 2 Make a realistic plan

Use AI to organize your choices without overfilling the day

Write down the tasks and time windows you already know. Ask for a draft plan, then compare it with your real calendar. Do not include private appointment details; “appointment” is enough for a practice plan.

Try this prompt

Create a draft plan for [day or week] using only these tasks: [list]. Fixed commitments are [non-sensitive time blocks]. Available time is [windows]. Prioritize [one goal]. Include breaks and travel/setup time where I specify it. If everything will not fit, show what to defer. Do not create calendar events.

Worked example

“Saturday: groceries, laundry and prepare a market display. I have 9–11 a.m. and 2–4 p.m. Grocery travel takes 30 minutes total. The display matters most. Leave half an hour unallocated.”

A plausible plan still needs checking. If it gives you two hours of errands in a one-hour window, ask it to show the arithmetic and remove a task. Recalculate the final schedule yourself.

Check before using

- Verify durations, opening hours and travel assumptions separately.
- Keep room for interruptions. Move accepted items into your calendar yourself.

One task I will defer rather than squeeze in

Day 3 Compare without guessing

Turn verified facts into a clearer decision

AI can organize a comparison, but missing facts should stay missing. Start with two or three options and the criteria that matter to you. Supply public product details or your own non-sensitive notes.

Try this prompt

Compare [options] using only the facts below: [facts and sources]. My must-haves are [criteria]. Make a table with each option, its fit, trade-offs and missing information. Mark unknowns explicitly. Do not invent prices, features or availability. End with the questions I should answer before deciding.

Worked example

Fictional planning example: Venue A costs $40 and includes a table; Venue B costs $25 and requires your own. Both have the same event hours. You need step-free access, but neither listing confirms it.

A good comparison flags access as unknown and includes the cost of bringing a table. It should not conclude that the cheaper booking is best before those gaps are resolved.

Check before using

- Open current official listings to verify price, availability, accessibility and cancellation terms.
- Check totals yourself. Do not let a tidy table hide missing fees or a failed must-have.

The unanswered question that could change my choice

Day 4 Draft a message you would send

Get help with wording without adding promises

Use AI to turn your points into a clear message. Keep names and private details out of the practice version. The goal is to sound like you and say what you mean, not to make the message impressive.

Try this prompt

Draft a [short email or text] to [recipient role]. My purpose is [purpose]. Include only these facts: [points]. Use a [plain, friendly or professional] tone and stay under [length]. Do not add promises, prices, deadlines or explanations I have not supplied. Leave placeholders for missing details. This is a draft only.

Worked example

“Draft a short email to a venue organizer asking whether a table is included and whether the entrance is step-free. Say I am considering booking, not that I have booked. Do not include personal information.”

Read it aloud. Replace phrases you would never use. If it says “I look forward to attending,” change that if you have not decided to attend.

Check before sending

- Confirm the recipient, facts, attachments and any implied commitment.
- For complaints, contracts or sensitive relationships, review carefully rather than sending the first draft.

A phrase I changed to make the message sound like me

Day 5 Learn something you can test

Ask for an explanation and then try a small exercise

Choose a low-risk skill, such as spreadsheet sorting, writing clearer instructions or understanding a new term. Ask for a small example and a way to check your understanding. You learn more by attempting the exercise than by collecting explanations.

Try this prompt

Teach me [topic] at a beginner level. Explain the key idea in plain language, show one small example and give me one practice task. Wait for my answer before showing the solution. Point out common mistakes. If the steps depend on a software version, ask which version I use instead of guessing.

Worked example

“Explain the difference between sorting and filtering a spreadsheet. Use a fictional list of five products. Give me a question that checks whether I understand the difference.”

Answer in your own words. Then ask: “Which part of my explanation is wrong or incomplete?” For software instructions, compare the answer with the product’s current official help before making important changes.

Check before relying on it

- Test on a copy or fictional example, not your only business file.
- Explain the idea without the chat. If you cannot, request a simpler example.

The idea in my own words

Day 6 Turn a routine into a checklist

Capture a process you already understand

Choose a routine you do yourself, such as packing orders or preparing a weekly update. Write rough steps from experience. Ask AI to organize them, but do not let it invent a company policy or a safety procedure.

Try this prompt

Turn these rough notes into a checklist for [routine]: [non-sensitive notes]. Keep the steps in a sensible order. Separate required steps from optional ideas. Mark missing decisions as questions. Add a final review step. Do not invent policies, approval powers or safety instructions.

Worked example

“For a craft order: check the item, compare it with the order note, package it, check the delivery label, record dispatch. Use fictional customer details. Add questions where my notes are incomplete.”

Try the checklist once yourself. You may discover that checking the address belongs before printing the label. Correct the saved checklist based on what actually happened.

Check before sharing

- Confirm each step with the person responsible for the process.
- Keep customer data out of the reusable template. Review shipping or other changing rules at the original source.

One step the first real trial showed I needed to change

Day 7 Keep one routine that works

Choose a useful repeatable task before exploring automation

Look back at the week. Keep the exercise that produced a result you could check and actually use. A reusable prompt may be all you need. Connecting accounts or deploying an agent is a separate decision, not a requirement for success.

Try this prompt

Help me turn this tested task into a reusable routine: [task]. The input is [what I provide]. The output is [what I need]. I will check [facts and risks] before using it. Make a reusable prompt with placeholders and a short review checklist. Flag any step that would need access to accounts or permission to take action.

Write your routine card

When I will use this routine

What I provide and what I expect back

What I will verify before using the result

Keep or drop

Try it again with a different example. If checking and correcting it takes more effort than doing the task yourself, simplify it or choose another task. Keep a manual fallback. Do not automate a process you cannot yet explain or review.

Your reusable AI checklist

Keep this page beside your next conversation

A prompt you can adapt

Help me with [task]. Here is the relevant context: [details]. Work within [limits]. Give me [format]. Use only [sources or supplied facts] where needed. Ask about important gaps; label assumptions and unknowns. Do not take actions or make commitments. I will review the result.

Before you paste

- Is this an appropriate low-risk task? Am I allowed to use this information here?
- Have I removed secrets, private records and unnecessary personal details?

Before you use the answer

- Does it answer the actual question and respect my limits?
- Have I verified important facts, calculations, dates and links outside the AI answer?
- Have I checked for invented commitments and decided what to do myself?

When to stop

Stop if the tool needs information you should not share, produces claims you cannot verify, or asks you to weaken security. For high-stakes decisions, use qualified help and authoritative information rather than treating the chat as the decision-maker.

You have finished the workbook when you have one useful routine you can explain, check and repeat. Keep improving it from real results.

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