

# Build your own *brand guidelines*

One document that says what your logo is, what your colours are and what your fonts are. Your signwriter, your printer and whoever builds your website all work off it. This guide gets you one in an afternoon, for nothing.

## About 2 hours

ONE SITTING, START TO FINISH

## \$0

NO PAID TOOLS NEEDED

## 2 routes

USE AI, OR USE CANVA

### WHY THIS IS WORTH AN AFTERNOON

## Every time someone asks for your logo, it costs you.

The signwriter wants a vector file. The shirt mob want it on a dark background. The bloke doing your Facebook wants a square version. If you have to hunt through your phone every time, you end up with four slightly different logos on four different things, and the whole lot looks like four different businesses.

#### WHAT IT STOPS

### Re-deciding

You pick your colours once. After that it is a lookup, not a decision.

#### WHAT IT STOPS

### Wrong files

Send one link. The printer, the signwriter and the web builder all get the right thing first go.

#### WHAT IT BUILDS

### Recognition

Same green on the ute, the shirt, the quote and the sign. People start recognising you before they read the name.

## Answer these five before you open anything.

Everything after this is built from these five answers. If you skip them you will end up with a nice looking logo that says nothing about your business. Write them on your phone, in your notes app, wherever. You will paste them into the prompts later.

### THE FIVE ANSWERS

1

#### What you do, in one line

Plain words, the way you would say it at the pub. "Domestic electrical, mostly renos and switchboard upgrades."

2

#### Who you do it for

Homeowners, builders, real estate agents, strata, all of them. Be specific about who you actually want more of.

3

#### Three words for how you want to come across

Pick three and stick to them. Reliable, straight up, premium, old school, fast, careful, family run, high end.

4

#### Your patch

The towns you actually service. This matters more than people think, it turns up in your copy and your photos.

5

## Your one proof

The thing that makes you the safe choice. Years on the tools, review count, licence number, the big job you did.

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### WORTH KNOWING

Word three on that list does most of the work. "Premium" and "old school" produce completely different logos, colours and fonts. If you say all three words out loud and one of them feels like a stretch, take it out and pick one that is true.

### WHAT A FILLED IN ONE LOOKS LIKE

1

Domestic electrical. Mostly renos, switchboard upgrades and a bit of solar. No commercial, no new builds.

2

Homeowners doing up an older place, and two builders who use me regularly. I want more of the builder work.

3

Reliable. Straight up. Careful.

4

Ballina, Lennox, Alstonville, and Byron if the job is worth the drive.

5

Nineteen years on the tools and 84 five star reviews. I have never left a job unfinished overnight.

That is the standard. Plain, specific, and true. Notice there is nothing clever in it: no slogan, no "passionate about quality". The last line is the one that sells, and it is just a fact he happened to know about himself.

## The AI route.

Six prompts, in order, all in **one ChatGPT conversation**. Copy them, swap the **highlighted bits** for your own answers from Part 1, and paste them in. Keep it in the one thread: each prompt builds on what it already knows about you, and starting fresh throws that away.

ALL OF IT, IN ONE  
PLACE

### One tool, one conversation

ChatGPT does the thinking, the writing and the picture. One account, one tab, one thread from the first question to the finished document.

WHY ONE TOOL MATTERS

### It remembers

By the time you ask for a logo it already knows your trade, your colours and your three words. You stop re-explaining yourself and the answers get sharper each time.

WORTH KNOWING

### Words are cheap, pictures are not

You can chat all day for nothing. Images are capped on the free plan, which changes how you should work. Read the box below before you generate anything.

#### READ THIS BEFORE YOU START GENERATING

Talking to it is free and effectively unlimited. **Pictures are not**. On the free plan you get somewhere around two or three images a day, and it resets 24 hours after your first one rather than at midnight. That is the single thing that will decide whether you finish this or not.

**So do not waste a single one.** Prompts 1 to 3 cost you nothing, so do all your deciding there. Then, before you generate anything, ask it: "**Before you make it, write out the logo prompt you are about to use and let me check it.**" Fix the wording while it is still free. Only then spend a go on the actual picture.

Be realistic about this bit: everything except the logo happens in one sitting. **The logo can take two or three days** on a free plan, because you only get a few swings at it each day. That is normal, and it is still faster than waiting on a designer.

## PROMPT 1, THE BRIEF

CHATGPT

I run a trade business in Australia and I am building simple brand guidelines. Here are my answers.

What I do: [your answer 1]

Who I do it for: [your answer 2]

How I want to come across: [your three words]

My area: [your towns]

What makes me the safe choice: [your proof]

Write me a short brand brief from that. I want: one sentence on what the business is, one sentence on who it is for, and three words that describe the personality. Keep it plain. No marketing waffle, no jargon. Australian English. Then ask me one question that would sharpen it.

That last line matters. It makes the tool interrogate you instead of just agreeing, and the answer usually improves everything downstream.

## PROMPT 2, COLOURS

CHATGPT

Using that brief, give me three colour palettes. For each one give me:

- a main colour, a dark colour for text, a light background colour, and one accent
- the hex code for every colour
- one line on why it suits the business
- one line on where the accent should and should not be used

Rules: they have to work on a vehicle, a shirt and a printed invoice, so keep them simple and high contrast. Tell me which of the three you would pick and why. Australian English.

Ask for hex codes every single time. That six character code (like #64DCA4) is what the printer, the signwriter and the web builder actually need. "Green" is not a colour anyone can match.



A PALETTE NEEDS FOUR JOBS FILLED, NOT FOUR COLOURS YOU LIKE

### PROMPT 3, FONTS

CHATGPT

Now pick fonts. Give me three pairings, each one a heading font and a body font. Every font must be free on Google Fonts so I can use it commercially and hand it to anyone.

For each pairing tell me:

- the two font names
- what feeling it gives
- which of my three personality words it matches

Then tell me which one you would pick and why. Keep the body font boring and readable, that is the point of it.

Insisting on Google Fonts saves you twice. They are free for commercial use, and anyone you hire can install them in ten seconds instead of asking you to buy a licence.

### PROMPT 4, THE LOGO

CHATGPT

Do NOT generate an image yet.

I want a logo for my business. Based on everything above, describe four different directions in words. Different ideas, not four versions of the same one. For each, tell me the idea in a sentence and what the mark would be.

Then ask me which one to build, and write out the image prompt you would use for it so I can check it before you spend a generation on it.

Whichever we pick, it has to be:

- flat vector style, solid shapes, no gradients, no 3D, no glossy effects, no shadows
- readable at 20mm wide on an invoice and 2 metres wide on a vehicle
- works in one solid colour as well as full colour
- the business name spelled exactly like this: **[your business name]**
- plain background, no mockup, no scene, just the logo

The first line is the important one. Four ideas in words costs you nothing, and picking from words instead of pictures means you spend your one or two daily generations on something you have already decided you want. Read the image prompt it writes back and correct anything wrong **before** you say go, especially the spelling of your own name.

#### PROMPT 5, REFINE

CHATGPT

Change these things and keep everything else identical:

[say exactly what you want. "make the icon simpler", "lose the outline", "the name bigger and the icon smaller", "try the icon above the name instead of beside it"]

Write the updated prompt out first and let me check it before you generate.

One change at a time, and check the prompt each time. Two rounds of this is usually enough.

#### DO NOT ASK IT FOR THE BLACK AND WHITE VERSIONS

This catches everyone. Ask an image model for "the same logo in black" and it does not give you the same logo, it draws a **new** one that looks similar. Do that four times and you have four logos, which is the exact mess this whole document exists to prevent.

**Get one logo you are happy with, and stop.** The all black, the white and the icon-only versions get made from that one file in Canva in about two minutes, in Part 3. Free, identical every time, and it does not touch your daily image limit.

Write my brand guidelines document from everything above. Use these headings and keep each one to a short paragraph or a list:

1. What we do and who for
2. Our logo, and the four versions of it
3. Clear space and smallest size
4. Things never to do to the logo
5. Our colours, with hex codes and what each one is used for
6. Our fonts, with which one goes where
7. Our photos, what to shoot and what to avoid
8. How we sound, three things we do and three we avoid
9. Where the files live

Plain English, written so a signwriter or a printer can follow it without asking me anything. Australian English.

Paste that output straight into a Canva template (Part 3) or a Google Doc. The words are done, all that is left is making it look like something.

## FIVE TESTS

# Before you accept an AI logo, put it through this.

These are the difference between a logo that looks good on your screen and one that survives being printed, embroidered and stuck on a moving vehicle. Run all five. A logo that fails any of them will cost you money later.

**1**

**The shrink test.** Can you still tell what it is at 20mm wide?

Print it on an A4 page at thumbnail size. If the detail turns to mush, it is too complicated.

**2**

**The one colour test.** Does it still work in flat black, with nothing lost?

Embroidery, stamps, faxed forms and cheap signage all take one colour.

**3**

**The dark background test.** Is there a version that reads on a black shirt?

If it only works on the white background it came on, you have half a logo.

4

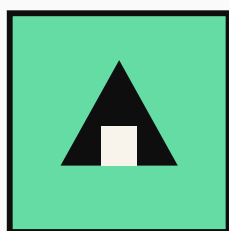
**The spelling test.** Is your business name right, letter for letter?

This is the one AI gets wrong most. Check every version, every time, before you fall in love with one.

5

**The trade test.** Does it look like your trade and your patch?

If it could belong to a software company in Sydney, it is not doing its job.



200px



60px



20px

**Still readable**

at every size, or it is too complicated

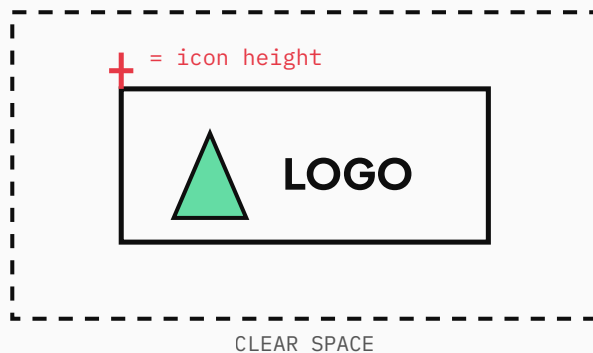
TEST 1, THE SHRINK TEST

**KEEP IT IF**

-  You can still tell what it is at 20mm wide.
-  It works in one flat colour with nothing lost.
-  Your business name is spelled correctly, letter for letter.
-  It reads on a white shirt and on a black one.
-  It looks like your trade and your patch, not like a tech startup.

**SEND IT BACK IF**

-  It has a gradient, a glow, a bevel or a shadow.
-  There is text you cannot read at full size.
-  It has hairline detail that would disappear in embroidery.
-  It only works on the exact background it came on.
-  It could belong to any trade in the country.



TEST 3, AND THE CLEAR SPACE THAT GOES WITH IT

PART 3, ROUTE B, ABOUT 45 MINUTES

## The Canva route.

If you would rather see it than describe it, do this instead. Canva has hundreds of brand guidelines templates already laid out, and the free account does everything you need to finish and export one. You can also do Part 2 first and pour those answers into a Canva template, which is the fastest path of the lot.

1

**Make a free Canva account** at [canva.com](https://canva.com).

The free plan is enough to build and export the document.

2

**Search "brand guidelines"** in the template search bar.

Filter to Presentation if you want something you can also show on a screen, or Document if you only want a PDF.

3

**Pick one with the pages you actually need.**

Look for a template that already has logo, colour, typography and photography pages. Ignore how pretty the sample photos are, you are replacing all of it.

4

**Delete every page you will never use.**

Most templates are built for agencies. A trade business rarely needs a brand architecture page or a partner co-branding page. Cut it to nine or ten pages.

**5****Drop in your answers from Part 1 and your text from Prompt 6.**

This is why the AI route pairs so well with this one. The words are already written.

**6****Upload your logo** under Uploads, then place it on the logo pages.

Just the one file you settled on. This is also where you make the other three versions: drop it on the page, and for the all black one use Edit then Adjust and pull the saturation right down and the brightness to nothing. For the white version do the same on a dark box. For the icon, crop the lettering off. Two minutes, and every version is genuinely the same logo.

**7****Set your colours by hex code.**

Click any coloured shape, click the colour swatch, then the plus, then type your hex code in. Do this once per colour and Canva remembers them under Recently used.

**8****Set your fonts** from the font list, matching the pairing you chose.

Search the Google Font name directly. Most of them are in Canva already.

**9****Share, then Download, then PDF Standard.**

PDF Standard for emailing. If a printer asks for print quality, use PDF Print instead.

**10****Put the PDF somewhere you can link to, like Google Drive or Dropbox.**

The whole point is being able to send one link when someone asks. A file sitting on your laptop cannot do that.

**FREE VERSUS PAID, HONESTLY**

The templates, the editing and the PDF export are all free. Canva's Brand Kit, the feature that saves your colours and fonts and applies them automatically to any new design, is part of Canva Pro. It is a genuine time saver if you make a lot of your own social posts and flyers, and completely skippable if you do not.

You do not need Pro to finish this document.

FREE, FOR FONTS

## Google Fonts

[fonts.google.com](https://fonts.google.com).

Every font free for commercial use, and anyone you hire can get them instantly.

FREE, FOR COLOURS

## Coolors

[coolors.co](https://coolors.co). Generates palettes and gives you the hex codes. Good for testing what your AI suggested.

FREE, FOR CHECKING

## WebAIM contrast checker

Paste two hex codes and it tells you whether text will actually be readable. Yellow on white fails, every time.

### PART 4

## The nine pages your document needs.

Whichever route you took, this is what ends up in the file. Nine pages is plenty. Anything longer stops being a tool and starts being a document nobody opens.

| #  | PAGE           | WHAT GOES ON IT                                                                                                    |
|----|----------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 01 | Cover          | Business name, logo, the year. That is all.                                                                        |
| 02 | What we do     | Your one line from Part 1, who it is for, your patch, your three personality words.                                |
| 03 | The logo       | The main version, big, on its own. Nothing else on the page.                                                       |
| 04 | Logo versions  | Full colour, all black, white for dark backgrounds, icon on its own. Label which is for what.                      |
| 05 | Space and size | How much clear space around it, and the smallest it can be printed. Plus a short list of things never to do to it. |
| 06 | Colours        | Every colour, its hex code, and one line on what it is used for.                                                   |
| 07 | Fonts          | Heading font and body font, with an example of each at the size you would actually use.                            |

| #  | PAGE                     | WHAT GOES ON IT                                                              |
|----|--------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 08 | <b>Photos</b>            | What to shoot, what to avoid. For a trade business this page earns its keep. |
| 09 | <b>Files and contact</b> | Where the logo files live and who to ring. Put a real link here.             |

#### PAGE 8 IS THE ONE THAT PAYS

Every trade business already owns the best photos it will ever have, sitting on a phone. A real switchboard you rewired beats any stock photo of a smiling electrician, and customers can tell the difference instantly.

Write three rules on that page and follow them: shoot the finished job in daylight, get the whole thing in frame rather than a close up of a detail, and take one with a person in it. Then say what you avoid, which for most trades is stock photography, dark phone shots and anything with a competitor's van in the background.

## PART 5

# File formats, the bit everyone gets wrong.

This is where AI logos most often fall over. They come out as a picture made of pixels, and a signwriter needs a file made of shapes. Sort it once and you will never be asked again.

| FORMAT     | WHAT IT IS                                                                         | WHO ASKS FOR IT                                   |
|------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------|
| <b>SVG</b> | Made of shapes, so it scales to any size with no quality loss.<br>The one to have. | Web builders, signwriters, anyone printing large. |
| <b>PDF</b> | Also shape based, and universally accepted.<br>Ask for this alongside the SVG.     | Printers, sign shops, embroiderers.               |
|            |                                                                                    |                                                   |

| FORMAT     | WHAT IT IS                                                               | WHO ASKS FOR IT                         |
|------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------|
| <b>PNG</b> | Pixels, with a see through background.<br>Export at 2000px wide or more. | Social media, email signatures, slides. |
| <b>JPG</b> | Pixels, no see through background.<br>Fine for photos, poor for a logo.  | Photos only.                            |

#### THE PROBLEM

### AI gives you pixels

Image generators produce PNG or JPG. Blow one up to fit a ute door and it goes soft and blocky. It is the single most common reason a signwriter comes back asking for "the real file".

#### THE FIX

### Convert it to shapes

Upload the PNG to a free vectoriser (search "free svg converter") and download the SVG, or open it in Canva and use Convert to vector if you have Pro. Simple, flat logos convert cleanly. Detailed ones come out messy, which is another reason to keep it simple in the first place.

#### ONE FOLDER, FOUR FILES, FOUR NAMES

Make a folder called Logo. Put in **logo-full-colour.svg**, **logo-black.svg**, **logo-white.svg** and **logo-icon.svg**, plus a PNG of each. Share the folder link. That link goes on page nine of your document, and it is the answer to every logo request you will ever get.

## PART 6

# Where you stand legally in Australia.

Short version, because it matters before you spend money on signage and shirts.

#### THE SHORT ANSWER, BEFORE THE DETAIL

None of this is a reason to skip the last hour. A brand you can actually use beats a perfect one you never made, and almost no trade business in the country has registered anything.

What it changes is what you do next. **If the business is just you and a ute, use it and get on with the job.** If you are putting it on a shopfront, a fleet, or anything you would be gutted to have to change in two years, spend the few hundred dollars registering it as a trade mark. That is the protection that actually holds, and it works whether a human or a machine drew the thing.

#### COPYRIGHT

### A pure AI logo probably has none

Australian copyright needs a human author. Where a tool produced the work with barely any human input, there may be no copyright in it at all, which means little stopping someone else using something very similar.

#### TRADE MARKS

### This is the protection that holds

A logo made with AI can still be registered as a trade mark if it is distinctive, and a registered trade mark is far stronger protection than copyright anyway. IP Australia does want you to show the mark is yours, which is easier when you can point to real creative input.

#### THREE THINGS THAT TAKE FIVE MINUTES

**Keep your prompts.** Save the conversation, and note what you changed yourself. That is your evidence of human input if it is ever questioned.

**Edit it yourself.** Adjust the colours, redraw a shape, set the type. Your choices are the part that carries protection, so make some.

**Search before you print.** Check your name on the ABN lookup and on the IP Australia trade mark search, and reverse image search your logo. Finding a clash before 500 shirts is a very different day to finding it after.

General information only, current at August 2026, and not legal advice. If the brand is going to carry real money, spend an hour with an IP lawyer before you commit.

## PART 7

# The afternoon, laid out.

Do it in one sitting. Splitting it across a week is how it ends up half done in a folder somewhere. Two hours is the honest number for everything except the logo. The logo waits on the free daily image cap, so give it a couple of days and do not let that stop you finishing the rest.

| 15 min                                                                         | 45 min                                                                                                         | 45 min                                                                                                   | 15 min                                                                                                   |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <div><div></div> 0 to 15</div> <div>Answer the five questions in Part 1.</div> | <div><div></div> 15 to 60</div> <div>Run prompts 1 to 5. Get the prompt right before you spend an image.</div> | <div><div></div> 60 to 105</div> <div>Run prompt 6, pour it into a Canva template, place the logo.</div> | <div><div></div> 105 to 120</div> <div>Export the PDF, save the four logo files, share the folder.</div> |

## PART 8

# Before you spend a dollar printing anything.

Run down this list first. Every line on it represents someone's expensive lesson.

|                          |                                                                          |
|--------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Your business name is spelled correctly in every version of the logo.    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | You have an SVG or a PDF of the logo, not only a PNG.                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | You have a version that works on a dark background.                      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | You have printed it on an A4 page at about 30mm wide and it still reads. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Every colour has a hex code written down.                                |
|                          |                                                                          |

☐ You have checked your text colour against your background colour for contrast.

☐ Both fonts are free for commercial use.

☐ You have searched the name on the ABN lookup and the trade mark register.

☐ The files sit in one shared folder with a link you can send.

☐ The document is a PDF, not only an editable file only you can open.

# Or we do the lot for you.

We build websites for trade businesses, and brand work is part of it. If you have gone through this and decided you would rather someone else did it, that is what we are here for. Have a look at what a build costs.

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