

Inbox in 15 Minutes

Three copy-paste prompts for the emails you have been putting off

These prompts could help you sort, understand and reply to a pile of emails using the AI chat you already use (Gemini, ChatGPT, Copilot or another). You stay in charge: you check everything and you press send.

Before you start (1 minute)

If it's work email, check your workplace's rules on AI and use the tool they allow. If there are no rules, ask your manager first. Copy the text only, and remove or swap names, phone numbers, email addresses, signatures and account or customer numbers ("Customer A", "my manager").

Prompt 1: Sort the pile (minutes 1 to 5)

Here are the subject lines and first lines of [number] emails I need to deal with, with names removed: [paste]. Sort them into four groups: reply today, reply this week, just read, and can archive. Give one short reason for each, and ask me if anything is unclear.

Prompt 2: Make sense of one thread (minutes 5 to 10)

Here is an email thread, with names removed: [paste]. In plain English, tell me what they are asking for, any dates or deadlines, any numbers or amounts, and what I need to find out before I reply. Then give me a short to-do list with dates.

Summaries can skip a detail. Check every date and number against the original yourself.

Prompt 3: Draft a reply (minutes 10 to 15)

I'm a [your job]. This email is from my [customer / manager / supplier / colleague]. I want to [say yes but I need until Friday / say no politely / ask for more details]. Write a short, polite reply that sounds like me. Don't promise anything I haven't mentioned, such as dates, discounts or refunds. Use [your spelling, for example UK or US English].

Then ask for changes in plain words: "Shorter", "Friendlier", "More formal, it's for head office".

Before you send

Copy the reply into your real email and add names, attachments and your signature there, not in the AI. Delete any promise you haven't checked, swap one line for your own words, read it once out loud, then send it yourself. Put the to-do items into your calendar with their dates.

AI drafts could save you some time, but they can miss details or get things wrong. You are responsible for what goes out under your name.