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THE 11 AI PROMPTS

From Appendix B of *Start from Scratch, Plan from the End* by Richard Harvie. Copy each prompt, fill in the square brackets, and check the results as the book explains.

Prompts 1 to 8 go with Chapter 6, Prompts 9 and 10 with Chapter 7, and Prompt 11 with Chapter 15. They work with most AI assistants that can read files, and are written to be copied, then adapted. Three rules apply to every one of them: check your organisation's policy on using AI tools first, remove personal data before you upload anything, and check the results against the original documents before you rely on them.

Prompt 1: Turn a folder of bills into a table

> I am uploading 12 months of [electricity / gas / fuel card] invoices for [organisation]. For each invoice, extract the supplier, site or account, billing period start and end dates, quantity used, unit (kWh, litres or m^3) and total cost [leave out the cost if your policy does not allow it to be shared]. Put each invoice on its own row in a table. Do not estimate or fill in anything you cannot read; mark it "not found" instead. List any invoices you could not read at the end.

Check: pick at least three invoices at random and compare every figure with the original.

Prompt 2: Find gaps and duplicates

> Using the table above, check for: any month with no invoice for a site; any billing periods that overlap; any invoice that appears twice; and any value that is more than double or less than half that site's usual monthly figure. List each problem with the invoice it relates to. Do not change the table.

Check: decide yourself how to deal with each problem, and note it in your method.

Prompt 3: Convert units

> Convert every quantity in the table into one unit for each fuel: kWh for gas and electricity, and litres for vehicle fuel, heating oil and LPG. For gas readings given in cubic metres (m^3), use the volume correction factor and calorific value shown on each bill. For electricity given in MWh, multiply by 1,000. Put the converted figures in a new column, keep the original readings, and show the formula you used for each row. Then split any bill that covers more than one month across those months by the number of days.

Check: recalculate two rows by hand, and make sure the new column shows only one unit for each fuel before you total anything.

Prompt 4: Apply conversion factors with formulas, not mental arithmetic

> Create a spreadsheet with one row per emission source and these columns: source, scope, quantity, unit, conversion factor (kgCO2e per unit), and emissions in tonnes of CO2e. Use a formula for the emissions column (quantity × factor ÷ 1,000) rather than typing in results. Leave the conversion factor cells empty for me to fill in from the official UK Government conversion factors for [year].

Check: enter the factors yourself from the official spreadsheet published by the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero (DESNZ), so you know exactly where each one came from.

Prompt 5: Summarise by scope and chart it

> Using the completed spreadsheet, total the emissions for Scope 1, Scope 2 and Scope 3, and give each source's share of the total. Create a simple bar chart of emissions by source, largest first, that will still read clearly in black and white.

Check: make sure the scope totals add up to the overall total.

Prompt 6: Check a spreadsheet for errors

> Review this spreadsheet for errors. Look for formulas that do not match the rest of their column, ranges that miss rows, hard-typed numbers where a formula should be, and unit mismatches. List each issue with its cell reference. Do not fix anything yet.

Check: fix the issues yourself, then ask a colleague to look over the final version.

Prompt 7: Explain the results to leaders

> Using these results, write a summary of no more than 200 words for a leadership team with no technical background. Lead with the total and the three largest sources, explain what they mean in plain English, and suggest three questions the team should discuss. Do not add any figures that are not in the spreadsheet.

Check: compare every number in the summary with the spreadsheet before it goes anywhere.

Prompt 8: Sort a year of spending into categories

> I am uploading a year of spending by supplier for [organisation], with VAT and personal details removed. For each line, choose the most suitable category from the list I have pasted below, which comes from the spend-based emission factors I am using [paste the category list]. Keep every original row and add two columns: the category, and how confident you are (high, medium or low). Mark any line you cannot place as "unsure" rather than guessing. Then total the spending by category.

Check: check the 20 largest suppliers by hand, because a few big contracts usually make up most of the total, and look at every line marked low or unsure.

Prompt 9: Draft a Carbon Reduction Plan

> Using only the figures below from our annual carbon report, draft a Carbon Reduction Plan for [organisation] under these headings: commitment to net zero by [year], baseline emissions, current emissions, targets, carbon reduction projects, and declaration and sign-off. [Paste the baseline and latest figures by scope and Scope 3 category, the targets and the main actions.] Write in plain English and keep it to two pages. Do not add any figure I have not given you; put anything you need from me in square brackets.

Check: compare every number with the workbook, check the plan against the current Cabinet Office guidance, and make sure it is approved and signed off as Appendix A.7 describes.

Prompt 10: Answer a customer's carbon questionnaire

> Below is a customer's questionnaire about our carbon emissions, followed by our answer pack: latest totals by scope, method note, targets and plan, and certificates. Draft an answer to each question using only the information in the answer pack. Where the pack does not answer a question, say so and suggest what we would need to find out. If the customer asks for its share of our emissions, show the calculation using its share of our [turnover / tonnes delivered], and explain the method in one sentence.

Check: read every answer before it goes, check each figure against the workbook, and keep a copy with the answer pack so that your next reply is consistent.

Prompt 11: Draft a letter to a key supplier

> Using the template in Appendix A.23 and the details below, draft a letter from [name and role] to [supplier]. The supplier provides [goods or services] to us under a contract worth about [£ a year] that ends in [month and year]. Ask for their published Carbon Reduction Plan or emissions targets, the emissions for their contract with us if they can provide them (and how they were worked out), a named contact for carbon, and a reply by [date]. Say that we will accept an assessment they already complete for other customers, such as an NHS Evergreen assessment or a CDP response, and offer a call or a place at our supplier session on [date]. Keep it to one page, in plain English. Do not add any commitment, figure or deadline I have not given you; put anything you need from me in square brackets.

Check: read the letter as the supplier would, check every name, date and figure, and agree the wording with procurement before it goes (section 15.5).

Start from Scratch, Plan from the End, Richard Harvie (2027). You may copy and adapt these prompts for use in your own organisation. Version: November 2026.