

Educator's Guide to GPT-5

Welcome, friend!

This overview is based on my use of GPT-5, OpenAI's [GPT-5 Prompting Guide](#), [Phillip Allcock's great overview of ChatGPT-5](#), and material from my two books, [A Time To Lead](#) and [Artificial Intelligence, Real Literacy](#), a book I co-wrote with [Jason Gulya](#).

I used GPT-5 in the creation of this guide. I took my observations, notes, books, and training material and used it to compile this information.

I trust this guide is a useful overview, and ultimately helps you

- *save time*
- *be more creative*
- *have a bigger impact*

*And of course, I hope this all results in rich, deep,
formative student learning.*

Happy Teaching!

Paul Matthews

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Paul Matthews". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Paul" and last name "Matthews" clearly distinguishable.

What GPT-5 is, and why does it matter for schools?

Simple Overview

GPT-5 is the latest version of OpenAI's language model, designed to understand and generate human-like text. It can follow instructions, reason through problems, and create responses for a wide range of educational tasks more accurately and flexibly than earlier versions.

What's new in GPT-5 compared with earlier models

Better at following instruction

- clearer adherence to precise directions, so well-structured prompts pay off.

Variety of reasoning levels

- you can choose minimal, medium, or high reasoning depending on task complexity and latency needs.

Verbosity control

- a separate control that influences how long the final answer is, independent of reasoning effort.

Agentic workflows

- A fancy way of saying GPT is better at multi-step tasks with tools, planning, and persistence when you ask for it.

Tool preambles:

can narrate its plan and progress when using tools, useful for transparency with students.

Coding upgrades (only a narrow group of educators will need this!)

- far better at building, refactoring, and following house style guides.

Bottom line for educators

Write clearer prompts, set the right reasoning level, and keep human oversight. You will save time and increase the quality of core teaching routines.

2. Basic AI Hygiene

Creating great resources with AI still follows the same basic 3 steps as with prior models:

1. **Prompt with context**

Give role, task, audience, length, constraints, exemplars, and format.

2. **Iterate like a teacher**

Treat the first output as a draft. Nudge, refine, and request alternatives. Ask for justification and evidence. Check facts, tone, difficulty, and bias. Add or remove scaffolds.

3. **Tweak by hand**

Make any final tweaks to align to curriculum, school values, and your learners.

3. Prompt methods that work

In all of my use, the same prompting formulas will still work with GPT5.

That said, you will notice that some instructions you used to give to earlier models are no longer necessary. For example, we no longer need to give ChatGPT instructions to be thorough and well considered. GPT-5 will do a good job of that on its own. You may find yourself telling it to keep it brief more often than before!

The RTF method

Role: the tool the context within which it's operating.

Task: tell the tool what you want it to do.

Format: clearly articulate how you want the tool to present the data.

RTF template

Role: Act as an expert [subject] teacher in Australia.

Task: Create [resource type] for [year level] on [topic], targeting [purpose].

Format: Output as [bullets, table, rubric with criteria and performance levels, etc.]. Keep it to [length].

The CARE method

Context: the tool the context within which it's operating.

Action: tell the tool what you want it to do.

Result: clearly articulate how you want the tool to present the data.

Example: add an exemplar to show what 'good' looks like.

CARE template

Context: I teach [year level, subject]. Our goal is [goal], with [diverse needs].

Action: Generate [resource] that [does X and Y].

Result: It must include [specific elements], aligned to [curriculum link].

Example: Here is a mini example of the structure I want: [paste with an exemplar].

Add explicit controls for GPT-5

Here are some other features you can add to your prompts to continue to refine the kind of output you want to get.

- Reasoning - “Use [minimal | medium | high] reasoning. Explain your plan briefly first.”

- Verbosity - “Keep the final answer concise, no more than [X] words.”
- Autonomy - “Do not ask clarifying questions unless safety or accuracy is at risk.” or “Persist until all subtasks are complete.”
- Preambles - “State the plan in 3 bullet points before the output.”

4. Iteration scripts you can reuse

Use these short follow-ups to improve a draft.

- Tighten: “Rewrite in fewer words, keep the same meaning.”
- Level: “Rewrite for a mixed Year 8 class, target a reading age of 11–12.”
- Focus: “Reduce recap, increase practice items. Include 6 retrieval questions.”
- Balance: “You emphasised causes, add two consequences with evidence.”
- Evidence: “Cite two reputable sources and distinguish fact from interpretation.”
- Structure: “Add clear subheadings, short paragraphs, and a 3-step checklist.”

- Differentiate: “Offer three versions: Core, Support, Extension, with criteria.”
- Bias check: “List any assumptions or bias risks you can spot.”
- Alternatives: “Give three different openings, each under 60 words.”

5. Tweak by hand checklist

Before you use GPT-5 output in class, always look over it and make any necessary final tweaks by hand. Think about the:

- Accuracy of facts and numbers.
- Alignment to syllabus outcomes and assessment criteria.
- Reading level, vocabulary load, and sentence length.
- Cultural and contextual fit for your community.
- Ethical stance and academic integrity guidance.
- Inclusivity, accessibility, and tone.
- Length and workload appropriateness.
- Final polish: examples from local contexts, school values, house style.

Some of these you will already cover in the iteration phase, some will be easiest to do by hand.

6. Use GPT-5 for evidence-based practices

Below are classroom-ready practices that map GPT-5 to proven strategies. Each includes a starter prompt, an iteration, and a teacher tweak. While these prompts are basic, they are expanded in *Artificial Intelligence, Real Literacy* - a book I wrote with Jason Gulya.

Use the **Role, Task, Format (RTF)** prompt formula. Here are three classroom-ready examples.

Text differentiation

Role: Act as an expert [Year Level] [Subject] teacher.

Task: Rewrite the following 500-word text at three reading levels, approximately Years 6, 8, and 10, preserving key ideas and domain vocabulary. Include two comprehension checks per level.

Format: Table with columns Level, Rewritten text, Two checks, Notes on changes. Keep each level under 300 words.

Potential iterations:

- Add a vocabulary preview with student friendly definitions and one non example.
- Include two multiple choice and two short answer items per level, labelled literal, inferential, evaluative.
- Provide a CLOZE version at the middle level and an extension paragraph for the top level.
- Tag each level with curriculum codes and reading age.
- Add teacher notes on likely misconceptions.

Retrieval practice

Role: Act as an expert [Year Level] [Subject] teacher.

Task: Create 12 retrieval questions from the source notes, mixing 8 short-answer, 2 multiple-choice, and 2 application items. Avoid clues in the questions. Tag each item Easy, Moderate, or Challenging and map each to a curriculum code.

Format: Bulleted list grouped by difficulty with code tags, followed by an answer key with brief rationales.

Potential iterations:

- Balance difficulty by converting two items into mini whiteboard quick checks and add expected time per item.
- Add rationales to the answer key and flag common misconceptions.
- Create an interleaved set that mixes last lesson and last week content in a 60 40 split.
- Provide a spaced retrieval schedule for the next four weeks.
- Offer a printable version with one item per line for in class use.

Exemplars and feedback

Role: Act as an expert assessment designer for [Year Level] [Subject]

Task: Write three paragraph exemplars on [prompt] at A, B, and C standard, each around 150 words, annotated against the rubric. Provide one improvement tip per exemplar.

Format: Three subsections labelled A, B, C. Under each, include the paragraph and bullet annotations referencing specific criteria.

Potential iterations:

- Add one sentence success criteria aligned to the rubric for each band.
- Generate a student friendly checklist for self and peer review.
- Append a comment bank of 10 feedback phrases mapped to criteria.
- Provide a short path to improvement for each band with concrete edits.
- Create a side by side table that highlights differences between A, B, and C responses.

7. Model controls for teachers

Use these lines inside your prompts to control GPT-5.

- Reasoning effort
 - “Use minimal reasoning for speed.”
 - “Use high reasoning for a thorough plan with risks and mitigations.”
- Verbosity
 - “Keep the final answer under 300 words.”
 - “Use bullet points, short paragraphs, and a 2-column table where helpful.”
- Agentic eagerness
 - Lower: “Avoid tangential ideas. Do not research beyond the given text.”
 - Higher: “Persist through sub-tasks until the checklist is complete.”
- Tool preambles and plans
 - “Start with a 3-bullet plan. End with a 3-bullet summary and next steps.”

8. Classroom workflows

Rapid lesson resource pack, 15 minutes

1. Paste source text or topic dot points.
2. Prompt for differentiated texts, retrieval questions, and stems.
3. Iterate to add answer keys and success criteria.
4. Tweak by hand for alignment and tone.
5. Export to your LMS or print as needed.

Assessment support

- Ask for a rubric draft with performance descriptors.
- Generate A, B, C exemplars and annotate.
- Create common feedback comments, then customise.

9. Safety, ethics, and integrity in practice

- Privacy: avoid sharing identifying student data. Use de-identified text or synthetic examples.
- Academic integrity: teach what counts as drafting support versus plagiarism. Require students to disclose AI use and show iterations.
- Bias and fairness: ask GPT-5 to list possible biases and to provide multiple perspectives.
- Digital nutrition: model bounded use. Choose minimal reasoning and low verbosity when appropriate to keep tasks light.
- Christian schools note: emphasise human dignity, virtue formation, service, and wisdom in technology choices.

10. Troubleshooting

- It wrote too much: Lower verbosity and ask for a word cap.
- It missed the brief: Restate role, audience, success criteria, and include a short exemplar.
- It invented facts: Request sources, then verify. Replace with vetted references.
- It was too clever, not readable: Ask for plain language and chunking with headings.
- It keeps asking questions: Add autonomy guidance, for example, “Proceed without clarification unless a safety issue arises.”

11. Conclusion

11. Last Word - a quick overview:

Prompt

RTF or CARE, include role, task, audience, format, constraints, exemplar.

Iterate

Tighten, level, focus, add evidence, structure, differentiate.

Tweak by hand

Fact check, align to curriculum, adjust tone and difficulty, localise examples, add values and integrity notes.

Model controls

Set reasoning level, verbosity, autonomy, and add a short plan.

Evidence-based patterns

Differentiation, retrieval, stems, cloze, vocab, discussion, readings, questions, exemplars, sentence combining.

Ethics

Privacy, integrity, bias checks, wise and bounded use.