[1]AI GENERATIVE ART PROMPT REFERENCE SHEET

A Comprehensive Guide to Vocabulary and Techniques

Introduction

This reference sheet provides essential vocabulary and techniques for creating effective AI art prompts. Use these terms to guide AI image generators like Midjourney, DALL-E, Stable Diffusion, and others to produce specific artistic results.

1. Subject & Content

Main Subjects

- Portrait - Face or upper body of a person
- Landscape - Natural outdoor scenery
- Still life - Arrangement of inanimate objects
- Architecture - Buildings and structures
- Character - Full person or creature design
- Scene - Multi-element composition with action
- Abstract - Non-representational forms and patterns
- Concept art - Design visualization for games/films

2. Art Styles & Movements

Classical Styles

- Realism - Accurate depiction of reality
- Photorealism - Extreme detail mimicking photographs
- Impressionism - Loose brushwork, light emphasis
- Expressionism - Emotional distortion and bold color
- Baroque - Dramatic, ornate, high contrast
- Renaissance - Classical proportions, perspective
- Art Nouveau - Organic, flowing lines and nature motifs
- Art Deco - Geometric, luxurious, streamlined

Modern & Contemporary

- Surrealism - Dreamlike, impossible combinations
- Cubism - Geometric fragmentation, multiple viewpoints
- Pop Art - Bold colors, commercial imagery
- Minimalism - Simple forms, limited elements
- Abstract Expressionism - Gestural, spontaneous

Digital & Genre Styles

- Anime/Manga - Japanese animation style
- Cyberpunk - High-tech, neon, dystopian future
- Steampunk - Victorian-era technology and aesthetics
- Fantasy - Magical, mythical elements
- Sci-fi - Futuristic technology and concepts
- Vaporwave - Retro 80s/90s digital aesthetics
- Pixel art - Retro video game style
- Low poly - Geometric, faceted 3D style

3. Medium & Techniques

Traditional Media

- Oil painting - Rich, textured brushwork
- Watercolor - Transparent, fluid washes
- Acrylic - Vibrant, fast-drying paint
- Pencil sketch - Graphite line work
- Charcoal - Dark, smudged, dramatic
- Ink drawing - Bold lines and contrast
- Pastel - Soft, chalky colors
- Gouache - Opaque, matte watercolor

Digital Techniques

- Digital painting - Created with digital brushes
- 3D render - Computer-generated 3D imagery
- Vector art - Clean, scalable graphics
- Matte painting - Photorealistic environment art
- Photo manipulation - Composite photography

Specialized Techniques

- Pointillism - Dots of color forming image
- Screen printing - Bold, graphic layers
- Etching - Fine engraved lines
- Woodblock print - Carved relief printing
- Collage - Mixed media assemblage

4. Lighting & Atmosphere

Lighting Types

- Natural lighting - Sunlight, daylight
- Golden hour - Warm, soft sunset/sunrise light
- Blue hour - Cool twilight atmosphere
- Rim lighting - Backlight creating edge glow
- Studio lighting - Controlled, professional setup
- Dramatic lighting - High contrast, shadows
- Soft lighting - Diffused, gentle illumination
- Volumetric lighting - Light rays, god rays
- Neon lighting - Glowing artificial lights
- Candlelight - Warm, flickering glow
- Bioluminescent - Natural glowing organisms

Atmosphere & Weather

- Foggy - Misty, obscured visibility
- Hazy - Soft, dreamlike atmosphere
- Stormy - Dark clouds, dramatic weather
- Rainy - Wet surfaces, reflections
- Overcast - Cloudy, even lighting
- Atmospheric perspective - Depth through haze

5. Color Palettes & Color Theory

Color Schemes

- Monochromatic - Single hue variations
- Complementary - Opposite colors on wheel
- Analogous - Adjacent colors on wheel
- Triadic - Three evenly spaced colors
- Warm palette - Reds, oranges, yellows
- Cool palette - Blues, greens, purples
- Pastel - Soft, desaturated tones
- Vibrant - Saturated, bold colors
- Muted - Desaturated, subdued tones
- Earth tones - Browns, greens, natural colors

Color Descriptors

- Saturated - Rich, intense color
- Desaturated - Washed out, grayed
- High contrast - Strong value differences
- Low contrast - Subtle value changes
- Iridescent - Color-shifting, opalescent
- Metallic - Reflective, shiny finish

6. Composition & Framing

Shot Types & Framing

- Extreme close-up - Very tight on detail
- Close-up - Face or object detail
- Medium shot - Waist up
- Full shot - Entire subject visible
- Wide shot - Subject in environment
- Extreme wide shot - Vast landscape view
- Establishing shot - Scene-setting view

Camera Angles

- Eye level - Neutral perspective
- High angle - Looking down
- Low angle - Looking up
- Bird's eye view - Directly overhead
- Worm's eye view - Ground level up
- Dutch angle - Tilted, diagonal
- Over-the-shoulder - Behind subject view

Composition Techniques

- Rule of thirds - Grid-based placement
- Golden ratio - Fibonacci spiral composition
- Centered composition - Symmetrical focus
- Leading lines - Directional elements
- Framing - Natural borders within scene
- Symmetry - Balanced, mirrored elements
- Negative space - Empty areas for emphasis
- Depth of field - Focus vs blur areas

7. Camera & Lens Terms

Lens Types

- Wide-angle lens - Expansive field of view
- Telephoto lens - Compressed perspective
- Fisheye lens - Extreme wide, distorted
- Macro lens - Extreme close-up detail
- Portrait lens - Flattering focal length
- Tilt-shift - Miniature effect, selective focus

Camera Effects

- Bokeh - Blurred background circles
- Shallow depth of field - Subject sharp, background blur
- Deep depth of field - Everything in focus
- Motion blur - Movement streaks
- Long exposure - Light trails, smooth water
- Film grain - Textured, vintage effect
- Vignette - Darkened corners
- Chromatic aberration - Color fringing
- Lens flare - Bright light artifacts

8. Quality & Detail Modifiers

Quality Terms

- Highly detailed - Intricate, fine elements
- Ultra realistic - Photographic accuracy
- 8K resolution - Extremely high quality
- Sharp focus - Crystal clear detail
- Crisp - Clean, well-defined edges
- Intricate - Complex, detailed patterns
- Hyperdetailed - Excessive fine detail
- Award-winning - Professional quality
- Masterpiece - Exceptional quality

Texture & Surface

- Smooth - Polished, uniform surface
- Rough - Coarse, uneven texture
- Glossy - Shiny, reflective finish
- Matte - Non-reflective surface
- Weathered - Worn, aged appearance
- Pristine - Clean, unblemished
- Ornate - Decorative, elaborate detail

9. Mood & Emotional Descriptors

- Ethereal - Delicate, otherworldly
- Ominous - Threatening, foreboding
- Serene - Peaceful, calm
- Melancholic - Sad, reflective
- Whimsical - Playful, fantastical
- Dramatic - Intense, theatrical
- Mysterious - Enigmatic, secretive
- Dystopian - Bleak, oppressive future
- Utopian - Idealistic, perfect world
- Haunting - Eerie, memorable
- Majestic - Grand, imposing
- Intimate - Personal, close
- Epic - Grand scale, heroic
- Cozy - Warm, comfortable

10. Artist References

Note: Reference specific artists to guide style. Some commonly used examples:

Classical & Traditional

- In the style of Leonardo da Vinci - Renaissance master
- In the style of Vincent van Gogh - Post-impressionist
- In the style of Claude Monet - Impressionist
- In the style of Salvador Dali - Surrealist
- In the style of Pablo Picasso - Cubist

Digital & Contemporary

- In the style of Beeple - Digital surrealism
- In the style of Artgerm - Character illustration
- In the style of Greg Rutkowski - Fantasy art
- In the style of Studio Ghibli - Anime backgrounds

11. Time Periods & Eras

- Ancient - Classical antiquity
- Medieval - Middle Ages aesthetic
- Victorian - 19th century elegance
- Art Deco era - 1920s-1930s glamour
- Mid-century modern - 1950s-1960s design
- Retro - 1970s-1980s nostalgia
- Contemporary - Modern day
- Futuristic - Advanced technology

12. Special Effects & Modifiers

- Glowing - Luminous, radiating light
- Holographic - Rainbow iridescence
- Transparent - See-through quality
- Translucent - Semi-transparent
- Particle effects - Dust, sparks, magic
- Reflective - Mirror-like surfaces
- Subsurface scattering - Light through skin/wax
- Caustics - Light patterns through water
- Bloom - Soft light glow effect
- Chromatic - Prismatic color separation

13. Rendering & Technical Terms

Rendering Engines

- Unreal Engine - Game engine aesthetic
- Octane render - High-quality 3D
- Ray tracing - Realistic light simulation
- V-Ray - Photorealistic rendering
- Arnold render - Production-quality CG

Technical Quality

- Global illumination - Realistic light bounce
- Ambient occlusion - Shadow in crevices
- Physically based rendering (PBR) - Accurate materials
- HDR - High dynamic range lighting

14. Aspect Ratios & Dimensions

- Square (1:1) - Instagram posts
- Portrait (2:3 or 4:5) - Vertical orientation
- Landscape (3:2 or 16:9) - Horizontal wide
- Widescreen (21:9) - Cinematic format
- Panoramic - Extra wide format

15. Prompt Construction Tips

Basic Structure

Effective prompts typically follow this pattern:

- Subject/Content (what to create)
- Style/Medium (how it should look)
- Lighting & Atmosphere
- Color Palette
- Composition/Perspective
- Quality Modifiers

Example Prompts

Portrait Example:
"Portrait of a young woman, oil painting style, warm golden hour lighting, impressionist brushwork, soft pastel color palette, shallow depth of field, highly detailed, by John Singer Sargent"

Landscape Example:
"Misty mountain landscape, digital painting, ethereal blue hour atmosphere, cool color palette with purple hues, wide-angle shot, volumetric lighting, highly detailed, 8K, in the style of Albert Bierstadt"

Character Design Example:
"Cyberpunk warrior character, full body shot, neon lighting, vibrant pink and blue color scheme, high contrast, futuristic armor design, concept art style, dramatic low angle, octane render, ultra detailed, by Syd Mead"

16. Best Practices

- Be specific - Clear descriptions yield better results
- Use commas to separate concepts
- Combine multiple modifiers for unique styles
- Reference specific artists for consistent style
- Weight important terms (platform-specific)
- Use negative prompts to avoid unwanted elements
- Experiment with different combinations
- Start broad, then refine with iterations
- Keep a library of successful prompts

Note: Different AI platforms may interpret prompts differently. Experiment to find what works best for your chosen tool.