# Practical uses of ChatGPT

Mendlesham Computer Club

By Giles Godart-Brown

# Agenda

- What is ChatGPT
- How to ask useful questions
- Writing letters and emails
- Understanding difficult information
- Cooking, shopping and planning
- Hobbies, learning and technology
- What ChatGPT can get wrong
- Privacy and safe use

# What is ChatGPT?

- An AI assistant you can have a conversation with
- Ask questions in ordinary language
- Ask it to explain, write, plan, brainstorm and solve problems
- You can ask follow-up questions and change the answer
- ChatGPT Vs Google
  - Google is just a search engine that uses AI to summarise what it finds across a number of sources.
  - With ChatGPT you have a conversation, asking it to refine what it finds and to create documents, presentations, drawings and images from the results.

# How to connect to ChatGPT

- In a Browser - https://chatgpt.com or
- Use the ChatGPT App on phones and tablets

Note that ChatGPT does NOT collect your private information or track other applications

# How much does it cost?

## FREE

- £0 No subscription is needed
- Chat and ask questions
- Search the web for current information
- Upload files and images
- Create images and use GPTs
- Some features have usage limits
- For many people, Free is more than enough

## PAID

- Paid plans provide higher usage limits
- More access to advanced models and tools
- More generous access to files, images and data analysis
- Some plans offer longer memory/ context
- Useful if you use ChatGPT regularly
- You do NOT need to pay to get started

# Why create an account?

## WITHOUT AN ACCOUNT

You may be able to use ChatGPT without signing in

Access and features can be more limited

Less continuity between conversations

## WITH A FREE ACCOUNT

Keep conversations in your account

Continue conversations later

Use ChatGPT across supported devices

Access a wider range of features

Upgrade later if you find you need more

## GOOD ADVICE

Start with Free

Use it for a few weeks

See what you actually use

Only pay if you regularly hit limits or need paid features

# Let's have a go

- Ask ChatGPT:

  “What are five useful things you could help me with?”

- Then ask:

  “Which of those would be most useful to someone my age?”

# You don't need special words

- Talk to ChatGPT much as you would talk to another person
- If it misunderstands you, simply explain what you meant

- Try:

  “My Android phone won't connect to my car.
  What should I check?”

# ChatGPT is very good at follow-up questions

1. Start: “Explain what a passkey is.”
2. Then: “Explain it as if I'm not technical.”
3. Then: “Give me an example using an Android phone.”
4. Then: “What could go wrong?”

## It can change its answer to suit you

For example;

- “Explain broadband in simple terms.”
- “Make that shorter.”
- “Use an analogy involving the post.
  e.g. is this like the electricity network”
- “Explain it without technical words.”

# It’s very good at writing letters and emails

- For example;
  - “Write a polite but firm letter to my electricity company because I think my bill is wrong. Keep it under 200 words.”
- Then ask it to change it e.g.
  - “Make it friendlier and more natural.”
  - “Make it shorter and less formal.”
  - “I'm writing to an old friend. Make it warmer.”
- Always remember ChatGPT can help you find the words — you remain the author.

# Using it to explain technical or complex things

Try: “Can you explain this in plain English?”

Useful for:

- Council letters
- Instructions
- Terms & Conditions
- Computer messages
- Official information

## A quick example

I have just received this email,

“Your subscription shall automatically renew upon expiry unless notification of termination is received no fewer than 30 days prior to the renewal date.”

Explain this in plain English.

What do I actually need to do?

# Cooking

- Try: “I have chicken, onions, carrots and potatoes. What could I make for dinner?”
- Then:
  - “I don't have any cream.”
  - “Make it for four people.”
  - “Give me a simple recipe and shopping list.”

# Shopping

ChatGPT can help you decide what matters before buying

Example:

> “I need a printer for occasional home use. I don't print photographs. What should I look for?”

For current prices and availability, check retailers and manufacturers.

# Travel

Start with your constraints:

> “Plan a day out in Norwich for two people who don't want to walk too far.”

Add:

- Train travel
- Lunch budget
- Start and finish times
- Interests

# Hobbies

- Gardening:
  - “What should I do with my roses in September?”
  - Upload a photo and ask it to plan a garden
- Photography: “How can I improve my garden photographs?”
- History: “Tell me about the history of my local area.”
- Woodworking: “What do I need to make a simple bird table?”
- Genealogy: “How should I start researching my family tree?”

## Learning

Ask ChatGPT to become your personal tutor

> “Teach me how to use my Android phone. Start with the basics and give me one lesson at a time.”

You can ask for a quiz — and ask it to explain your mistakes.

# Computers and Phones

- Tell it:
  - What device you have
  - What you are trying to do
  - What you have already tried
  - The exact message on screen
- Then ask it to guide you one step at a time.

# Ideas and problem solving

- Use ChatGPT to help solve problems

- Example:
  - Where could an over 60’s social club go on an outing within 30 miles of Mendlesham?
  - We have a budget of £20 per person.
  - Which three would you try first?
  - Are they all accessible?

## It can also ask you questions

Try:

> “I'm thinking about buying a new car. Ask me questions one at a time to help me decide what sort of car I need.”

This can be easier than trying to formulate the perfect question yourself.

# ChatGPT and the internet

- ChatGPT searches the web to be able to create replies
- Useful for current events, unfamiliar topics and current information
- Current information should still be checked
- Web pages can be wrong, incomplete or out of date or ChatGPT's bot may not have visited the site recently.

## The “tell me more” trick

- If the answer isn't useful, don't start again.
- Tell ChatGPT what is missing:
  “We are both retired, prefer quiet places, don't want a long flight and enjoy gardens and history.”
- More useful context → more useful answer.

# Caveats

Mendlesham Computer Club

By Giles Godart-Brown

# Don't automatically believe ChatGPT

- ChatGPT can:
  - Make mistakes
  - Misunderstand you
  - Give outdated information
  - Sound confident when it is wrong

CONFIDENT DOES NOT MEAN CORRECT

# Always check the answer

- Be particularly careful with:
  - 🏦 Money and financial decisions
  - ⚖️ Legal matters
  - 🏥 Medical information
  - 🔐 Security
  - 📄 Important official matters
- Use ChatGPT to help understand — not as your only authority.

# Protect your personal information

- Don't paste:
  - Passwords or PINs
  - Bank or card details
  - National Insurance numbers
  - Passport details
  - Other people's private information
- Remove or replace identifying information when possible.

# Now its your turn



By Giles Godart-Brown

# Now its your turn

- Suggestions of letters to try;
  - Ask a tradesperson for a quotation
  - Complain about a service
  - Cancel a subscription
  - Invite friends to an event
- Other Suggestions;
  - Write an email
  - Plan a day out
  - Create a recipe
  - Explain something you've never understood
  - Solve a computer problem
  - Suggest ideas for a hobby
  - Plan something you've been putting off
  - Plan a garden

# Five things to remember

1. Just ask, you don't need special language
2. Keep the conversation going
3. Give it useful context
4. Ask it to change the answer
5. Check important information