

How to talk to AI

Introduction to using AI in everyday life and work

Boquete Public Library · May 11, 2026

AI is a smart assistant, not a search engine.

Treat it like the brightest research partner you've ever hired, who has read everything but knows nothing about you yet. The more context you give it, the better the answer. That's the whole skill.

The Recipe

Goal	What do you want? Be specific about the output.
Context	Who's it for? What's the situation? What do they already know?
Constraints	Length, tone, format. What to include and what to avoid.
Examples	Optional. Show a sample of what you like.
Check	Ask it to list its assumptions before answering. Catches mistakes early.

Vague vs. Specific

VAGUE

| "Write me an email to my landlord."

SPECIFIC

| "Write a polite email to my landlord asking him to fix the water heater. He's responsive but busy. This is the third time it's broken in six months. Three short paragraphs, friendly but firm."

When the answer isn't right

- **Refine the tone:** Make it more direct / casual / brief / warmer
- **Avoid something:** Try again, but don't include [thing]
- **Surface assumptions:** What did you assume? Which assumptions might be wrong?
- **Change format:** Give me this as a checklist / table / email / outline
- **Push for honesty:** What in your answer should I double-check?

Copy-paste templates

REWRITE THIS

"Rewrite the following so it sounds [tone] and is [length]. Audience: [who]. Goal: [what they should do after reading]. Original: [paste text]"

EXPLAIN THIS

"Explain [topic] to me as if I'm [reading level / background]. Use analogies. Tell me what's most important first. End with three questions I should think about."

PLAN THIS

"Help me plan [event/project]. I'm [context]. Constraints: [time, budget, etc]. Generate a one-page checklist with sections for: things to do, things to bring, questions to ask. List your assumptions before you start."

The tools worth knowing

Updated May 2026 · Pricing changes often, verify before you buy

Start with one. Use it daily for two weeks. Then add another.

If you're new and overwhelmed, start with **ChatGPT**. If you write a lot, start with **Claude**. If your life is in Gmail and Drive, start with **Gemini**. You don't need three subscriptions. You need one.

THE BIG THREE · ~\$20/MO EACH

ChatGPT BEST ALL-ROUNDER	Voice mode (talk to it like a person), vision (point your camera at anything), agents (multi-step tasks), Deep Research, Memory across chats. The default if you're starting out. chat.openai.com · Plus \$20/mo · Free tier available
Claude BEST FOR WRITING	Artifacts (watch it build documents and tools live), Projects (persistent workspaces with your reference docs), 1M+ token context for long documents, more willing to push back on shaky reasoning. claude.ai · Pro \$20/mo · Free tier available
Gemini BEST IN GOOGLE	Lives inside Gmail, Docs, Sheets, Drive. NotebookLM (the killer app: ask your documents questions, get cited answers). Audio Overviews turn documents into a 12-min podcast. gemini.google.com · notebooklm.google.com · AI Pro \$20/mo

SPECIALIZED TOOLS · EACH DOES ONE THING EXCEPTIONALLY WELL

ElevenLabs VOICE	Reads articles, eBooks, webpages aloud in a natural voice. Free Impact Program licenses for people with permanent voice loss (ALS, stroke, throat cancer). elevenlabs.io · Free tier · Reader app
Wispr Flow DICTATION	Press a key, talk, polished text appears in any app. Up to ~250 words/min. Auto-removes filler words, stutters, and false starts. Adapts tone to context (casual in Slack, professional in Gmail). For arthritis, RSI, Parkinson's, or anyone who thinks faster than they type. wisprflow.ai · Free 2,000 words/wk · \$12/mo unlimited
Canva AI DESIGN	Magic Write, Magic Design, Magic Edit, background remover, Translate Magic. If you already use Canva, the AI features are inside the tool you have. canva.com · Pro \$15/mo · Free tier available

PRIVACY · TWO RULES

Turn off training tonight As of late 2025: ChatGPT, Claude, and Gemini all train on your chats by default. 5-minute fix (each tool is different): ChatGPT: Profile → Settings → Data Controls → turn off "Improve the model for everyone" Claude: Profile → Settings → Privacy → turn off "Help improve Claude" Gemini: myactivity.google.com/product/gemini → turn off "Keep Activity" (note: this also turns off chat history) Exception: NotebookLM doesn't train on what you upload. Use it for documents that matter.	What still doesn't go in Even with training off: passwords, codes, and anything about other people you have a duty to protect (clients, patients, employer confidential). The test: would the person this is about be okay seeing it on a billboard? If no, don't paste it. On shared devices: sign out when you're done. Library computers, café terminals, family iPads. Your chat history has your name on it. Family safe word: agree on one now. If "family" calls in an emergency asking for money, ask the word. Voice cloning is real. If something feels off: hang up, close the chat, walk away. You can always restart. AI doesn't have urgent deadlines. Scammers do.
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