PROMPT CRAFT

Image prompts

Subject, framing, optics and the light that decides whether it reads as a photograph or as a render.

HOW TO USE THIS

Five habits that do most of the work

- Work down the aspects in order. The order is the recommended order in the prompt too.
- One clause per aspect. A prompt is a list of decisions, not a paragraph of atmosphere.
- Prefer a number over an adjective wherever a number exists: 116 BPM over upbeat, 85mm over flattering, 15 seconds over short.
- Put the negatives last, in one sentence beginning with No.
- Reuse the identical phrasing across a batch. Paraphrasing is what makes a set of images look unrelated.

THE ORDER

Work down these, in this order

The order below is also the order that works inside the prompt itself. Each one is a decision; state it in one clause.

- Aspect ratio, Medium and style, Shot size, Camera angle
- Composition and framing, Lens and focal length, Depth of field, Lighting
- Colour and palette, Materials and finish, Background, Mood
- Text handling

ASPECT 1 OF 26

Aspect ratio

Choose it first. Composition instructions that assume a landscape frame fall apart in a vertical one.

Vocabulary	16:9, 9:16, 1:1, 4:5, 21:9, 3:2, 4:3
Phrases that work	Square 1:1.
	Vertical 4:5 for a feed post.
	Wide 16:9 with the subject offset left.

ASPECT 2 OF 26

Medium and style

Ambiguity here produces the uncanny middle ground that looks like neither a photo nor an illustration.

Vocabulary	cinematic, photorealistic, documentary, anime, 3d render, line art, watercolor, vector, 16mm, 35mm film
Phrases that work	Photorealistic editorial photograph.
	Clean 3D product render on a seamless backdrop.
	Flat vector illustration, limited palette, no gradients.

ASPECT 3 OF 26

Shot size

Same lever as in video and just as reliable. It also controls how much detail the model has to invent.

Vocabulary	close-up, wide shot, medium shot, extreme close-up, two-shot, closeup, over-the-shoulder, establishing shot, macro shot, full shot
Phrases that work	Extreme close-up, texture filling the frame.
	Full body shot, head to feet, room above and below.
	Head and shoulders portrait.

ASPECT 4 OF 26

Camera angle

Viewing position.

Vocabulary	three-quarter, profile, eye-level, low angle, overhead, high angle, top-down, bird's-eye, dutch angle
Phrases that work	Three-quarter view, turned slightly off axis.
	Straight-on profile, subject facing frame left.
	Shot from directly above, flat lay.

ASPECT 5 OF 26

Composition and framing

Explicit composition instructions, including what must stay fully visible, fix it.

Vocabulary	close-up, wide shot, medium shot, extreme close-up, two-shot, closeup, over-the-shoulder, establishing shot, macro shot, full shot
Phrases that work	Centred on a single vertical axis, symmetrical.
	Rule of thirds, subject on the right third, negative space left.
	Everything fully inside the frame, nothing cropped at the edges.

ASPECT 6 OF 26

Lens and focal length

Also the cheapest way to signal photographic realism, because a real photograph was taken at some focal length.

Vocabulary	35mm, 85mm, 50mm, 110 mm, 16mm, anamorphic, 24mm, 70mm, 48mm, fisheye
Phrases that work	85mm portrait lens, natural compression.
	35mm, mild environmental context around the subject.
	Macro at life size, the surface reading as landscape.

ASPECT 7 OF 26

Depth of field

Separates a subject from clutter you did not describe, which is most backgrounds.

Vocabulary	shallow depth of field, bokeh, f/1.4, f/7.1, soft focus, f/2.8, deep focus, f/2.0, f/4, f/2
Phrases that work	Shallow depth of field at f/1.8, background soft.
	Everything sharp front to back, deep focus.
	Only the eyes critically sharp.

ASPECT 8 OF 26

Lighting

Direction, quality and source of light.

Vocabulary	silhouette, rim light, soft light, soft lighting, backlit, key light, golden hour, high-key, rim lighting, backlight
Phrases that work	Large softbox front left, soft shadows falling right.
	Backlit into silhouette, subject dark against a bright field.
	High-key, white on white, almost no shadow.

ASPECT 9 OF 26

Colour and palette

Keeps a set consistent. Reuse the identical phrase across a batch rather than paraphrasing it each time.

Vocabulary	vibrant, pastel, film grain, black-and-white, desaturated, high contrast, natural color, natural colour, monochrome, low contrast
Phrases that work	Vibrant, fully saturated, clean whites.
	Muted pastel palette, soft contrast.
	Black and white, deep blacks, bright highlights.

ASPECT 10 OF 26

Materials and finish

Materials are where a render either convinces or does not. Naming the finish is more effective than naming the object.

Vocabulary	glossy, matte, ceramic, concrete, leather, velvet, satin, brass, linen, frosted
Phrases that work	Brushed metal with a satin finish, no mirror reflections.
	Matte ceramic, slightly uneven glaze.
	Smoked glass over dark walnut.

ASPECT 11 OF 26

Background

An undescribed background is where models put clutter, text and logos.

Phrases that work

Seamless mid-grey studio backdrop, no horizon line.

Plain white, no props, no shadow on the background.

Softly blurred interior, unreadable, no recognisable objects.

ASPECT 12 OF 26

Mood

One adjective, placed early, quietly resolves dozens of choices in a consistent direction.

Vocabulary	elegant, playful, minimal, dramatic, calm, energetic, whimsical, moody, luxurious, nostalgic
Phrases that work	Elegant and restrained.
	Playful and bright.
	Moody, close to darkness.

ASPECT 13 OF 26

Text handling

Models add text nobody asked for.

Phrases that work

No text, no lettering, no numbers anywhere in the image.

No logos, watermarks, captions, borders or frames.

Leave the upper third clear for a headline added later.

ASPECT 14 OF 26

Subject + setting + style (the opening clause)

Treat it as practice worth copying, not as a count.

Vocabulary	a red fox curled in a snowy pine forest, golden hour, cinematic, subject + action, concrete and physical
Phrases that work	a red fox curled in a snowy pine forest, golden hour, cinematic
	a film editor in a bold red bomber jacket mid-leap, cutting a giant arc of 35mm film with oversized chrome scissors

ASPECT 15 OF 26

Typography named in the prompt (when text is generated)

Treat it as practice worth copying, not as a count.

Vocabulary	Anton, Anton SC, Bebas Neue, Oswald, Archivo Black, Montserrat, Poppins, Roboto Condensed, Inter, Barlow Condensed
Phrases that work	The prompt must state: Exact literal copy; Display/body font family names and which text uses each
	Name the exact display/body families in the prompt; never infer typography from the logo or palette.

ASPECT 16 OF 26

Identity lock / subject fidelity

Treat it as practice worth copying, not as a count.

Vocabulary

IDENTITY LOCK, photographic identity match, same bone structure, eye shape, nose, lips, jawline, skin tone, hairline and hair texture, Do not beautify, average, or restyle the face, IMAGE

Phrases that work

CHARACTER N: the person from attached face reference #K, IDENTITY LOCK: reproduce this exact person with a photographic identity match, same bone structure, eye shape, nose, lips,

IMAGE REFERENCES: image 1 = CHARACTER 1 face reference; image 2 = brand logo.

All faces crisply sharp as the anchors of the shot.

ASPECT 17 OF 26

Aesthetic / seasonal preset

Treat it as practice worth copying, not as a count.

Vocabulary	Clean girl, Cottagecore, Quiet luxury, Dark academia, Y2K, Christmas, Valentine's, Halloween, Black Friday, None
Phrases that work	Christmas version, quiet-luxury aesthetic
	vertical pin for my candle brand, cottagecore mood

ASPECT 18 OF 26

Product-photo genre / mode

Treat it as practice worth copying, not as a count.

Vocabulary	restyle, levitating, floating, splash, frozen motion, surreal, CGI, sculptural, infographic, lifestyle
Phrases that work	bottle of cold-brew on a sunlit kitchen counter, IG feed
	sparkling peach lemonade can for marketplace listing
	premium skincare serum, clean clinical marketplace visual system

ASPECT 19 OF 26

Logo / vector mark specification

Treat it as practice worth copying, not as a count.

Vocabulary	pictorial, abstract, mascot, emblem, one dominant unified silhouette, negative-space device, motif treatment, unexpected locked color-role pairing, symmetry or intentional asymmetry,
Phrases that work	Flat vector design, clean lines, no shadows, no texture, no text. Clean editable vector paths, SVG-friendly, minimal anchor points.
	Monoline vector design, uniform stroke weight, rounded line caps, no fills, no shadows, no texture, no text. Clean editable vector paths, SVG-friendly, minimal anchor points.
	Flat vector design with the specified locked vector gradient, no shadows, no texture, no text. Clean editable vector paths, SVG-friendly, minimal anchor points.

ASPECT 20 OF 26

Logo placement on a mockup surface

Treat it as practice worth copying, not as a count.

Vocabulary

Target surface, Position, Scale, Orientation, Color, horizontally centered, upper third, optical center aligned to panel, clear-space margin, align to <panel edge/seam/baseline>

Phrases that work

[PLACEMENT LOCK] Target surface: <exact object panel/face/material>. Position: <exact alignment and location, e.g. horizontally centered, upper third, optical center aligned to panel>.

[AUTHORITATIVE LOGO] <ImageN> is the exact approved <full-color/black/white> logo. Preserve its spelling, silhouette, geometry, proportions, internal negative space, and exact color.

"Place the logo on the bag/box" is insufficient.

ASPECT 21 OF 26

Seamless / tileable behaviour

Treat it as practice worth copying, not as a count.

Vocabulary	seamless tileable game texture tile, uniform pattern density, perfectly seamless edges that wrap horizontally and vertically, no border, no vignette, no single focal object, photographed-flat
Phrases that work	seamless tileable game texture tile of <description>, uniform pattern density,
	, perfectly seamless edges that wrap horizontally and vertically, no border, no vignette, flat even lighting, no single focal object
	seamless tileable surface texture of <description>,

ASPECT 22 OF 26

Key colour for transparency

Treat it as practice worth copying, not as a count.

Vocabulary	bright magenta #FF00FF, bright green #00FF00, bright blue #0000FF
Phrases that work	on a solid uniform bright <KEY COLOR> background, crisp edges, no drop shadow outside the element
	Clean uniform <key color> background.

ASPECT 23 OF 26

Reference-image role and what it controls

Treat it as practice worth copying, not as a count.

Vocabulary

style donors only, Image0, Image1, Image2, official logo, approved base scene, style-reference, representative-visual, grade/energy only

Phrases that work

Make an Animated Explainer. Take only the visual render style and color grading of the input image(s); mix the styles if there is more than one image. Never use the characters, inscriptions,

Use references as style donors only. Never copy their people, text, logos, or objects.

Label references by role in prompts: `Image 1: official logo`, `Image 2: approved base scene`.

ASPECT 24 OF 26

Design-board direction vocabulary (web/layout imagery)

Treat it as practice worth copying, not as a count.

Vocabulary	Pristine Light (paper/cream/off-white, dark ink), Deep Dark (charcoal/graphite), Bold Studio Solid (oxblood, royal blue, forest, vermilion, emerald fields), Quiet Premium Neutral (bone,
Phrases that work	"website design mockup, desktop landing page section, [SECTION ROLE], [theme paradigm + exact palette words], [typography character] typography, [hero architecture / composition
	Name real content in the prompt (the actual headline wording you plan) so type sits believably.

ASPECT 25 OF 26

Reference photos for identity training

Treat it as practice worth copying, not as a count.

Vocabulary	front, 3/4 left, 3/4 right, slight up/down, indoor, outdoor, soft, harsh, neutral, smiling
Phrases that work	Higher variety = better identity capture.

ASPECT 26 OF 26

Image-to-3D input framing

Treat it as practice worth copying, not as a count.

Vocabulary	t-pose, a-pose, Full body in frame, nothing cut off, Clean/plain background, Limbs visually separated from the torso, One character, no props overlapping the silhouette, lowpoly,
Phrases that work	Full body in frame, nothing cut off.
	Clean/plain background; no shadows, text, watermarks, logos.
	Limbs visually separated from the torso (arms not pressed to the body), fused silhouettes produce fused geometry and break auto-rig.

NEGATIVES

Say what you want, not what you don't

Most media models expose no separate negative field, so a banned word is still a word in the prompt. Keep the list short and aimed at the failure you actually see.

- Text and branding: text, logos, captions, watermark, watermarks, logo, labels
- Anatomy and faces: hands, arms, extra people, extra characters
- Frame artefacts: frame, border, mockup
- Content and safety: scary elements, weapons prominently displayed
- Style and clutter: people, props
- Other: overlays, slogan, letters, sunglasses, dramatic pose, helmet, police department names, cinematic color grading

Read the rest online

The web pages are the version that gets corrected. A sheet printed six months ago has not moved.

Cinematic language: lenses, film stocks, lighting and mood recipes.

Every measurement on the site carries the date it was read.

shotcraft.video/prompts/image/