RECON11
GLOBAL SYSTEMS, LLC

IMAGE PROMPT FIELD MANUAL

99 COPY-READY IMAGE PROMPTS

How to write an image prompt that comes back looking like a photograph or a print instead of a generated picture, with 99 prompts already written that way

IM

QUICK START

CHOOSE A PROMPT

Find the kind of picture you need, open the matching prompt, and make one real picture today.

ONE-MINUTE QUICK START: PICK THE PICTURE YOU NEED TODAY

IM-10 **Loaf on the rack**
A product page, a menu, a weekly special. PAGE 10

IM-37 **Tailgate at the end of a job**
A page header, an about page, a how-we-work section. PAGE 10

IM-55 **Painted steel**
Behind a headline, a section divider, a slide background. PAGE 13

Copy the prompt, change the subject to yours, and keep the rest. Then check the picture against the eight tells on page 03 before you use it.

INSIDE THIS GUIDE

Why a picture looks generated: the eight tells 03

The seven-part recipe 04

Words to cut, and what to write instead 05

Weak prompt, full prompt: a tradesperson at work 06

Weak prompt, full prompt: food 07

Weak prompt, full prompt: an illustration 08

Find your prompt: all 99 by category 09

Photographs to start with: three prompt cards 10

Made by hand to start with: three prompt cards 11

Before you publish: eight checks and ten rules 12

Open the library and make your first picture 13

THE PROBLEM

WHY IT LOOKS GENERATED

Eight tells. Each one traces back to something the prompt asked for, or forgot to ask for.

01

Everything is centered and squared up

Real desks, benches and truck beds are never lined up to the frame.

FIXED BY: FRAMING AND SHAPE

02

Nothing is in use

No one was just there. Nothing is half done, half eaten or put down in a hurry.

FIXED BY: MOMENT

03

Every surface is brand new

No scuffs, dust, fingerprints, stains or wear on anything.

FIXED BY: FLAWS

04

The light comes from nowhere

Even, shadowless light with no window, lamp or sun you could point to.

FIXED BY: LIGHT

05

Glow, fog and sparks

Effects the scene does not explain, added to make it feel important.

FIXED BY: LEAVE OUT

06

Sharp from front to back

A real lens holds one distance. The rest goes soft.

FIXED BY: CAPTURE

07

Every color turned up

Real scenes have a lot of dull color and one or two strong ones.

FIXED BY: CAPTURE

08

It could be any business, anywhere

Nothing in it belongs to one trade, one town or one hour of the day.

FIXED BY: PLACE AND TIME

WHY IT HAPPENS

A generator fills every gap in a prompt with the most common answer it has seen. The most common picture of anything is an advertisement: centered, spotless, evenly lit. Leave a part out and you get the ad.

HOW TO USE THIS PAGE

After every run, look for these eight. Each one points at one part of the recipe on the next page. Fix that part and run it again.

THE METHOD

THE SEVEN-PART RECIPE

Fill these in order. Every one of the 99 prompts in the library is written this way.

PART	WHAT TO WRITE	EXAMPLE: IM-10, LOAF ON THE RACK
1. Subject	The one thing the picture is of. One, not three.	a round sourdough loaf
2. Moment	What just happened, or what it is in the middle of. This is what stops a picture looking staged.	cooling on a wire rack, a bench scraper and a folded linen cloth pushed to one side
3. Place and time	A real, plain place and an hour of the day.	on a flour-dusted steel bench in a bakery at 6 in the morning
4. Capture	A camera and lens, a film, or a print or paint process. Say how it was made, not how good it is.	photo on a 50mm lens at f/2.8
5. Light	A source you could point to: a window, a work lamp, a flash, an overcast sky.	gray window light from the left, one fluorescent tube overhead giving the steel a slightly green cast
6. Flaws	Two true imperfections. Wear, dust, a stain, a crooked edge.	flour fingerprints on the bench edge, an uneven dark blister on the crust
7. Framing and shape	Where the camera stands, what the frame cuts off, and the shape you need.	from standing height, a little off-center to the right, a second rack out of focus behind

JOINED IN ORDER, WITH WHAT TO LEAVE OUT

A round sourdough loaf, cooling on a wire rack, a bench scraper and a folded linen cloth pushed to one side, on a flour-dusted steel bench in a bakery at 6 in the morning. Photo on a 50mm lens at f/2.8, gray window light from the left, one fluorescent tube overhead giving the steel a slightly green cast. Flour fingerprints on the bench edge, an uneven dark blister on the crust. From standing height, a little off-center to the right, a second rack out of focus behind, 4:5. No packaging, no lettering, no logos, no people.

BLANK RECIPE: SELECT, COPY, FILL IN

```
Subject: [subject]
Moment: [moment]
Place and time: [place and time]
Capture: [capture]
Light: [light]
Flaws: [flaws]
Framing and shape: [framing and shape]
Leave out: [no lettering, no logos]
```

THE TWO PARTS MOST PROMPTS SKIP

Moment and **Flaws**. Without a moment the picture is a display. Without flaws it is a catalog. If you only have time to add two things to a weak prompt, add these.

WORDS GO ON AFTERWARD

Do not ask the generator for your business name, a slogan or a price. Leave the space empty and add them in a design tool.

THE METHOD

WORDS TO CUT

These words tend to pull a generator toward the glossy stock look. Here is what to write in their place.

IF YOUR PROMPT SAYS	WRITE THIS INSTEAD
~~photorealistic, hyperrealistic, 8K, ultra detailed~~	Name the camera, the lens or the film: a 50mm lens at f/2.8, 35mm color negative film, a phone snapshot.
~~cinematic lighting, dramatic, volumetric, rim light~~	Name the source: gray window light from the left, a work lamp, on-camera flash at dusk.
~~3D render, studio product shot~~	Only if a render is what you want. Otherwise say photo, gouache, linocut or risograph, and say what it is printed or painted on.
~~beautiful, stunning, premium, epic, masterpiece~~	Cut them. They ask for polish, and polish is the problem. Describe one more thing in the frame instead.
~~perfectly arranged, symmetrical, centered~~	Off-center, cut off by the edge of the frame, dropped where it fell.
~~glowing, neon, fog, mist, sparks~~	Cut them unless the thing is really there, like steam off a pot or dust in a workshop.
~~clean, pristine, flawless, sleek~~	Name two flaws: a coffee ring, a chipped corner, a wrinkle, paint outside the line.
~~in the style of a named artist, trending on a site~~	Name the medium and the materials: black oil-based ink on off-white printmaking paper.

WHY THESE WORDS FAIL

They describe how good the picture should be, not what is in it. A generator cannot see "premium". It can see a coffee ring, a steel bench and a low sun.

THE TEST

Read each word in your prompt and ask: could a camera photograph this? If the answer is no, cut the word or replace it with something a camera could.

ONE EXCEPTION

If a render, a neon sign or fog is really what the picture is of, say so plainly. The problem is asking for them as decoration.

WEAK PROMPT, FULL PROMPT | 1 OF 3

A TRADESPERSON AT WORK

Same picture in mind, two prompts. The weak one is not wrong. It is unfinished, and the generator finishes it with the most average answer it has.

THE PROMPT MOST PEOPLE TYPE

```
A photo of a plumber fixing a sink, professional, high quality.
```

WHAT A PROMPT LIKE THAT TENDS TO RETURN

A smiling model in a spotless uniform, holding a wrench next to a shiny sink, looking at the camera.

A description of the usual pattern, not a recorded run.

WHAT IT LEAVES THE GENERATOR TO GUESS

`"a plumber fixing a sink"`	A subject, but no moment. Fixing what, at what stage, seen from where?
`"professional"`	An opinion. The generator turns it into a clean uniform and a smile at the camera.
`"high quality"`	Asks for polish. Polish is how the stock-photo look gets in.
`nothing about the place`	So it invents a bright, spotless kitchen that belongs to no one.
`nothing about the camera or the light`	So you get even studio light and everything sharp from front to back.
`nothing worn`	So every tool and surface is brand new.

THE SAME PICTURE, ALL SEVEN PARTS: IM-01

SUBJECT	A plumber's forearms and gloved hands
MOMENT	Tightening a brass compression fitting, with worn slip-joint pliers, a damp rag and a headlamp on the cabinet floor
PLACE AND TIME	Under a kitchen sink, seen from inside the cabinet looking out, on a weekday afternoon
CAPTURE	35mm color negative film, 28mm lens
LIGHT	Lit only by the headlamp and daylight from the kitchen behind
FLAWS	Slight motion blur in the hands, visible grain, old water stains on the particleboard
FRAMING AND SHAPE	The cabinet edge cutting into the left of the frame
SHAPE	3:2
LEAVE OUT	No face, no lettering, no logos

WHAT TO LOOK FOR IN THE RESULT

Hands that hold the tool the way a person would. A real light source. No face trying to sell you something.

COPY-READY: IM-01, UNDER THE SINK

A plumber's forearms and gloved hands, tightening a brass compression fitting, with worn slip-joint pliers, a damp rag and a headlamp on the cabinet floor, under a kitchen sink, seen from inside the cabinet looking out, on a weekday afternoon. 35mm color negative film, 28mm lens, lit only by the headlamp and daylight from the kitchen behind. Slight motion blur in the hands, visible grain, old water stains on the particleboard. The cabinet edge cutting into the left of the frame, 3:2. No face, no lettering, no logos.

WEAK PROMPT, FULL PROMPT | 2 OF 3

FOOD

Same picture in mind, two prompts. The weak one is not wrong. It is unfinished, and the generator finishes it with the most average answer it has.

THE PROMPT MOST PEOPLE TYPE

```
Delicious tacos on a table,
food photography, 8K,
cinematic lighting.
```

WHAT A PROMPT LIKE THAT TENDS TO RETURN

Three identical untouched tacos in a perfect row on a dark slate board, glistening, with scattered cilantro and a moody glow.

A description of the usual pattern, not a recorded run.

WHAT IT LEAVES THE GENERATOR TO GUESS

`"delicious"`	An opinion. It adds gloss and steam, not information.
`"on a table"`	Which table, where, at what time of day?
`"food photography"`	A category, not a camera. It pulls toward the magazine cover look.
`"8K"`	A file size. It tells the generator nothing about what is in the frame.
`"cinematic lighting"`	Light from nowhere, with a glow.
`nothing eaten, nothing spilled`	So the plate is untouched and the garnish is tweezered into place.

THE SAME PICTURE, ALL SEVEN PARTS: IM-19

SUBJECT	A half-eaten order of fish tacos
MOMENT	In a paper-lined red plastic basket, with a squeezed lime wedge, a crumpled napkin and a sweating plastic cup
PLACE AND TIME	On a sun-faded wooden picnic table at dusk
CAPTURE	Compact point-and-shoot camera, direct on-camera flash
LIGHT	Hard flash from the camera, the background falling to dark blue
FLAWS	A drip of sauce on the paper, a hard shadow under the basket
FRAMING AND SHAPE	Slightly tilted, cropped close so the basket runs off the bottom edge
SHAPE	1:1
LEAVE OUT	No hands, no lettering, no logos

WHAT TO LOOK FOR IN THE RESULT

A bite gone. A used napkin. A shadow that matches one flash or one window.

COPY-READY: IM-19, TACOS ON FLASH

A half-eaten order of fish tacos, in a paper-lined red plastic basket, with a squeezed lime wedge, a crumpled napkin and a sweating plastic cup, on a sun-faded wooden picnic table at dusk. Compact point-and-shoot camera, direct on-camera flash, hard flash from the camera, the background falling to dark blue. A drip of sauce on the paper, a hard shadow under the basket. Slightly tilted, cropped close so the basket runs off the bottom edge, 1:1. No hands, no lettering, no logos.

WEAK PROMPT, FULL PROMPT | 3 OF 3

AN ILLUSTRATION

Same picture in mind, two prompts. The weak one is not wrong. It is unfinished, and the generator finishes it with the most average answer it has.

THE PROMPT MOST PEOPLE TYPE

```
Minimalist illustration of a bicycle, clean modern style.
```

WHAT A PROMPT LIKE THAT TENDS TO RETURN

A perfectly smooth flat-color bicycle on a pastel gradient circle, with no texture and no sign of a hand.

A description of the usual pattern, not a recorded run.

WHAT IT LEAVES THE GENERATOR TO GUESS

`"minimalist"`	A style word with no materials behind it. It comes back as flat vector shapes.
`"illustration"`	Made with what? Paint, pencil, ink and print all look different.
`"clean"`	Removes every mark of a hand, which is the part that makes it look made.
`"modern"`	An opinion. It pulls toward the same pastel flat style as every app screen.
`"a bicycle"`	Doing what, where? A subject with no story is an icon.
`nothing about color`	So you get the default palette, usually blue and purple.

THE SAME PICTURE, ALL SEVEN PARTS: IM-64

SUBJECT	A delivery bicycle
MOMENT	Leaning against a brick wall with a crate of bread strapped to the rear rack
PLACE AND TIME	On a quiet street in the morning
CAPTURE	Gouache on cold-press watercolor paper, flat opaque color
LIGHT	Photographed flat in daylight, no glare
FLAWS	Visible brush strokes, slightly wobbly dry-brush edges, paint a little outside the pencil sketch in two places
FRAMING AND SHAPE	A loose border of bare paper all round, limited palette of brick red, mustard, sage green, off-white and one dark blue-gray
SHAPE	4:3
LEAVE OUT	No gradients, no black ink outlines, no digital smoothness, no lettering

WHAT TO LOOK FOR IN THE RESULT

Brush strokes. Paper showing through. An edge where the paint went over the line.

COPY-READY: IM-64, GOUACHE BICYCLE

A delivery bicycle, leaning against a brick wall with a crate of bread strapped to the rear rack, on a quiet street in the morning. Gouache on cold-press watercolor paper, flat opaque color, photographed flat in daylight, no glare. Visible brush strokes, slightly wobbly dry-brush edges, paint a little outside the pencil sketch in two places. A loose border of bare paper all round, limited palette of brick red, mustard, sage green, off-white and one dark blue-gray, 4:3. No gradients, no black ink outlines, no digital smoothness, no lettering.

PROMPT INDEX

FIND YOUR PROMPT

Pick the category by the kind of picture, then the prompt closest to your subject.

CATEGORY	USE IT WHEN	PROMPT IDS
Work in progress	You need to show the job being done, without a posed model.	IM-01 to IM-09
Products where they live	You need a product picture that does not look like a catalog cutout.	IM-10 to IM-18
Food and drink	You need food that looks like someone was about to eat it.	IM-19 to IM-27
Places and storefronts	You need to show where the business is, at an hour that says something.	IM-28 to IM-36
Tools and tabletops	You want a top-down picture of the kit, without the showroom look.	IM-37 to IM-45
Close-up details	You want one small detail big, to stand for the whole craft.	IM-46 to IM-54
Background plates	You need something quiet to put words on.	IM-55 to IM-63
Painted and drawn	You want an illustration that looks like a person made it with real materials.	IM-64 to IM-72
Printmaking looks	You want a poster, stamp or mark with the grain of real ink on real paper.	IM-73 to IM-81
Diagrams and drawings	You need to explain how something goes together, in a drawing that looks hand made.	IM-82 to IM-90
Handmade models	You want something friendly and three-dimensional that is plainly a made object, not a render.	IM-91 to IM-99

Nine prompts per category, 99 in all. The first seven categories are photographs. The last four are made by hand.

CUE 1: SHOWING YOUR OWN WORK

Use a real photo if you have one. A generated picture of a job you did not do can mislead a customer. For that page, pick from the four made-by-hand categories instead.

CUE 2: YOU NEED ROOM FOR WORDS

Start in Background plates, or add where the empty space goes to the framing part of any prompt.

CUE 3: NOT SURE OF THE LOOK

Run the same subject through one photograph prompt and one print prompt. Keep the one that looks least like an advertisement.

All 99 prompts: open the library 13

COPY-READY PROMPTS

PHOTOGRAPHS TO START WITH

Three photographs most small businesses can use this week.

IM-10 Loaf on the rack

Use for: A product page, a menu, a weekly special.

A round sourdough loaf, cooling on a wire rack, a bench scraper and a folded linen cloth pushed to one side, on a flour-dusted steel bench in a bakery at 6 in the morning. Photo on a 50mm lens at f/2.8, gray window light from the left, one fluorescent tube overhead giving the steel a slightly green cast. Flour fingerprints on the bench edge, an uneven dark blister on the crust. From standing height, a little off-center to the right, a second rack out of focus behind, 4:5. No packaging, no lettering, no logos, no people.

MADE AS Photo on a 50mm lens at f/2.8
SHAPE 4:5

CHECK THE PICTURE
Check the product itself is not misshapen and carries no invented label or brand.

ALSO CHECK
Swap the loaf for your product. Keep the bench, the hour and the two flaws.

IM-28 Repair shop at dusk

Use for: A home page header, a contact page, a business listing.

A small single-story lawn equipment repair shop, the roll-up door half open and warm tungsten light spilling onto cracked asphalt, two push mowers waiting outside, on a two-lane road at dusk in late summer. Medium format color film, 40mm lens, a pale orange sky fading to gray-blue, one streetlight just coming on. Power lines crossing the top of the frame, a faded blank sign panel over the door. From across the road, a pickup's tailgate at the right edge, the upper third left as plain sky, 16:9. No readable lettering, no people.

MADE AS Medium format color film, 40mm lens
SHAPE 16:9

CHECK THE PICTURE
Read every sign and window in the frame. Blank or blur anything the generator tried to spell.

ALSO CHECK
Blank or cover every sign before you publish. Do not present it as your real building.

IM-37 Tailgate at the end of a job

Use for: A page header, an about page, a how-we-work section.

A pickup tailgate with the tools of a finish carpenter, a scuffed tape measure, a carpenter's pencil worn to a stub, a folded paper plan with a coffee ring, leather work gloves dropped where they fell, at the end of a job in the late afternoon. Phone camera snapshot, slightly wide, a little lens distortion, late sun from the upper right, long hard shadows, one corner in shade. Sawdust caught in the ribs of the bed liner, nothing lined up, nothing centered. Looking straight down, 3:2. No hands, no readable words on the plan, no logos.

MADE AS Phone camera snapshot, slightly wide, a little lens distortion
SHAPE 3:2

CHECK THE PICTURE
Check nothing is lined up to the frame and nothing is floating. Every object should cast one shadow in the same direction.

ALSO CHECK
Swap the tools for the ones your trade carries. Keep "nothing lined up, nothing centered".

COPY-READY PROMPTS

MADE BY HAND TO START WITH

Three pictures that are plainly illustrations, which is often the safer choice.

IM-64 Gouache bicycle

Use for: A blog post, an email header, an empty-state picture.

A delivery bicycle, leaning against a brick wall with a crate of bread strapped to the rear rack, on a quiet street in the morning. Gouache on cold-press watercolor paper, flat opaque color, photographed flat in daylight, no glare. Visible brush strokes, slightly wobbly dry-brush edges, paint a little outside the pencil sketch in two places. A loose border of bare paper all round, limited palette of brick red, mustard, sage green, off-white and one dark blue-gray, 4:3. No gradients, no black ink outlines, no digital smoothness, no lettering.

MADE AS Gouache on cold-press watercolor paper, flat opaque color

SHAPE 4:3

CHECK THE PICTURE
Look for the materials: paper tooth, brush marks, uneven edges. If it is perfectly smooth, run it again.

ALSO CHECK
Keep the limited palette line. It is what stops the default colors coming back.

IM-73 Two-color risograph

Use for: A poster, a flyer, an event graphic.

A claw hammer and three nails, drawn as bold simplified shapes, the nails scattered, on a plain ground. Two-color risograph print in fluorescent orange and teal on uncoated cream paper, scanned flat. The two layers slightly out of register, grainy halftone in the shadows, uneven ink in the large flat areas. Shapes off-center, the hammer handle running off the bottom edge, dark brown where the inks overlap, 3:4. No lettering, no border, no gradients.

MADE AS Two-color risograph print in fluorescent orange and teal on uncoated cream paper

SHAPE 3:4

CHECK THE PICTURE
Count the ink colors. If you asked for two and see five, or the edges are perfectly crisp, run it again.

ALSO CHECK
Two inks only. If a third color appears, run it again.

IM-91 Paper shopfronts

Use for: A home page picture, a neighborhood or location page.

A row of three small shopfronts, built from cut and folded colored paper and corrugated cardboard, the walls bowing slightly, on a tabletop against a plain kraft paper backdrop. Photo of a real handmade model, 85mm lens, one desk lamp from the left with a real soft shadow. Visible cut edges, a little dried glue at one seam, a pencil mark on a tab. Focus on the middle shop, the front edge of the table soft, colors of sage green, mustard, brick red and cream, 4:3. Blank paper strips for signs, no lettering, no figures.

MADE AS Photo of a real handmade model, 85mm lens

SHAPE 4:3

CHECK THE PICTURE
Look for the hand: cut edges, glue, fingerprints, a real shadow. A model with none of those is a render.

ALSO CHECK
Ask for the glue and the cut edges. They are what make it read as a real model.

REVIEW

BEFORE YOU PUBLISH

The checks are for the picture that comes back. The rules are for the prompt you write next.

EIGHT CHECKS. PRINT THIS PAGE IF IT HELPS

- [ ] Nothing in it is borrowed: no logo, character, product design or real face that belongs to someone else.
- [ ] No one would take it for a real photo of a job you did, unless you say plainly that it is an illustration.
- [ ] Hands, tools and edges hold up when you zoom in.
- [ ] Any lettering in the frame is either blank or you have covered it. Generators misspell.
- [ ] It still reads at thumbnail size.
- [ ] The empty space is where your words need to sit.
- [ ] Your image tool's terms allow the use you have in mind.
- [ ] You saved the prompt next to the picture, with what you changed.

TEN RULES FOR WRITING THE PROMPT

01 **One subject per picture.** Two ideas in one frame come back as a muddle.

02 **Give it a moment.** Something is cooling, half eaten, just put down. A picture of things that were only arranged looks arranged.

03 **Describe what is in the frame.** "Premium" and "modern" are opinions. A coffee ring, a steel bench and a low sun are things a camera can see.

04 **Say how it was made.** A lens, a film, a print process. Never ask for "realistic". Ask for the camera.

05 **Point to the light.** A window, a lamp, a flash, the sky. If you cannot say where it comes from, neither can the generator.

06 **Ask for two flaws.** Wear and dirt are what make a thing look owned.

07 **Keep it off-center.** Let the frame cut something off. Say where the empty space goes if words will sit on it.

08 **Add your logo and your words afterward.** Put them on in a design tool. Generators misdraw marks and misspell text.

09 **Do not name a living artist, a brand, a character or a real person.** Name the medium and the materials instead.

10 **Change one thing at a time.** Keep the prompt that worked, and note what you changed.

KEEP A RECORD

Save the prompt beside the picture, and note the tool and the date. The Results Log tab in the workbook is built for this.

COMPANION RESOURCES

OPEN THE LIBRARY

The full library ships in three formats. Start with one picture you already need.

THREE COMPANION FILES, SAME 99 PROMPTS

PDF

Recon11_99_Image_Prompt_Library.pdf
All 99 prompts as designed cards, three to a page, in the same format as this manual.

XLSX

Recon11_99_Image_Prompts.xlsx
Every prompt split into its seven parts, a build-your-own sheet that joins them for you, and a results log. No macros.

MD

Recon11_99_Image_Prompts.md
The same 99 prompts as plain text. Opens in any text editor.

HOW TO OPEN THEM

All three come in the same kit folder as this PDF. They are also attached inside it: in Adobe Acrobat or Reader, open the Attachments panel (the paperclip icon) and double-click a file.

MAKE YOUR FIRST PICTURE IN FOUR MOVES

01 **Choose.** Pick one picture you need this week. Find its category on page 09 or with the Category filter in the workbook.

02 **Swap.** Copy the prompt and change the subject to yours. Keep the other six parts.

03 **Run it twice.** The same prompt gives a different picture each time. Make at least two and keep the better one.

04 **Check and log.** Work the list on page 12, then add one row to the Results Log: prompt ID, tool, what you changed, and whether you kept it.

These prompts were written by Recon11 and had not been run through an image generator by Recon11 when this edition was made. Results vary by tool and by run. Nothing here promises a result. Check your image tool's terms before commercial use. This guide is educational and is not legal or other professional advice.