✨ Prompts + Guardrails

UNICEF Guidance 3.0 recommends teaching children to question AI critically. The EU AI Act requires transparency about its limitations. These are principles I apply at home with my 9-year-old daughter.

She never uses AI without me. That's Rule #1 of our family AI charter.

One evening, she asked: "Can you tell the AI to do my maths homework?" I was there. "Let's try differently," I said. "Ask it to explain. Not to do."

She rephrased: "Explain how to solve this type of equation." The AI explained. She understood. She finished on her own.

That evening, AI was a cognitive partner, a tool to help her think better. Not a cognitive surrogate, a tool that thinks instead of her. This is the distinction Rebecca Winthrop of the Brookings Institution places at the centre of her research on AI and education. And it's the distinction every prompt in this document is built to preserve.

How you phrase the prompt matters. According to the Oxford AI Programme, the more specific and task-oriented a prompt, the better the output. Start with a verb. Give context. Limit the scope. These simple rules change everything.

These prompts won't guarantee perfect grades. Learning requires effort. But when an adult is there to guide, they turn any AI tool into a learning resource, whether that's ChatGPT, Gemini, Claude, or another.

The child stays the pilot. AI is the co-pilot.

Sources : UNICEF Guidance 3.0 (2025) / Oxford AI Programme / Winthrop, R. — Brookings Institution, 2026

✅ 6 "Learn Better" Prompts (by Goal)

Copy-paste these prompts and adapt them to your situation:

1. UNDERSTAND A CONCEPT

" Explain [concept] as if I were [age] years old, using a concrete everyday example."

Example:
"Explain photosynthesis as if I were 12 years old, with a concrete everyday example."

2. CHECK UNDERSTANDING

"Ask me 5 questions about [topic] to check that I understood. Level: [grade]."

Example:
"Ask me 5 questions about the French Revolution to check that I understood. Level: 8th grade."

3. GET EXAMPLES

" Give me 3 different examples of [concept/rule], from the simplest to the most complex."

Example:
"Give me 3 different examples of metaphors, from the simplest to the most complex."

4. CORRECT MISTAKES

"Here is my reasoning: [text]. Are there any mistakes? If yes, explain why it's wrong."

⚠️ Important:

Do NOT copy the AI's correction — **understand the mistake**.

5. STEP-BY-STEP METHOD

"Show me how to solve this type of problem: [problem]. Explain each step without giving the final answer."

Example:
"Show me how to solve 3x + 5 = 14. Explain each step without giving the final answer."

6. IMPROVE THE RESPONSE THROUGH ITERATION

"Your answer is good but [too long / too complex / not enough examples]. Rewrite with [specific constraint]."

Example: "Your answer is good but too abstract. Rewrite using an example from the daily life of a 13-year-old student."

Why this matters: AI doesn't always give its best answer on the first try. Knowing how to challenge it, rather than passively accepting the first output, is itself a critical skill.

🛡️ Safety Rules: what we apply at every session

These rules protect your child from AI misuse:

1. **ALWAYS VERIFY with 2 sources (textbook, reliable website, teacher)**

   → AI doesn't "know" when it's wrong. Its responses are statistical predictions, not verified facts. A wrong answer arrives with the same fluency as a correct one. NEVER copy without checking.

2. **NEVER include personal data in prompts**

   → **No name, address, school, photos. AI stores everything.**

3. **DISCLOSE AI use in homework**

   → "Assisted by [AI tool used: ChatGPT / Gemini / Claude / other] for [specific task]" at the bottom of the assignment."

4. **IF IN DOUBT: Ask BEFORE using AI**

   → 30 seconds of asking is better than 1 hour of conflict.

5. **No AI to bypass school filters or restrictions**

   → If the school blocks ChatGPT, it's not to annoy you. Respect it.

6. **The Comprehension test :**If you can't explain it, you haven't learned it

→ After every AI session: ask your child a question about the topic they worked on. If they can't answer in their own words — AI replaced their thinking, it didn't support it. Start again with an "explain to me" prompt.

"Students miss the opportunity to develop their own personal independent thinking skills."
Source: Winthrop, R. — Brookings Institution, 2026 / UNICEF Guidance 3.0 (2025)

💡 *Tip: Print the prompts and place them near the computer. Using good prompts becomes a reflex.*

🎯 **Goal: AI as a cognitive partner. Not a substitute. Your child thinks. AI helps them think better.**

Prompts by Age

Ages 6–10 (supervision required)

✅ "Explain [concept] as if I were 8 years old"
✅ "Give me 3 simple examples of [thing]"
✅ "Create a 5-question quiz about [topic]"

Ages 11–14 (regular checking)

✅ "Give me 5 possible angles for this essay topic"
✅ "Explain why this concept works"
✅ "Challenge my arguments: where is my reasoning weak?"

✅ "Could this assignment be completed by AI with no personal effort? If yes, how should I rephrase it so my own thinking is visible?"

Ages 15–18 (guided autonomy)

✅ "Analyze this source: what are the potential biases?"
✅ "Debug this code and explain the error"
✅ "Simulate a debate: argue against my position"

"The 4 UNICRI Pillars: the parental framework (Communicate, Learn, Explain, Monitor)"

1. Communicate

Action: Talk about AI at least once a week.
"Did you use it this week? For what? Did it help?"

2. Learn

Educate **yourself** first. Test ChatGPT, Claude, Gemini. Try the same prompts as your child. The Oxford AI Programme recommends progressing in steps: start vague, then add specificity, adopt a persona, then iterate. You can't guide what you haven't tried yourself.

3. Explain

Action: Explain **why** rules exist.
"We cite AI because it's honest — like citing a book."

4. Monitor

Action: Random checks, at least once a week.
"Show me your latest homework + AI history."