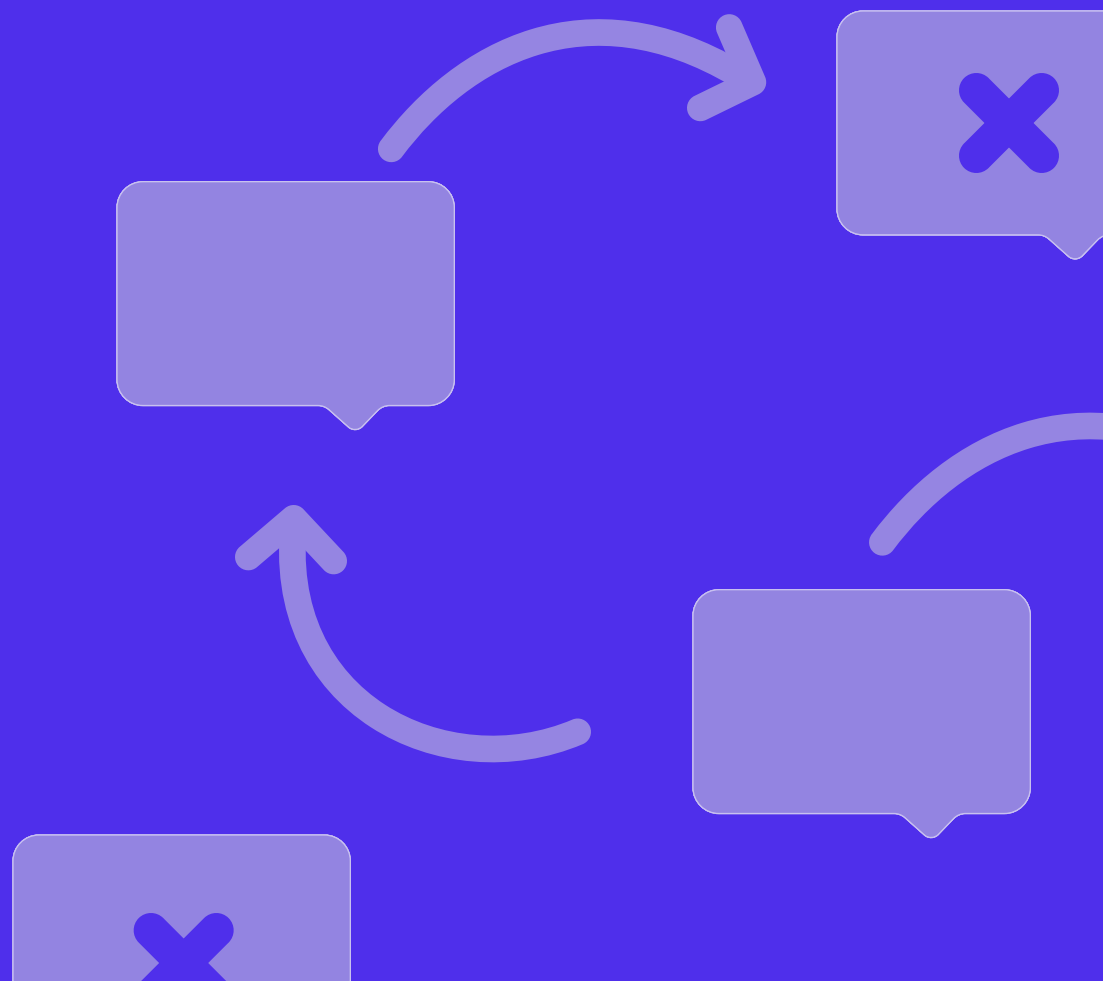


The CFO's AI Prompt Playbook

Get Better Outputs from LLM's



Rillet

Finance teams are expected to close faster, analyze deeper, and report more, all while staying leaner.

AI tools like ChatGPT, Claude, and Gemini can help, but only if you know how to prompt them correctly.

Most CFOs treat AI like Google: ask a question, get an answer, move on.

That doesn't work for finance workflows. Variance analysis, JE narratives, audit prep, and board reporting require structure, context, and repeatability.

This playbook shows you how to prompt AI like a pro, with real examples you can copy and paste today.

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The First Step: Set Up Your AI Project Memory

Before you run any prompts, **prime your AI with context**. Modern tools like ChatGPT Projects, Claude Projects, and Gemini let you create dedicated workspaces where the AI remembers your company setup across sessions.

Think of it like onboarding a new hire: you explain your business once, and they remember. Here's the setup prompt to copy and paste:

Project Setup Prompt

You are a CFO with 20 years of experience in FP&A, strategic finance, accounting, and compliance. Give technical, decision-ready answers.

Company Context:

- [# employees], [\$X revenue], [X% growth], [X% margin]
- **Industry:** [SaaS/Healthcare/Manufacturing/etc.]
- **Accounting:** [GAAP/IFRS]
- **ERP:** [Rillet/NetSuite/QuickBooks/etc.]

Output Standards:

- Use structured formats (tables, bullet lists)
- Flag assumptions and risks explicitly
- Challenge data quality issues when you see them

Avoid:

- Generic summaries without insight
- Responding without asking for clarification

For all subsequent prompts, maintain this context. Respond with "Acknowledged" when ready.

Once the AI acknowledges, every prompt you run builds on this foundation. No more re-explaining your business every time.

Greg Brockman's 4-Part Prompt Framework

Greg Brockman, President of OpenAI, developed a framework that turns vague requests into workflow-grade outputs. Every effective prompt has four parts:

1. Goal

What you want the AI to do

2. Return Format

How you want the output structured

3. Warnings/Constraints

Critical checks and requirements

4. Context Dump

All relevant background data

This structure works across ChatGPT, Claude, Gemini, and any other LLM. Here's how finance leaders use it:

Real Finance Prompts You Can Use Today

1. Monthly Variance Analysis

Use this to generate board-ready variance explanations for month-end close.

Prompt

You are a CFO assistant. I'm providing a P&L showing Actuals vs. Budget for [Month].

Task:

Identify line items with variance >10% or >\$50K and draft flux explanations.

Return Format:

- **Table:** Line Item | Actual | Budget | Var \$ | Var % | Root Cause
- 2–3 sentence narrative for each material variance

Requirements:

- Only explain material variances (>10% or >\$50K)
- Tie explanations to business drivers (volume, pricing, timing)

Context:

[Paste your P&L or upload CSV]

What you get: A clean variance report with narratives ready for audit documentation or board materials. What used to take 2+ hours now takes 30 seconds.

2. Audit-Ready JE Descriptions

Use this to generate compliant journal entry narratives automatically.

Prompt

You are a Senior Accountant. I need a journal entry description.

Task:

Write a clear, audit-ready JE narrative.

Return Format:

- 2–3 sentence description explaining what the entry records, why it's necessary, and supporting documentation reference

Requirements:

- Use proper accounting terminology
- Reference the source document (invoice #, contract, etc.)

Context:

Transaction: [amount, accounts, date]

Purpose: [what this relates to]

Support: [invoice/contract/approval]

What you get: Professional JE descriptions that satisfy audit requirements. Maintains consistency across your team and eliminates the "what did this entry record?" scramble during audit.

3. FP&A Scenario Modeling

Use this to build three-scenario models for board presentations or strategic planning.

Prompt

You are an FP&A Analyst. I need to model three scenarios for Q2 2025.

Task:

Build base, upside, and downside scenarios with clear assumptions.

Return Format:

- **Table:** Scenario | Revenue | COGS | OPEX | EBITDA | Cash
- Assumptions list for each scenario

Requirements:

- Base case uses current run rate

- **Upside:** +20% bookings growth
- **Downside:** -15% retention
- Show cash impact for each scenario

Context:

Current: \$5M revenue, 30% growth, 20% margin

Risks: Customer churn, market headwinds

What you get: Three complete scenario models with documented assumptions. Board-ready in minutes instead of hours of spreadsheet work.

4. Reconciliation Exception Review

Use this to catch anomalies in account reconciliations before they become audit findings.

Prompt

You are an Accounting Manager. I'm providing a reconciliation for [Account Name].

Task:

Review for completeness, flag anomalies, identify missing support.

Return Format:

- **Summary:** Account balance, reconciled vs. unreconciled items
- **Exceptions list:** Items missing support, timing differences >30 days
- Recommendations for remediation

Requirements:

- Flag entries >\$10K without clear business purpose
- Highlight stale reconciling items (>60 days)

Context:

[Upload reconciliation or paste data]

Account history:

[prior month balance, typical activity]

What you get: A structured exceptions report showing exactly what needs attention before you finalize the rec.

5. Board Commentary Generator

Use this to create executive summaries for board materials.

Prompt

You are a CFO preparing board commentary for Q1 2025.

Task:

Summarize financial performance in board-ready language.

Return Format:

- Executive summary (3–4 bullet points)
- **Key metrics table:** Revenue, Burn, Runway, ARR
- Notable items requiring board attention

Requirements:

- Highlight variances >10% vs. plan
- Use plain English, not accounting jargon
- Include "so what" for each metric

Context:

[Upload P&L or paste key numbers]

Board priorities: Growth, cash efficiency, unit economics

What you get: A concise executive summary suitable for the first page of your board deck. Communicates financial performance in language board members actually understand.

6. Audit Prep Checklist

Use this to organize documentation before year-end audit.

Prompt

You are a Controller preparing for year-end audit with [Audit Firm].

Task:

Create an audit prep checklist and identify missing documentation.

Return Format:

- **Checklist grouped by:** P&L, Balance Sheet, Controls
- **Status for each item:** Complete | In Progress | Missing
- Priority flags for items auditors will request first

Requirements:

- Include standard PBC (Provided by Client) items
- Flag high-risk areas (revenue recognition, equity, debt)

Context:

Company: [size, industry]

Prior year findings: [if applicable]

What you get: A prioritized audit prep checklist showing what's ready and what needs immediate attention. Turns audit prep from reactive scrambling to proactive planning.

Validation Techniques: Don't Trust Blindly

AI is powerful but not perfect. Always validate outputs with these follow-up prompts:

"Recheck" Prompt

"Recheck your calculations. Walk through each step and confirm the math is correct."

"Critique" Prompt

"Critique the analysis you just provided. What assumptions might be wrong? What did you miss?"

"Explain Your Reasoning" Prompt

"Explain step-by-step how you arrived at this conclusion. Show your work."

Cross-reference AI outputs against your source systems. If the AI says revenue was \$1.2M but your ERP shows \$1.15M, dig into the discrepancy.

When NOT to Use AI

AI is a powerful tool for finance workflows, but it's not appropriate for every situation. Know the boundaries and understand where human judgment and professional certification are non-negotiable:

Formal tax positions

Don't use AI to draft tax return positions or interpret complex tax law. These require licensed tax professionals and carry legal liability. AI can help research tax topics or summarize regulations, but final positions must be determined by qualified advisors.

Legal interpretations

AI can summarize contracts, highlight key terms, or identify relevant clauses, but don't rely on it for legal advice on revenue recognition, lease accounting, or regulatory compliance. These interpretations require licensed attorneys who understand the legal implications and liability.

When compliance requires human certification

If a regulation requires a qualified professional to sign off (SOX controls, for example), AI can support the process by preparing documentation or running analyses, but it can't replace the required human certification and accountability.

Irreversible accounting entries

For high-stakes entries that affect audited financials, like year-end adjustments, equity transactions, or debt modifications, use AI to draft and model scenarios, but always require a senior accountant or controller to review and approve before posting. Once these entries hit your books, they're part of the permanent record.

Final audit opinions

AI can help prepare audit documentation, organize PBC lists, and draft support schedules, but auditors—not AI—form opinions on financial statements. The professional judgment and certification requirements can't be delegated to technology.

The fundamental rule: AI assists, humans decide. Use AI to accelerate work and improve consistency, but don't use it to bypass professional judgment or regulatory requirements.

Key Takeaways

- ✓ Set up project memory once – the AI remembers your company context
- ✓ Use Greg Brockman's 4-part structure: Goal, Return Format, Requirements, Context
- ✓ Upload actual data, not summaries – AI works best with real numbers
- ✓ Validate outputs with "Recheck," "Critique," and "Explain Your Reasoning" prompts
- ✓ Know when NOT to use AI – tax, legal, and audit opinions require humans

Finance leaders who master structured prompting close faster, scale FP&A without headcount, and spend less time in spreadsheets.

Other AI tools finance leaders are using



Using Rillet? These Prompts Work Even Better

If you're using Rillet's AI-native ERP, these workflows are built directly into your system. Aura (Rillet's AI assistant) has native access to your general ledger and transaction data; no uploads, no exports, no manual formatting.

Example Rillet prompts:

"Perform a flux analysis for January 2026"

"Find duplicate vendors in our AP system"

"What accruals do I need to record for March?"

"Show me revenue by customer for Q1"

Book a demo to see how finance teams are using natural language to run their entire close process, from variance analysis to board reporting.

