

The AI Design Prompt **Cheat Sheet**

For business owners creating business cards, flyers & marketing documents that don't look AI-generated.

1 Build Your Business Profile First — Never Skip This

Before generating anything, feed the AI a **Business Profile Brief**. This is the single biggest factor in whether output looks custom or generic. Reuse this every time you start a new design session.

BUSINESS PROFILE TEMPLATE

BUSINESS NAME:

INDUSTRY:

TARGET MARKET: (age range, income level, lifestyle, what they care about)

BRAND PERSONALITY: pick 3 adjectives — e.g. "trustworthy, modern, warm"

NOT "professional, quality, innovative" (dead words — see Step 4)

LOGO: attach file, or describe colors, shape, style

BRAND COLORS: exact hex codes if you have them

FONTS ALREADY IN USE: if any

TONE OF VOICE: formal / conversational / bold / playful / premium

COMPETITORS TO NOT LOOK LIKE: name 1–2

COMPETITORS/BRANDS YOU ADMIRE: (reference only, not copying)

WHAT MAKES THIS BUSINESS DIFFERENT: one sentence

Upload your logo and any existing marketing material as image references before writing your first prompt. Say explicitly:

SAY THIS

"Use this uploaded logo and color palette as the visual foundation — do not alter the logo, do not invent new brand colors."

2 The Prompt Layout Formula

Structure every image-generation prompt in this order. AI models respond better to structured, layered prompts than one long sentence.

THE 7-PART STRUCTURE

[1. SUBJECT / DOCUMENT TYPE]

+ [2. STYLE / AESTHETIC DIRECTION]

+ [3. COMPOSITION & LAYOUT DETAIL]

+ [4. MATERIALS / TEXTURE / LIGHTING]

+ [5. BRAND ELEMENTS TO INCLUDE]

+ [6. WHAT TO AVOID]

+ [7. TECHNICAL SPECS]

Example — Flyer Prompt

A promotional flyer for a boutique gin-tasting event, editorial magazine layout style, asymmetric grid with generous negative space, soft natural window light on a marble countertop with a single gin bottle and glass as hero object, muted sage green and brass color palette matching the uploaded brand guide, includes logo top-left and QR code bottom-right, avoid: stock-photo gloss, generic sparkle/glow effects, centered symmetrical clipart layout, print-ready A5 portrait format.

3 Words That Make Output Look Custom, Not AI

Instead of Generic Style Words, Use These

Avoid (screams "AI default")	Use Instead
"professional"	"editorial," "considered," "restrained"
"modern"	"contemporary Scandinavian," "brutalist minimal," "mid-century"
"high quality"	"shot on 50mm lens, shallow depth of field"
"beautiful design"	name an actual design movement: "Swiss grid," "Bauhaus," "art deco"
"colorful"	name exact colors + placement: "terracotta accent on cream base"
"clean layout"	"generous whitespace, left-aligned hierarchy, single accent color"

Composition & Layout Vocabulary

Asymmetric grid Rule of thirds Off-center focal point Editorial whitespace Negative space Type hierarchy
Grid-breaking element Layered depth Bleed to edge Contained margin

Texture & Material Words (kills the "plastic AI sheen")

Uncoated matte paper texture Subtle film grain Soft natural shadow Letterpress / embossed / foil-stamped
Hand-finished, slightly imperfect edges Real fabric / wood / concrete texture

Lighting Words (avoids the glossy "AI render" look)

- Natural window light, golden hour, diffused overcast light
 - Single directional light source with soft falloff
- Avoid: "studio lighting with glow," "vibrant lighting," "dramatic rays"

Photography-Specific (for flyers/ads using photo-style images)

Shot on 35mm/50mm/85mm lens Shallow depth of field, f/1.8 Documentary style, candid framing
Slight desaturation, film-emulation grade

4 Words & Phrases to Never Use — AI Tells

These trigger the generic AI-stock look almost every time:

"vibrant" · "stunning" · "eye-catching" · "dynamic" · "cutting-edge" · "3D render" · "glossy" · "futuristic" · "sleek" (unless genuinely on-brand) · "sparkle" · "glow effect" · "burst of light"

- Leaving color choice open-ended ("nice color scheme") — always specify exact colors/hex codes
- Leaving layout undefined — always specify grid, alignment, hierarchy

5 Document-Specific Prompt Templates

Business Card

Business card design, [orientation: horizontal/vertical], [material: matte uncoated stock / linen texture / recycled kraft], front face shows logo [position] and business name in [font style/weight], back face shows [contact details layout], color palette: [exact colors], style reference: [e.g. "minimal Japanese stationery aesthetic"], avoid: gradient backgrounds, generic corporate clipart, centered-everything layout. Print-ready, bleed included, 85x55mm.

Flyer / Event Poster

[Event/offer] flyer, [size, e.g. A5 portrait], [style direction] layout, hero image: [describe subject, lighting, texture], headline hierarchy: [bold headline] > [supporting line] > [call to action/contact], brand colors [list], logo placement [corner], includes [QR code/social handles], avoid: stock-photo look, symmetrical centered clipart, default AI glow.

Lead Magnet / Report Cover

Cover design for a [industry] guide titled "[title]", editorial non-fiction book cover style, single bold typographic treatment, [1-2 color accent on neutral base], subtle texture [paper grain/geometric line pattern], no stock photography, no icons, minimalist authority-brand aesthetic similar to McKinsey/Harvard Business Review report covers.

Social Media / Ad Graphic

Square social ad, [platform] format, [product/message] as hero, [negative space ratio] for text overlay, brand colors [list], typography: [font mood], style: [reference], avoid: generic AI-gradient background, overused bold sans-serif center-stack text.

6 The "De-AI-ify" Pass — Second Prompt

After first generation, run a refinement prompt rather than accepting the first output:

Refine this: reduce symmetry, add one intentional off-grid element, replace any glossy/gradient surfaces with matte texture, tighten color palette to only [2–3 brand colors], make typography less centered and more left-aligned editorial style.

This second pass is often what separates **"obviously AI"** from **"looks designed."**

✓ Quick Reference: 5-Second Checklist Before Generating

- ✓ Exact brand colors specified (hex if possible)?
- ✓ Specific style reference named (not "modern/professional")?
- ✓ Layout/grid direction specified (not left to default)?
- ✓ Texture/lighting described (not left glossy by default)?
- ✓ "Avoid" list included to block generic AI defaults?
- ✓ Logo/brand assets uploaded as reference, not just described?

NEED THIS DONE FOR YOU?

Ailaikit builds AI-powered marketing systems for SMEs and schools — from brand-consistent design workflows to full digital compliance frameworks. Get in touch at ailaikit.co.za

7 Turn This Into an AI Agent (Stop Prompting From Scratch)

Everything above works — but retyping your brand profile, style words, and "avoid" list every time is slow and error-prone. Once your prompt formula is solid, build it into an **agent**: a saved setup that already knows your brand and applies this cheat sheet automatically.

What "AI Agent" Means Here

A reusable AI setup with three things baked in permanently, so you only type the new request:

THE 3 BUILDING BLOCKS

1. MEMORY — your Business Profile Brief (Step 1) saved once, referenced every time
2. INSTRUCTIONS — the prompt formula + word lists (Steps 2-4) as standing rules
3. ASSETS — your logo, brand colors, and reference images uploaded once

Three Ways to Set This Up — Easiest to Most Advanced

Option	How It Works	Best For
Saved Prompt Doc	Keep your Step 1 brief + word lists in one doc. Paste it at the start of any AI chat before asking for a design.	Solo owners, quick start, zero setup
Custom Project / GPT / Gem	Create a dedicated Project (Claude), Custom GPT (ChatGPT), or Gem (Gemini) — upload your brief + logo as permanent knowledge, write the rules once as custom instructions.	Business owners generating designs weekly
Automated Agent	A built system (e.g. on Base44) where you fill a short form — document type, occasion, message — and it auto-assembles the full structured prompt and generates the asset.	Teams, agencies, or multiple brands/clients

Quick-Start: Build a "Saved Prompt Agent" in 10 Minutes

- ✓ Open a new Project/Custom GPT (or a dedicated folder in your AI tool of choice)
- ✓ Upload your logo, brand colors, and 2-3 examples of designs you like
- ✓ Paste in your completed Business Profile Brief from Step 1
- ✓ Add a standing instruction: "Always follow the 7-part prompt structure, use the approved word lists, avoid the banned AI words, and run a de-AI-ify pass automatically"
- ✓ From now on, just type the request — e.g. "flyer for our spring sale" — and it builds the full prompt for you

WHERE THIS GOES NEXT

Once the agent works reliably, the same setup can trigger design generation from a form, a WhatsApp message, or a new product added to your catalog — no manual prompting at all. This is exactly the kind of lean automation Ailaikit builds for SMEs. Get in touch at ailaikit.co.za.