

How to C.R.E.A.T.E. Effective AI Prompts

This framework was developed by Logann Todd in the 2025-2026 NCDA AI Taskforce with the assistance of AI tools, reflecting a collaborative approach between human expertise and AI-driven content generation. (Created February 2026) - <https://ncda.org/aws/NCDA/pt/sp/ai-resources>

Think of AI prompting as coaching the tool, not commanding it. The CREATE framework is a practical method for designing high-quality and effective prompts that produce more accurate, relevant, and responsible AI outputs. For career development professionals, CREATE also serves as a reflection tool for assessing AI results and ensuring they align with professional standards, client needs, and ethical practice.

C – Character

- Assign a clear role or professional identity to the AI (e.g., career coach, hiring manager, resume writer, labor market analyst).
- Choose roles that reflect real professionals in your field.
- Avoid overly authoritative roles (e.g., "ultimate expert") that may discourage critical thinking.

R - Request

- Clearly state what you want the AI to do - analyze, generate, compare, summarize, rewrite, simulate, etc.
- Consider uploading or copying and pasting relevant documents (omitting personal info)
- Use action verbs: analyze, identify, draft, compare, design.
- Try limiting each prompt to one main task.
- If the output feels off, rewrite the request, not the whole prompt.

E – Example

- Guide tone, audience, or style, and when possible, include sample expectations.
- Using examples can reduce misinterpretation, inappropriate tone, and mismatches in knowledge level.
- This is especially important when working with: first-gen students, career changers, international students, sensitive topics (identity, confidence, failure), etc.
- Specify tone when possible (supportive, professional, strengths-based, neutral) and name the audience (undergraduate, adult learner, executive).

A - Adjust

- AI prompting is iterative, and the first output is rarely the final one.
- This step reinforces that AI is not an authority; career development professionals and/or clients remain the decision-makers, and critical thinking is essential.
- Treat outputs as drafts, not answers, and model revision with clients where possible.
- Use follow-up prompts like:
 - "Make this more concise."
 - "Focus on transferable skills."
 - "Adapt this for an international student."

T - Type

- Specify how information should be delivered: table, bullets, outline, script, length, etc.
- Structure can impact usability, accessibility, and cognitive load for clients.
- Good formatting makes AI outputs advising-ready.

- Use tables for comparisons and bullets for action steps.
- Limit the length for overwhelmed clients.

E – Extras

- This is the most important step for professional practice, as it's where you can address bias, prevent over-reliance, and reinforce ethical decision-making through constraints, reflection prompts, or verification steps.
- Prompt extras could include:
 - "Highlight assumptions."
 - "Note limitations."
 - "Provide alternative options."
 - "Explain your reasoning."
- "Cite where this may not apply."