Prompt Best Practices

A Quick-Reference Guide for Product Owners

You finished the course. Now what? This desk reference distills the prompt techniques from **AI for Product Owners** into eight practices you can apply on Monday morning. Each practice pairs a short principle with a before-and-after example drawn from real Product Owner work — backlog refinement, user stories, sprint planning, stakeholder updates, and more. Keep this nearby. Prompting well is a skill that compounds.

> **THE FIVE-ELEMENT FRAMEWORK**
> Every strong prompt answers five questions: **Goal** (what are you trying to accomplish?) → **Role** (who should the AI be?) → **Context** (what does it need to know?) → **Action** (what should it do?) → **Format** (how should the output look?). If your prompt skips one of these, that's usually where it goes wrong.

1 Be specific — vague prompts produce vague output

The single biggest upgrade you can make is replacing general verbs with concrete ones. "Summarize," "help," and "create" leave the AI guessing. Tell it exactly what to produce, for whom, and what to focus on.

BEFORE

```
Summarize the sprint retrospective.
```

AFTER

```
Generate a concise summary of the key takeaways, action items, and improvement
opportunities from the sprint retrospective. Group items by theme and flag any decisions
that need stakeholder follow-up.
```

2 Assign the AI a role with relevant expertise

Naming the role primes the model to draw on the right vocabulary, conventions, and judgment. The course recommends going beyond a job title — add a short backstory (years of experience, domain wins) to sharpen the response.

BEFORE

```
Write some user stories for our checkout feature.
```

AFTER

```
Act as a senior Product Owner with 7 years of experience in e-commerce checkout optimization. You've shipped features that reduced cart abandonment by 20%+. Draft 5 user stories for our new one-page checkout, written in standard "As a / I want / So that" format.
```

WHY THIS WORKS

Goal + role together give the AI a destination and a guide. Without a role, you get generic, surface-level answers. Without a goal, you get articulate output that misses the point. Pair them deliberately every time.

3 Load the context — your situation isn't obvious

The AI knows nothing about your product, your users, your sprint cadence, or the decision you're trying to make. Set the scene: business objective, target audience, constraints, and any custom data the AI should use. The more you tell it, the less it has to guess.

BEFORE

```
Help with sprint planning.
```

AFTER

```
Our team has a 2-week sprint capacity of 32 story points. We're a B2B SaaS company and our quarterly objective is to reduce time-to-first-value for new admin users. Given these ordered user stories [paste list], which combination should we commit to this sprint to maximize impact on that objective?
```

4 Specify the action — name the deliverable

Effective prompts say what to produce: a list, a draft, an outline, a comparison, a critique. "Help me with X" is a conversation starter, not an instruction. Pick the verb that matches the artifact you actually need.

BEFORE

```
Create a backlog item.
```

AFTER

```
Expand this user story with acceptance criteria using the Given/When/Then format. Include both happy-path and edge-case scenarios. Story: "As a user, I want to create a shopping list so I can easily purchase items I frequently need."
```

5 Define the format — get output you can actually use

Tell the AI what shape the output should take: a table, INVEST-checked user stories, a numbered list, a one-paragraph executive summary. Specifying format saves a round of rework and makes results easy to paste into Jira, Confluence, or an email.

BEFORE

```
Give me user stories from this customer feedback.
```

AFTER

```
From this customer feedback [paste], generate 8 user stories in a table with these
columns: Story (As a / I want / So that), Persona, Business Value (H/M/L), and INVEST
check (note any criteria the story may not satisfy). Order by business value.
```

6 Iterate — the first response is rarely the final one

Treat prompting like sprint work: generate, evaluate, refine, repeat. The course calls this the prompt iteration loop. Evaluate each response against four criteria — **relevance**, **actionability**, **completeness**, and **clarity** — then tweak the keywords or structure and try again. Don't get discouraged if the first output isn't perfect; that's the norm, not the exception.

FIRST PASS

```
Generate 10 user stories for a fitness tracking app.
```

REFINED

```
The previous stories are too generic. Rewrite them for our specific persona: "Marcus, a
42-year-old returning runner training for his first half-marathon, who values data but is
intimidated by complex UIs." Each story should reference a specific pain point and be
small enough to ship in one sprint.
```

7 Use custom data — but protect what's confidential

Custom data — your backlog, retro notes, customer feedback, analytics — transforms generic AI output into team-specific insight. Open GenAI tools are fine for general research and trend analysis. For anything confidential or proprietary, use a closed system that meets your company's data security policy. When in doubt, ask first.

BEFORE

```
What are common themes in SaaS customer complaints?
```

AFTER

```
Analyze the attached 47 support tickets from Q1 [paste anonymized data]. Identify the top 5 recurring themes, the sentiment associated with each, and any suggested feature requests embedded in the language. Output as a ranked table with supporting quotes from the tickets.
```

8 Chain prompts to break complex work into steps

A prompt chain is a series of connected prompts that guide the AI through a complex task in smaller, more manageable steps. Each output feeds the next prompt. This uncovers deeper insights than asking for everything in one shot — and it gives you natural checkpoints to evaluate quality before moving forward.

INSTEAD OF ONE BIG PROMPT

```
Create a complete product roadmap for our mobile app including personas, user stories, prioritization, and quarterly milestones.
```

CHAIN IT

```
Step 1: From this customer data, identify 3 distinct user personas. Step 2: For Persona #1, generate 8 user stories addressing their top pain points. Step 3: Order those stories using a RICE scoring rubric and explain each score. Step 4: Group the top-ranked stories into themes for Q1, Q2, and Q3.
```

EVALUATE EVERY RESPONSE — THE 4-QUESTION CHECK

Relevance: Does it address the actual problem and reflect the context you gave? **Actionability:** Can you make a decision or take a step with this? **Completeness:** Did it cover everything that matters, or are there gaps? **Clarity:** Is it free of jargon, easy to understand, and ready to share?

9 The reusable PO prompt template

Copy this template into your notes app. Fill it in once per task. With practice, the structure becomes muscle memory — and your prompts get sharper without thinking about it.

FILL-IN TEMPLATE

ROLE: Act as a [specific role] with [years/type of experience] in [domain]. You have [relevant accomplishment or perspective].

CONTEXT: We are [team / product / company]. Our current objective is [outcome]. Our users are [persona description]. The relevant constraints are [time, capacity, technical, regulatory]. Here is the data you'll work with: [paste].

GOAL: I'm trying to [decision or deliverable] so that [why it matters].

ACTION: [Verb] a [artifact] that [specific requirements]. Apply [framework: INVEST, RICE, MoSCoW, etc.].

FORMAT: Output as a [table / numbered list / draft email / etc.] with these columns/sections: [list]. Keep it [length]. Flag anything unclear or assumptions you had to make.

Common Product Owner use cases from the course

Task	What to ask the AI to do
User story generation	Draft stories from feedback, in INVEST-checked format
Acceptance criteria	Expand stories with Given/When/Then scenarios
Backlog refinement	Order items by value, effort, or strategic fit
Customer segmentation	Cluster users by behavior, not just demographics
Persona creation	Generate rich personas from real customer data
Meeting summaries	Pull out decisions, action items, and owners
Risk identification	Flag risks and bottlenecks for the upcoming sprint
Stakeholder updates	Draft audience-tailored progress communications

REMEMBER

Prompt engineering is iterative. Just like a scrum team adapts each sprint, your prompts will evolve as you learn what works for your context. Keep what's useful, drop what isn't, and bring AI into the work where it genuinely makes you faster or sharper — not just busier.