

AI Prompt Quick-Start Guide for Childcare Owners & Directors

Welcome to Your New "Personal Assistant"

This guide is designed for childcare directors who are curious about AI but aren't sure where to begin. Whether you need to write a tricky email, draft a staff memo, or brainstorm a newsletter, AI will save you hours of "staring at a blank page" if you learn the basics.

The Best Part? You don't need to be tech-savvy to begin. If you can type a message, you can use AI.

Note: Director Zen is not a paid promoter of ChatGPT. There are many other AI tools, such as Google Gemini, that are incredible as well. We are simply sharing the tools that have given us our time back!

Can AI Really Help Childcare Leaders?

If you haven't read our article: *More Time, Better Leadership: The Practical Power of AI*, we suggest you reading that first. It gives you some of the main ways using AI it can help save precious time—and saving that time allows you to be more present at your facility for your staff, children, and families.

For this article, we will stick to the basics, including 10 simple prompts to begin testing followed by more complex prompts you can customize.

Think of ChatGPT like having a dedicated personal assistant! But unlike humans, this assistant doesn't get sick, need breaks, or get frustrated when you ask it to "try again". To be honest, sometimes I feel guilty asking ChatGPT to "try again". We are conditioned to not overburden our staff. But with ChatGPT you don't have to be concerned!

How ChatGPT Conversations Work (Beginner-Friendly)

When you use ChatGPT, you're having a "conversation" with the AI. Think of each conversation as a running thread — the tool remembers what you've already told it during that session and uses that information to give more accurate, connected responses.

If you keep asking questions or giving prompts in the **same conversation**, ChatGPT will remember the context, tone, and details you've already shared. This is helpful when

you're working on a project, drafting multiple related emails, or building on earlier responses.

Sometimes, you'll want to **start a new conversation** — for example, when you begin a completely different topic, or if the conversation has gotten long and you want a “fresh start” without past context.

Simple Steps to Use ChatGPT:

1. Open ChatGPT and start a new conversation (or select an existing one if you're continuing work).
2. Copy and paste a prompt from this guide.
3. Add any extra details — like names, dates, policies, or tone — to make the result more personalized.
4. Review the AI's draft and, if needed, ask it to make changes (“Can you make this warmer?” or “Add more detail here”).
5. Save or copy the final version for your use.

Pro Tip: If you find a prompt you really like, save it in a document or notes app. You can use it again and tweak it for different situations.

Final Tips for Using AI Well

You don't need to be perfect with prompts. The more you experiment, the better your results will get.

Here are a few tips to grow your skills and get more from the tool:

- **Practice Makes Progress:** The more you "talk" to the tool, the better it gets at sounding like you.
- **Ask follow-up questions.** If you don't love the first draft, ask AI to revise it: “Can you make this sound more supportive?” or “Add a little more detail.”
- **Reuse and refine.** Save prompts you like. You can build a personal prompt library for yourself or your center.
- **Layer your context.** Including names, background, or center policies helps the tool sound more like *you*.
- **The "80/20" Rule:** AI gets you 80% of the way there. **You** provide the final 20%—the personal touch and the final approval.
- **Human-in-the-Loop:** Always proofread! AI is a helper, but it's not human. Double-check your dates and names before hitting send.

Most importantly, don't overthink it. Type in what you'd say to a helpful assistant—and let the tool do the heavy lifting.

10 Email Prompts to Test (Simply Copy and Paste)

Remember, the clearer and more specific your prompt, the more useful and accurate the result will be.

Here's a quick comparison to show the difference between a basic and a detailed prompt:

Basic Prompt:

Write an email to a parent about a late payment.

Result:

Hello,

This is a reminder that your payment is late. Please submit it as soon as possible.

Thank you.

Detailed Prompt:

Write a professional and respectful email to a parent whose payment is late. Keep it calm, warm, and direct. Mention the due date, provide a link to the payment portal, and invite them to reach out if they need help.

Result:

Subject: Friendly Reminder: Tuition Payment Due

Hi [Parent Name],

I hope you're doing well. I wanted to gently remind you that your tuition payment for [Month] was due on [Due Date]. You can complete your payment using our portal here: [Link].

If you've already submitted payment, please disregard this message. And if there's anything we can assist you with, don't hesitate to reach out—we're here to help.

Warmly,

[Your Name]

See the difference? Adding a little context helps AI give you a much better draft.

Let's start with some prompts you can use to test the capability of ChatGPT or Gemini. I am convinced, that once you try it, you will never go back!

1. **Respond to a Parent Concern**

Prompt (Copy & Paste below):

Write a professional email response to a parent who is concerned about their child being picked on at school. Acknowledge the parent's concern, express

empathy, and explain any steps we've taken or plan to take.

2. Payment Reminder Email

Prompt (Copy & Paste below):

Write a polite and kind reminder email to a parent, Jane Doe, regarding a missed tuition payment. The email should state that the due date was July 1 and note that a \$20 late payment fee has been added. Include payment options of credit card or EFT (Electronic Funds Transfer). Remind the parent of the tuition policy: "If tuition is not paid by the due date, a \$20 late fee will be assessed. Payments that are more than 10 days late will be subject to care suspension." Invite the parent to set up a potential payment plan if needed, including instructions to call or email the facility director for more information.

3. Staff Meeting Invitation Email

Prompt (Copy & Paste below):

Write a clear, friendly email inviting staff to a meeting next Friday at 7:00 PM. The email should state that the reason for the meeting is our mandatory monthly staff meeting and that it will be held in our PreK room. Since attendance is required, note that staff will be paid for their time. Use a warm, encouraging, and professional tone, and include an invitation for staff to come alert and ready to network and brainstorm ways we can improve our center's experience.

4. Parent Letter Email Regarding an Administrative Change

Prompt (Copy & Paste below):

Write a email to parents and staff about a change in administration. This is a sensitive change, so please create it with great care, ensuring each paragraph is thoughtful and well-crafted.

*The change is regarding **Jane Doe**, who is being promoted to the position of **Facility Director**. Jane has been our Assistant Director since January 2022 and is highly qualified for the job, including the required ECE units and tenure per our State's licensing requirements.*

Please also highlight Jane's other qualities that make her well-prepared for this role—such as her friendly personality, popularity with children and parents, and her ability to work well with others. The memo should sound very congratulatory for Jane.

*The existing director, **Sarah Doe**, who has served in that role since August 2013, is moving on to a new opportunity. The letter should thank her for her hard work,*

dedication, and the positive impact she has had on our program.

5. Follow-Up After a Staff Conversation Email

Prompt (Copy & Paste below):

Write a follow-up email to a staff member, Jane Doe, regarding a conversation held today about playground supervision. The conversation addressed Jane using her phone during playground time, which poses a distraction to supervision. Include in the email the importance of being alert and proactive—such as proper positioning to view all children in care and actively supervising to prevent incidents. Reference the company policy that prohibits cell phone use during supervision as it can distract from active supervision. Confirm the expectations discussed (active supervision and no distractions) and outline the next steps, including the possibility of suspension or termination for future occurrences.

6. Welcome Email to a New Family

Prompt (Copy & Paste below):

Write a warm welcome email to a new family joining our child care center, Jane Doe Preschool. Include the start date (September 2), what to bring (a change of clothes in a ziplock baggie with the child's name, a small blanket for nap, and a lunch container with its own cold source), arrival time (8:15 a.m. drop-off time), and key staff contacts (Facility: (111) 111-1111, Director: Jane Doe, Head Teacher: Miss Jeany, Assistant Teacher: Miss Tammy). Include the pick-up time (open until 6:00 p.m.) and a section on what to expect on the first day, including guidance on what to do if the child is having a hard time separating from the parent at drop-off. End with a warm note expressing excitement to have them join the program.

7. Late Pick-Up Notification

Prompt (Copy & Paste below):

Write a respectful and professional email to a parent who has had multiple late pick-ups. Mention our policy that failure to pick up after 6:30 p.m. will result in a \$1 per minute fee, which goes directly to the staff supervising the child after closing, and that more than three late pick-ups is subject to termination of care. Include the reason for the policy—our program is licensed until 6:30 p.m.—and the secondary reason that staff working after closing often have other commitments, such as family or school. Use a tone that shows empathy and understanding while clearly communicating the importance of following the policy.

8. Staff Document or Certification Request

Prompt (Copy & Paste below):

Write a professional reminder email to a staff member (John Doe) requesting updated documentation for their CPR certification by Friday, October 4, 2024, as the current certification expires that day. Thank them for helping the program stay compliant with licensing regulations and offer support if needed to help them find a qualifying CPR course.

9. Positive Feedback to Staff

Prompt (Copy & Paste below):

Write a kind email to a staff member who handled a sensitive situation with care and professionalism. Mention what they did well, such as helping an upset parent whose child lost their sweatshirt at school, and how it helped—for example, noting that their smile, patience, and professionalism turned an escalated situation into a calm one and ultimately led to finding the child's sweatshirt.

10. Explain a Policy to a Parent

Prompt (Copy & Paste below):

Write an email to a parent who is questioning our illness policy. She wants to know why her son cannot return to the center until he has been fever-free for at least 24 hours without fever-reducing medication. Use simple, respectful language that shows kindness and compassion. Clearly explain the policy, why it exists, and how it benefits both the child and the overall health of the center.

AI Prompts for Childcare Directors

How to Use These Prompts (Beginner-Friendly)

Each prompt below includes:

- **Purpose:** Why you'd use it
- **Copy-and-paste Prompt:** The exact instruction to give the AI
- **Tone Options:** Add 1–2 words to guide the tone
- **Length Options:** Choose short or detailed
- **Optional Add-ons:** Add names or policies for more accurate results

Want Even Better Results?

Here are a few optional details you can include in the prompt to help AI write more accurately and sound more like you. You don't have to add them every time, but they can make the output more personal and relevant:

- **Your Name:** For example, “From: Ms. Alexis, Director at Little Roots Preschool.” This helps AI draft messages in your voice.
- **Childcare Center Name:** Such as “Little Roots Preschool,” so the AI knows what organization to reference.
- **Parent or Staff Name:** For example, “To: Mr. Thomas” or “Hi, Jamie (Staff Member),” which makes messages more personal.
- **Original Email (if replying):** Paste the email you’re responding to underneath your prompt so AI has the full context.
- **Relevant Policy Text:** Include a short excerpt from your handbook or policy if it relates to your message. This ensures the AI follows your center’s rules.

These are not required, but adding them will often give you more accurate, polished, and on-brand results.

Writing Prompts

1. Employee Memo – General Announcement

Prompt: Write a professional memo to all staff announcing [policy update, schedule change, new staff member]. Include any key dates, expectations, or next steps. Keep it clear and respectful.

Tone Options: Professional / Friendly / Supportive

Length Options: 1–2 paragraphs OR memo with bolded sections

Optional Add-ons: Staff names, dates, context of change

2. Parent Memo – Program Changes

Prompt: Write a memo for parents explaining a change in our program (e.g., new hours, adjusted meal plan, staff change). Keep the tone respectful, clear, and reassuring. Explain why the change is being made and how it supports the children.

Tone Options: Informative / Warm / Reassuring

Length Options: 2–3 paragraphs OR include FAQs

Optional Add-ons: Center name, date of change, specific reasons

3. Employee Correction Notice (Written Warning)

Prompt: Write a professional written warning for an employee who violated [policy/behavioral expectation]. Include the date of the issue [insert date here], what occurred [insert policy violation], the relevant policy [insert policy], and expectations moving forward. Keep the tone respectful and fact-based.

Tone Options: Neutral / Formal / Direct

Length Options: Short summary OR formal HR-style format

Optional Add-ons: Staff name, policy text, prior verbal warnings

4. Child Behavior Notice to Parent

Prompt: Write a respectful, supportive message for a parent explaining a behavior

concern involving their child. Include what occurred [insert behavior here], how it was addressed [insert what we did to correct the child], and how we'll support their child moving forward.

Tone Options: Supportive / Calm / Reassuring

Length Options: 1–2 paragraphs OR full behavior incident format

Optional Add-ons: Child name, date of incident, positive framing

5. **Parent Survey**

Prompt: Create a short, parent-friendly feedback survey with 5–6 questions about [safety, communication, curriculum satisfaction, family engagement]. Leave one question open for the parent to share any other feedback/concern. Make the questions easy to answer (scale or open-ended).

Tone Options: Curious / Warm / Respectful

Length Options: 5 questions OR include intro paragraph

Optional Add-ons: Goal of survey, anonymous vs. named

6. **Draft a Parent Newsletter**

Prompt: Write a parent newsletter for [Month] including: a director's message [insert topic or full message], upcoming events [insert events here], curriculum themes [insert here], and reminders [insert reminders here]. Use a warm, clear, and friendly tone. Make it easy to skim.

Tone Options: Friendly / Informative / Upbeat

Length Options: 3–4 short sections OR full formatted newsletter

Optional Add-ons: Center name, dates, classroom highlights

7. **Policy Rewrite for Parent Handbook**

Prompt: Rewrite this policy section to be easier for parents to understand. Use calm, respectful language. Clarify the reasoning and how it helps their child. [Paste original policy text here]

Tone Options: Clear / Calm / Supportive

Length Options: Condensed version OR rewritten with example

Optional Add-ons: Name of policy section, center values

8. **End-of-Day Checklist for Staff**

Prompt: Write an end-of-day classroom checklist for staff at a [name of childcare center]. Include cleaning, communication, and classroom reset tasks. [list any specific details on what you would like to include here]. Make it easy to follow and printable.

Tone Options: Practical / Clear / Encouraging

Length Options: Bullet points OR numbered steps

Optional Add-ons: Classroom age group, licensing requirements

9. **Incident Report Template**

Prompt: Create a fill-in-the-blank incident report template for documenting child

injuries, behavior, or accidents. Make it easy for staff to complete and clear for parents to read.

Tone Options: Formal / Neutral / Supportive

Length Options: Template form with sections

Optional Add-ons: Fields for time, location, staff involved, actions taken

10. **Staff Recognition Note (Printed or Posted)**

Prompt: Write a short, upbeat recognition note to celebrate [insert staff member name] who went above and beyond. Include their name, what they did [insert behavior here], and how it impacted children or coworkers.

Tone Options: Appreciative / Encouraging / Uplifting

Length Options: 2–4 sentences OR formatted “Spotlight” paragraph

Optional Add-ons: Staff name, story, parent or peer quote

Research & Resource Prompts

1. **Positive Reinforcement in Early Childhood**

Prompt: Research and summarize the benefits of using positive reinforcement in early childhood classrooms. Include examples and cite sources if available.

Tone Options: Educational / Professional / Parent-Friendly

Depth Options: 1 paragraph summary OR full article with references

Optional Add-ons: Request for references, specific age group focus

2. **Creating an Inclusive Center**

Prompt: Create a list of strategies for making our childcare center more inclusive of all cultures, abilities, and family structures. Include classroom, staff, and policy-level ideas.

Tone Options: Supportive / Reflective / Practical

Depth Options: List format OR 3–4 paragraph summary

Optional Add-ons: Focus on infant, toddler, or preschool classrooms

3. **DIY Playdough Recipe for Classrooms**

Prompt: Give me a classroom-safe recipe for homemade playdough. Include ingredients, steps, storage instructions, and how to involve children in the process.

Tone Options: Friendly / Clear / Engaging

Depth Options: Bullet-point recipe OR printable instruction sheet

Optional Add-ons: Add natural dye ideas, gluten-free version

4. Non-Toxic Slime for Toddlers

Prompt: Write a simple, toddler-safe recipe for making non-toxic slime in a childcare setting. Include supervision tips and how to clean up easily.

Tone Options: Instructional / Playful / Professional

Depth Options: Short recipe OR add a “why sensory play matters” paragraph

Optional Add-ons: Include cleanup method, allergy-friendly notes

5. Book List: Diversity & Belonging

Prompt: Create a list of picture books that celebrate diversity, inclusion, and belonging for children ages 2–5. Include a short description for each book.

Tone Options: Enthusiastic / Educational / Thoughtful

Depth Options: 5–10 books OR themed book sets

Optional Add-ons: Include author names, classroom activity ideas

6. Parent Guide: Developmental Milestones

Prompt: Write a parent-friendly guide summarizing typical developmental milestones for children ages 0–5. Group by age and focus on social, emotional, and motor development.

Tone Options: Informative / Reassuring / Easy-to-read

Depth Options: 1-page summary OR age-by-age breakdown

Optional Add-ons: Add example behaviors, link to CDC or state resources

7. Science Activities for Preschoolers

Prompt: Suggest 5 simple, safe, and age-appropriate science activities for preschoolers. Each activity should use common classroom items and include a learning outcome.

Tone Options: Fun / Practical / Encouraging

Depth Options: Short list OR printable activity cards

Optional Add-ons: Add setup time, supervision needs

8. Staff Training Topics: Behavior & Guidance

Prompt: Suggest 5 staff training topics related to child behavior, social-emotional development, or guidance techniques. Include a short goal statement for each topic.

Tone Options: Professional / Action-Oriented / Thoughtful

Depth Options: Bulleted list OR half-page training guide
Optional Add-ons: Add NAEYC or state alignment

9. Family Engagement Ideas

Prompt: List 6 creative ways childcare centers can build stronger relationships with families. Include both in-person and virtual options. Focus on connection, not just updates.

Tone Options: Warm / Community-Focused / Creative

Depth Options: Short list OR expanded with examples

Optional Add-ons: Include low-cost options, COVID-safe variations

10. Licensing Checklist: Classroom Setup

Prompt: Create a classroom environment checklist that aligns with licensing requirements for childcare centers in the State of [insert State]. Include safety, supervision, and cleanliness standards.

Tone Options: Practical / Clear / Professional

Depth Options: Checklist format OR grouped by classroom area

Optional Add-ons: Add state-specific notes if known