The Tech Cowboy's Guide to Perplexity AI Training Manual (2025 Edition)

Perplexity AI is a cutting-edge conversational search and question-answering tool that combines generative AI with real-time web search. Unlike traditional chatbots, Perplexity focuses on providing accurate, sourced information. This manual is designed for beginners and covers everything from signing up and understanding the interface to using advanced features like Copilot and citations.

by Ty Davis-Turcotte

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What Is Perplexity AI?

Perplexity is an AI-powered research assistant that answers questions using natural language and verifies its answers with real-time citations from trusted sources. It's designed for learners, researchers, and professionals who want fact-based AI responses.

Unlike traditional search engines that return a list of links, Perplexity generates comprehensive answers directly while maintaining transparency about where the information comes from. The platform combines large language model capabilities with real-time web search to deliver up-to-date information on virtually any topic.

Key features include instant answers to complex questions, citation of sources so you can verify information, the ability to ask follow-up questions in a conversational manner, and support for various query types from simple facts to deep research. Perplexity can be accessed via web browser or mobile app, making it a versatile tool for quick fact-checking, in-depth research, learning about new topics, or staying informed about current events.

Video Tutorial

▶ YouTube

Perplexity Full Tutorial: WILD …

⚡Join Ai Foundations: https://swiy.co/aif-0 In today's vid…

▶ 24:57

Signing Up and Accessing the Platform

Getting started with Perplexity AI is straightforward. The platform is accessible through multiple devices and offers several login options to suit your preferences.

🌐 Visit the Website

Navigate to https://www.perplexity.ai using any modern web browser like Chrome, Firefox, Safari, or Edge.

The platform is fully responsive and works on desktop computers, laptops, tablets, and mobile devices.

📱 Download Mobile Apps

For on-the-go access, download the dedicated Perplexity app from the Apple App Store (iOS) or Google Play Store (Android).

Mobile apps offer the same core functionality as the web version, with an interface optimized for smaller screens.

◁ Login Options

No sign-up is required to start using basic features, but creating an account enables Pro features and saves your search history.

You can log in using Google, Apple, or email authentication. Each method provides secure access to your personal account.

If using email authentication, you'll receive a verification link to confirm your account.

⚙️ Account Setup

After logging in for the first time, you'll be prompted to complete your profile with optional information like your name and areas of interest.

Setting up your interests helps Perplexity tailor responses to your specific needs and knowledge domains.

👑 Pro Plan

$20/month for access to advanced AI models including GPT-4 and Claude 2, along with exclusive features like Copilot, image generation, and longer context windows.

Pro subscribers also receive priority during high-traffic periods and can process more queries per day than free users.

A 7-day free trial is available for new users who want to test Pro features before committing to a subscription.

🗔 Browser Extensions

Install the official Perplexity browser extension for Chrome or Firefox to access the AI directly from your search bar.

Extensions allow you to highlight text on any webpage and quickly search for related information without switching tabs.

🔑 API Access

Developers can integrate Perplexity into their own applications using the official API (requires Pro subscription).

API documentation is available in the developer section of the website, with code examples for common programming languages.

Once you've signed up and accessed the platform, all your queries and interactions will be synchronized across devices when you're logged into your account, allowing for a seamless research experience regardless of which device you're using.

User Interface Overview

Perplexity offers an intuitive interface designed for seamless information retrieval and AI-powered research. Below is a comprehensive breakdown of the key elements you'll encounter when using the platform.

Main Sections

- **Search/Prompt Bar:** Type your question or topic here. The bar changes color when active and supports various input formats including natural language questions, keywords, and URL pasting.

- **Answer Panel:** Displays AI-generated responses with citations. Responses are formatted with clear paragraph breaks and bullet points for readability.

- **Source Links:** Clickable references to the source websites. Each source includes the website name, publication date when available, and a brief preview of the content.

- **Follow-up Suggestions:** After each answer, Perplexity offers potential follow-up questions you might want to ask next.

- **Reaction Buttons:** Provide feedback on responses with thumbs up/down icons to help improve answer quality.

- **Share Button:** Creates a shareable link to your query and the AI's response for collaboration.

Sidebar (Logged-in Users)

- **Home:** Returns to the main search interface with trending topics and suggestions.

- **History:** Access all your previous searches, organized chronologically with search terms and dates.

- **Collections:** View and manage your saved responses organized into custom folders.

- **Settings:** Customize your experience including theme preferences, notification settings, and account management.

- **Upgrade to Pro:** Access subscription options and view benefits of the premium tier.

- **Profile:** View and edit your account information, interests, and preferences.

- **Copilot Access:** Pro users can initiate advanced research sessions from here.

Step by Step Tutorial
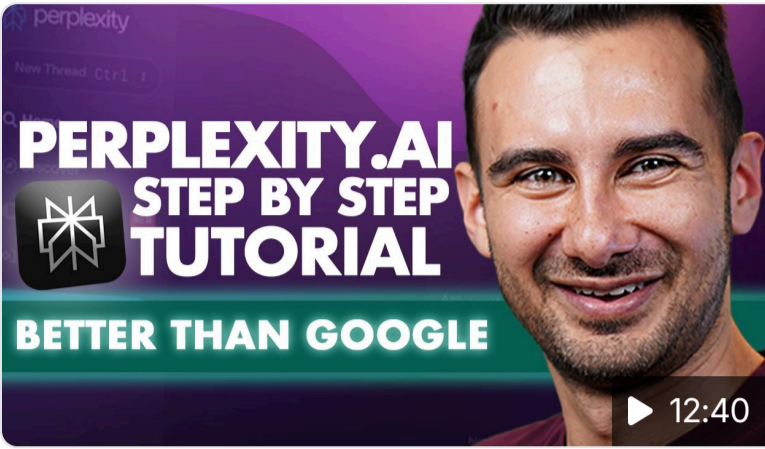
▶ YouTube ⤢

How to Use Perplexity AI: The UNDERRATED Search AI

This Perplexity AI tutorial walks you through how to use Perplexity AI effectively and why it's a powerful alternative to Google Search in...

Additional Interface Elements

Bottom Toolbar (Mobile)

Includes shortcuts to Home, Search, Copilot, and Settings. The mobile interface is optimized for touch interactions with larger tap targets and simplified navigation.

Theme Options

Toggle between light and dark modes via the Settings menu. Dark mode reduces eye strain during nighttime use and conserves battery on OLED screens.

Focus Mode

Minimizes distractions by hiding the sidebar and other elements, allowing you to concentrate on the current query and response.

The interface adapts dynamically based on your device screen size, subscription level, and login status. All elements are designed with accessibility in mind, supporting screen readers and keyboard navigation for users with disabilities.

Free vs. Pro Plan Comparison

Feature	Free Plan	Pro Plan ($20/month)
AI Models	GPT-3.5	GPT-4, Claude 2
Citations	Yes	Yes
Copilot	No	Yes
Image Generation	No	Yes
Context Window	Limited	Extended
Collections	No	Yes

How to Ask Effective Questions

Example Questions

- "What are the health benefits of green tea?"
- "Summarize the latest news about electric vehicles."
- "Compare Apple Vision Pro and Meta Quest 3."

Tips for Better Results

- Ask clear, specific questions.
- Use follow-up prompts to refine results.
- Specify formats: "In bullet points," "Cite sources," etc.

Understanding Sources and Citations

Perplexity automatically pulls and displays its sources inline, ensuring transparency and credibility in every response. This citation system distinguishes Perplexity from other AI tools by providing verifiable information directly within your results.

Source Links

Hover over or click the superscript numbers to see source links. These numbered citations appear throughout Perplexity's responses, indicating exactly which information comes from which source.

Full Articles

Click a link to open the full source article. This allows you to verify information, explore topics in greater depth, or access additional context not included in the summary.

Ideal Use Cases

This makes it ideal for research, students, and professionals. The citation system enables academic work, fact-checking, and building research bibliographies with proper attribution.

Source Quality

Perplexity prioritizes reputable sources including academic journals, established news outlets, and official websites. Pro users can request higher source quality standards for specialized research.

Citation Formats

You can ask Perplexity to format citations in specific styles like APA, MLA, or Chicago for academic papers. Simply include your preferred citation style in your question.

Source Transparency

All sources are dated, allowing you to determine information recency. For topics requiring current information, Perplexity will note when it's using the most recent available sources.

Understanding how to leverage Perplexity's citation system effectively will significantly improve your research efficiency and ensure you can confidently verify all information provided in responses.

Using Copilot (Pro Only)

Copilot is an interactive assistant that helps you refine questions, select sources, and guide the AI for deeper research. This premium feature transforms your experience from simple Q&A to comprehensive research sessions with tailored insights and higher-quality results.

Copilot acts as your personal research partner, automating many of the steps you would typically perform manually when conducting in-depth research. It intelligently follows chains of inquiry, evaluates source quality, and pulls together information from diverse sources.
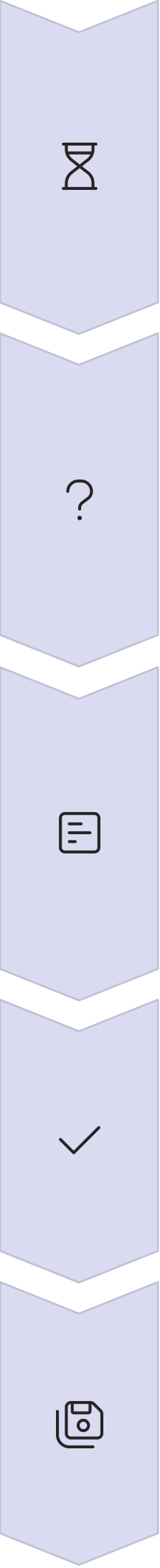
Start Copilot

Click the Copilot icon in the top navigation bar or select "Start Copilot" from the dropdown menu. Pro subscribers will see this option prominently displayed in their interface. You can also use the keyboard shortcut Alt+C (Windows) or Option+C (Mac) to launch Copilot instantly.

Refine Your Search

Answer follow-up questions that Copilot presents to narrow the search parameters. These questions help Copilot understand exactly what you're looking for, including preferred content types, time periods, specific perspectives, or level of technical detail. The more guidance you provide, the more tailored your results will be.

Get Detailed Results

Let Copilot gather more detailed results from high-quality sources. During this phase, Copilot works in the background, evaluating multiple sources for relevance and credibility. It synthesizes information across documents, removing redundancies and highlighting key insights that directly address your query.

Review and Iterate

Examine the comprehensive answer and supporting sources. Copilot allows you to ask follow-up questions to clarify points, challenge assumptions, or explore tangential topics of interest that emerge during your research session.

Save and Export

Save valuable insights to your Collections for future reference or export the entire research session as a PDF or text document. Copilot sessions are automatically saved in your history with a special designation, making them easy to find later.

Ideal For:

- Academic research requiring comprehensive literature review and citation
- Technical documentation and troubleshooting complex systems
- Deep-dive comparisons of products, services, or competing methodologies
- Market analysis and competitive intelligence gathering
- Literature and news synthesis across multiple perspectives
- Planning complex projects with multiple variables to consider

Pro Tips:

For maximum effectiveness, start with broader questions and let Copilot guide you to specificity, rather than beginning with very narrow queries. Use the "Focus on..." feature to direct Copilot to emphasize certain aspects of your research that you find most relevant as the session progresses.

Collections and History

Perplexity AI makes it easy to manage your research by providing comprehensive tools to track your past searches and organize valuable information for future reference.

History

Logged-in users can view and revisit past searches. Your search history provides several benefits:

- Automatically saves every query you make
- Timestamps each entry for easy reference
- Organizes searches chronologically
- Provides full conversation context when you revisit

To access your history, click on the "History" icon in the left sidebar. You can search through your history using keywords to find specific past conversations. History is retained indefinitely for Pro users, while Free users can access approximately one month of search history.
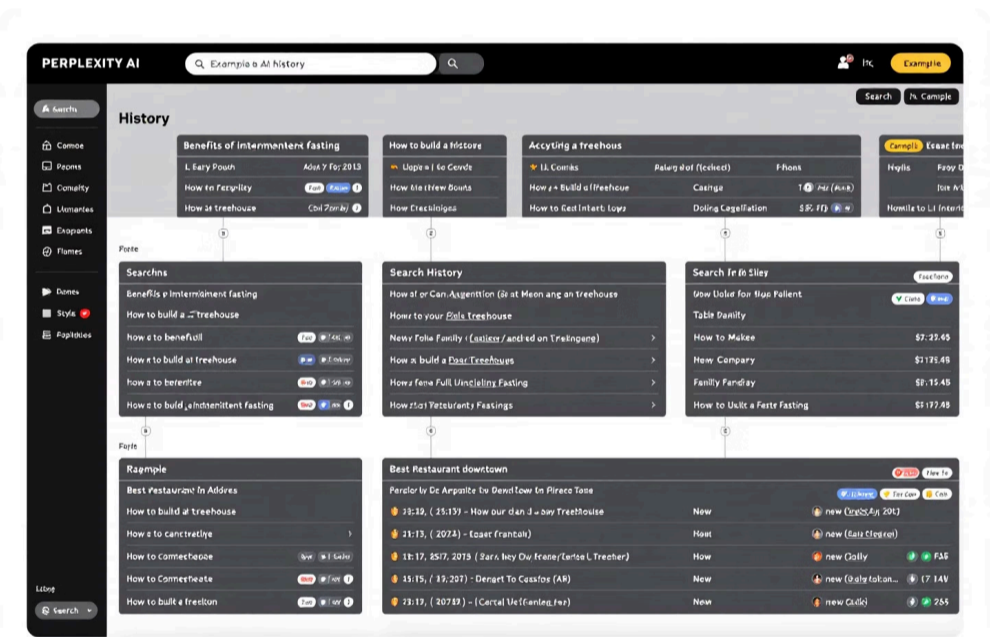
Collections (Pro)

Collections is a Premium feature that allows you to organize responses into folders or themes, creating your personal knowledge library. This powerful organizational tool helps you:

- Group related research topics together
- Create project-specific research repositories
- Share collections with team members or colleagues
- Quickly retrieve important information without searching again

How to Save to Collections:

1. Click the bookmark icon next to a result
2. Create or choose a collection folder
3. Add an optional note or tag to describe the saved item
4. Access your collections anytime from the sidebar

Collections can be organized hierarchically with folders and subfolders. You can also rename, merge, or archive collections as your research needs evolve. Pro users can create unlimited collections, making this feature ideal for ongoing research projects or academic work.
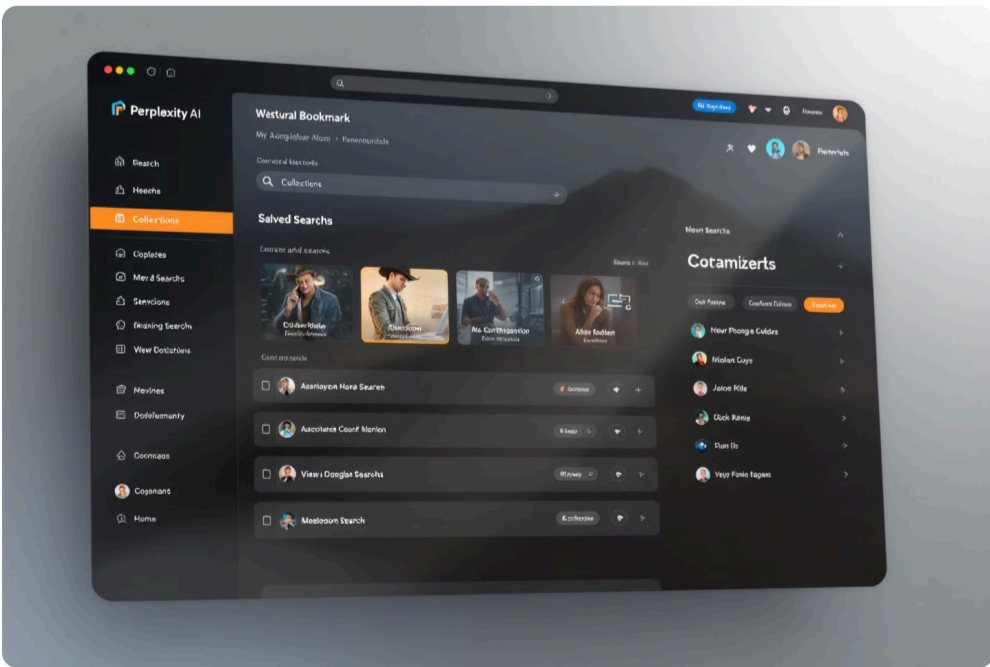
Both History and Collections features are designed to complement each other. While History provides a chronological view of all your searches, Collections allows for intentional organization of your most valuable findings. Using these features together creates a powerful research workflow that saves time and enhances productivity.

Personalization & Settings

Perplexity AI offers a variety of customization options to tailor the platform to your specific needs and preferences. These settings ensure you get the most out of your research experience while maintaining control over your account, privacy, and interface preferences.

To access your settings, click on your profile icon in the top right corner of the screen, then select "Settings" from the dropdown menu. This will open the settings panel where you can customize the following options:

Default AI model

Choose between available AI models based on your specific needs. Claude and GPT models offer different strengths - Claude excels at longer, nuanced responses while GPT may provide more concise answers. Pro users have access to more powerful models with expanded capabilities.

Dark/light theme

Customize your visual experience by selecting between light mode (ideal for daytime use or brightly lit environments) and dark mode (reduces eye strain in low-light conditions and conserves battery on mobile devices). You can also set it to automatically match your system preferences.

Manage subscription

Update or change your plan between Free and Pro tiers. Pro subscribers can update payment methods, view billing history, download receipts, or modify subscription renewal options. You can also view your current usage statistics and remaining quota for features like image generation.

Delete account or clear history

Manage your privacy options including deleting individual searches, clearing your entire search history, or permanently deleting your account. Perplexity provides transparency about what data is stored and how it's used to improve the service.

Additional Settings & Preferences

Language Preferences

Select your preferred language for the Perplexity interface. While the system supports multiple languages for queries, setting your interface language ensures menus and system messages appear in your preferred language.

Notification Settings

Control how and when Perplexity notifies you about new features, shared content, or system updates. You can opt to receive notifications via email, in-app alerts, or disable them entirely.

Default Sharing Permissions

Set your default privacy level for searches and collections. You can choose to make your content private by default or set specific sharing permissions for team collaborations.

Pro subscribers have access to additional personalization options, including customizable response lengths, priority access to new features, and advanced collaboration tools. These settings can significantly enhance your productivity by tailoring the AI's responses to your specific workflow needs.

To ensure optimal performance, Perplexity AI periodically updates available settings options. Check the settings menu regularly for new customization features that may help streamline your research process.

Troubleshooting & FAQs

Here are solutions to common issues users encounter when using Perplexity AI. If your specific problem isn't addressed below, please contact our support team.

Problem: No response or timeout

Try refreshing the page or simplifying your prompt. If the issue persists, check your internet connection, clear your browser cache, or try a different browser. During peak usage times, the service may experience brief delays.

Problem: Can't access Copilot

Ensure you're on a Pro plan. If you've recently subscribed, try logging out and back in to refresh your access credentials. Check if your payment method is valid and your subscription is active in your account settings.

Problem: Inaccurate or irrelevant responses

Try rephrasing your question to be more specific. Include key details and context to help the AI understand your query better. You can also try selecting a different search mode (Focus, Academic, or Writing) that better matches your needs.

Problem: Missing or incorrect citations

Check that your query is specific enough to find relevant sources. For academic topics, use the Academic mode for better citation quality. You can always click on sources to verify information or request additional sources by asking "Can you provide more references?"

Problem: Issues with collections or sharing

If collections aren't saving properly, ensure you're logged in. For sharing problems, check that you've set the correct permissions in your collection settings. Recipients must have a Perplexity account to access shared collections.

Problem: Billing or subscription issues

For payment failures, verify your payment method details. If you're being charged incorrectly, check your subscription status in account settings. For refund requests or billing disputes, contact customer support with your transaction details.

Contact Support

Use the in-app feedback option by clicking the "Feedback" button in the bottom-right corner of any screen. For urgent issues, email support@perplexity.ai or visit the Help Center at help.perplexity.ai for comprehensive guides and solutions. Pro subscribers have access to priority support with faster response times.

The Perplexity community forum at community.perplexity.ai is also a valuable resource where you can browse solutions to common problems or ask questions to other users and staff members.

Best Practices

Use clear and specific prompts.

Be precise about what information you need. Rather than asking "Tell me about AI," try "Explain the differences between machine learning and deep learning, with examples from healthcare." Specific questions yield more relevant and useful responses.

Always review source links.

Check citations to verify information accuracy. Click through to original sources to ensure quotes and data are represented correctly. Pay special attention to scientific claims, statistics, and controversial topics to avoid misinformation.

Use Copilot for deep research.

Take advantage of guided research for complex topics. For multi-faceted questions, Copilot can help explore different perspectives and dive deeper into subtopics you might not have considered. Use follow-up questions to refine and expand your understanding.

Create Collections for long-term projects.

Stay organized with themed folders. Group related queries together for research papers, trip planning, or learning new subjects. Revisit and build upon your collections over time, and share them with colleagues or classmates for collaborative research.

Upgrade to Pro for more powerful tools.

Access advanced features for serious research. Pro users benefit from GPT-4 integration, unlimited searches, priority during high-traffic periods, and exclusive Copilot functionality. The investment is particularly valuable for academics, professionals, and anyone conducting regular in-depth research.

Leverage different search modes.

Switch between Focus, Academic, and Writing modes depending on your needs. Use Focus for concise, straightforward answers, Academic for scholarly research with peer-reviewed sources, and Writing mode when you need help with creative or professional content.

Use the mobile app for on-the-go research.

Download the Perplexity app to continue your research anywhere. The mobile interface maintains most desktop functionality while allowing you to quickly find information during meetings, travel, or classroom discussions without switching devices.

Be mindful of privacy considerations.

Avoid sharing sensitive personal information in your queries. While Perplexity maintains security standards, it's best practice to keep personal identifiers, financial details, and private matters out of your searches. Use the platform's privacy settings to control data retention.

Consistently applying these best practices will significantly enhance your experience with Perplexity AI, helping you obtain more accurate information, conduct more efficient research, and make better use of the platform's growing capabilities.

Summary Cheat Sheet

This quick reference guide provides key information about Perplexity AI features, plan differences, and best practices for optimal results.

Free Users

- Ask unlimited questions with reliable citations
- Access GPT-3.5 model for responses
- Use Focus, Academic, and Writing modes
- Create and manage basic Collections
- Access search history for limited time

Pro Users

- Access advanced GPT-4 model for more nuanced responses
- Upload files and images for analysis
- Use Copilot for deeper exploration and follow-ups
- Receive priority during high-traffic periods
- Enjoy unlimited searches per day

Best Practices

- Always check sources for accuracy and relevance
- Be specific in your questions for better results
- Use follow-up queries to refine information
- Switch between search modes based on your needs
- Provide sufficient context for complex questions

Organization Tips

- Create themed Collections for long-term projects
- Name Collections clearly for easy reference
- Share Collections with collaborators when needed
- Revisit previous searches to build on research
- Group related queries for comprehensive understanding

Mobile Usage

- Download the app for on-the-go research
- Sync searches across devices automatically
- Take screenshots of important findings
- Share results directly from the mobile interface
- Continue desktop sessions seamlessly on mobile

Privacy Guidelines

- Avoid sharing sensitive personal information
- Use privacy settings to control data retention
- Review and clear search history periodically
- Be mindful of confidential information in queries
- Consider using focused accounts for different purposes

For detailed instructions on any feature, refer to the relevant section in this manual. Remember that Perplexity AI is constantly evolving, so check the official website for the latest features and updates.

Perplexity Hands-On Exercises

Welcome to your comprehensive guide to mastering Perplexity AI as a beginner! This workbook contains 11 practical exercises designed to help you navigate, prompt, and get the most out of Perplexity's free version. Each exercise builds on skills from basic interface navigation to conducting mini research projects. By completing these exercises, you'll gain confidence in using AI for research, learning, and information gathering—all with properly cited sources and conversational clarity.

Exercise 1: Exploring the Home Interface

Before diving into complex queries, let's familiarize ourselves with Perplexity AI's main interface. Open your web browser and navigate to Perplexity.ai to begin this exercise.

Interface Elements to Identify

- Search bar (typically centered at the top)
- Profile icon (in the upper right if signed in)
- Library or Threads section (for saved content)
- Answer source citations (typically displayed at the bottom of responses)

Practice Tasks

- Click on the search bar and notice the placeholder text
- Look for the Profile icon and check if you're signed in
- Locate where your past conversations would be stored
- Identify where sources are cited in a sample response

Learning Goals

- Become comfortable with the main layout
- Understand where to find your conversation history
- Recognize how Perplexity displays source information
- Build foundation for navigation in later exercises

Take a few minutes to explore the interface without entering any queries yet. Click around to see what happens when you interact with different elements. Notice the clean, minimalist design that helps you focus on the information you're seeking. This familiarity with the layout will help you navigate more efficiently as you progress through the remaining exercises.

Reflection Question: What element of the interface seems most useful to you, and why? Write down your thoughts before moving to the next exercise.

Exercise 2: Performing a Basic Query

Now that you're familiar with the interface, let's perform your first query to see how Perplexity responds to a straightforward question.

Instructions:

1. In the search bar, type: **"What causes lightning?"**
2. Press Enter or click the search button
3. Wait for Perplexity to generate a response
4. Once the answer appears, take note of the following:
   - How comprehensive is the explanation?
   - Is the language conversational or technical?
   - How many sources are cited?
5. Click on one of the source links provided at the bottom of the response
6. Notice how the source opens and verify that the information matches what Perplexity provided

> As you review Perplexity's answer, pay special attention to how it structures the explanation. Does it start with basic concepts before going into details? Does it use scientific terminology while still remaining understandable?

This exercise demonstrates one of Perplexity's key strengths: delivering knowledge with transparency. Unlike traditional search engines that simply link to websites, Perplexity synthesizes information and shows you exactly where it came from. This citation practice helps you verify information and dig deeper into topics that interest you.

Worksheet Activity: Write down three new things you learned about lightning from the response, and note which sources provided this information. Could you easily tell which facts came from which sources?

Exercise 3: Comparing Prompt Styles

The way you phrase your questions significantly impacts the quality and format of responses you receive. This exercise will help you understand how different prompt styles yield different results.

Prompt Version 1:

> "Tell me about climate change."

This is an open-ended, general question that gives Perplexity considerable freedom in how to respond. After receiving the answer, note:

- How long is the response?
- What aspects of climate change does it focus on?
- Is the information general or specific?
- How is the information organized?

Prompt Version 2:

> "Summarize the current scientific understanding of climate change in three bullet points."

This prompt is specific about both content and format. After receiving this answer, observe:

- Did Perplexity follow the instruction to use three bullet points?
- How concise is each point?
- Does it focus on the most important information?
- Is the scientific emphasis different from the first response?

Analysis Questions:

1. Which prompt produced the most useful information for someone doing basic research?
2. Which prompt would be better for a student creating a quick presentation?
3. How did the specificity of your second prompt change what information was prioritized?
4. Did either prompt produce unexpected results? If so, what?

Understanding how to craft effective prompts is perhaps the most valuable skill in working with AI assistants like Perplexity. Being specific about format, length, complexity, audience, and purpose will consistently yield better results than general queries. As you continue using Perplexity, experiment with different levels of specificity to find what works best for your needs.

Practice Challenge: Create your own pair of prompts on a topic of interest—one general and one specific. Compare the responses and note the differences.

Exercise 4: Using Follow-up Questions

Perplexity AI excels at maintaining context throughout a conversation, allowing you to ask follow-up questions that build on previous responses. This exercise will help you practice using Perplexity in a more conversational way.

Step-by-Step Instructions:

1. Start with any question from a subject you're interested in (e.g., "How do electric cars work?")
2. Review Perplexity's initial response
3. Instead of starting a new search, use one of these follow-up methods:
   - Click on the search bar and type a follow-up question
   - Use the suggested follow-up questions that may appear below the response
4. Try this specific follow-up: **"Can you simplify that for a 5th grader?"**
5. Notice how Perplexity reformulates its previous detailed response into simpler language
6. Ask at least two more follow-up questions that dig deeper into aspects of the topic

Initial Question
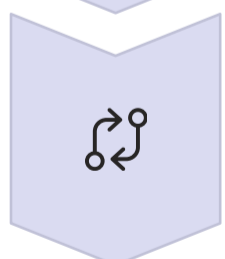
Ask your first question on any topic of interest

First Follow-up

"Can you simplify that for a 5th grader?"

Deeper Follow-up

Ask about a specific aspect mentioned in the answer

Comparative Follow-up

Ask how this compares to a related concept

The ability to maintain context is what makes conversations with AI assistants like Perplexity feel natural. Without this feature, you would need to repeat information in every new query. Context retention allows for progressive learning, where each question builds on the knowledge established in previous interactions.

Reflection Exercise: In your notebook, draw a simple map of your conversation flow. How did each follow-up question change the direction or depth of information? Were you able to guide the conversation effectively? What did you learn about how Perplexity maintains context?

Exercise 5: Asking for Comparisons

Comparison prompts are especially useful when researching options or trying to understand differences between similar concepts. In this exercise, you'll see how Perplexity handles side-by-side analysis.

Your Comparison Prompt:

> "Compare electric vehicles and gas vehicles in terms of environmental impact."

When reviewing the response, evaluate these aspects:

- Does Perplexity organize the comparison in a clear, structured way?
- Are multiple factors considered (e.g., emissions, manufacturing impact, energy sources)?
- Does it present a balanced view of both options?
- Are there any visual elements like bullet points or paragraphing that make the comparison easier to understand?
- How comprehensive are the sources cited?

Try these follow-up comparison prompts:

1. "Now compare them in terms of total cost of ownership over 5 years."
2. "What about comparing their performance characteristics?"
3. "Compare the convenience factors for city dwellers versus rural residents."

Notice how each follow-up shifts the comparison criteria while maintaining the original subject matter.

Variations to experiment with:

Try using more specific comparison language:

- "What are the pros and cons of electric vs. gas vehicles?"
- "Create a table comparing electric and gas vehicles."
- "What are the three biggest differences between electric and gas vehicles?"

Different phrasings may yield different formats and emphasis in the response.

Comparison prompts are valuable for decision-making research and understanding complex topics with multiple perspectives. Perplexity excels at presenting balanced information that highlights key differences without overwhelming you with details. This skill is particularly useful for students, researchers, and consumers trying to make informed choices.

Application Activity: Think of a decision you need to make that involves comparing two or more options (products, methods, locations, etc.). Craft a comparison prompt about this real-life choice and see if Perplexity's response helps clarify your decision.

Exercise 6: Working with Longer Text

While the free version of Perplexity may have limitations regarding file uploads, you can still work with longer text passages. This exercise will help you practice interacting with more substantial content.

Option A: If File Upload is Available

1. Locate the file upload feature (usually near the search bar)
2. Upload a PDF or text document you'd like to analyze
3. Ask Perplexity: **"Summarize this document."**
4. Review how well it captures the main points of your document

Option B: For Text Pasting (if file upload isn't available)

1. Find a paragraph or short article online (aim for 3-5 paragraphs)
2. Copy this text
3. Paste it into the Perplexity search bar, followed by: **"Summarize this."**
4. Observe how Perplexity condenses the information

Try these follow-up prompts with your text:

"What are the key arguments made in this text?"

Extract specific information:

"List all the statistics mentioned in this text."

Ask for analysis:

"What assumptions does this text make? Are there any potential biases?"

Request simplification:

"Explain the main points of this text as if to a high school student."

Working with longer texts showcases Perplexity's ability to process and analyze substantial content. This feature is particularly useful for students reviewing course materials, professionals analyzing reports, or anyone trying to quickly understand the essence of longer documents without reading every word.

When working with your own documents, be mindful of privacy considerations. While Perplexity strives to be secure, it's best to avoid uploading highly sensitive personal or proprietary information.

Reflection Question: How accurate was Perplexity's summary compared to what you would consider the main points? Did it miss anything important or emphasize something you wouldn't have?

Exercise 7: Research-Based Prompting

Perplexity isn't just for simple questions—it's designed to be a research assistant that can find, compile, and cite information from across the web. This exercise will help you craft research-oriented prompts that leverage these capabilities.
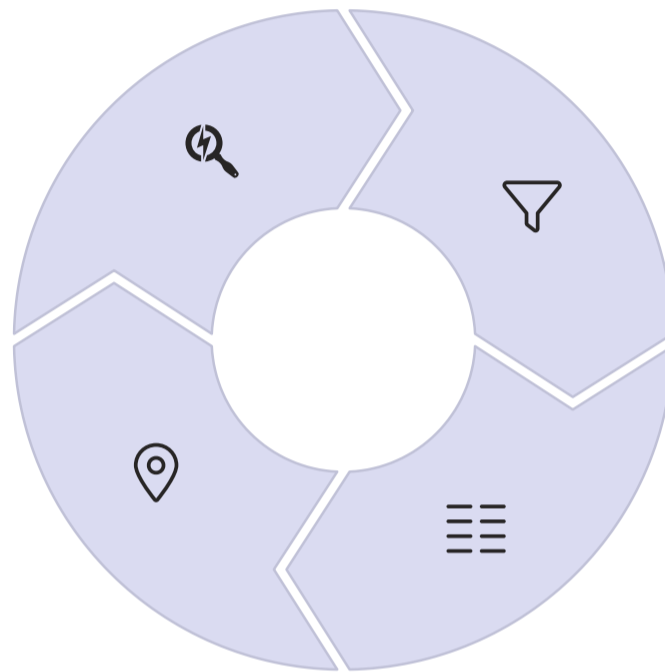
Your Research Prompt:

> "Find the top 3 causes of air pollution and give me links to recent studies."

Information Gathering

Perplexity searches multiple sources to find relevant information

Relevance Filtering

The AI identifies the most important and current information

Citation

Sources are clearly referenced so you can verify the information

Organization

Information is structured according to your prompt specifications

When reviewing the response, check for:

- Did Perplexity clearly identify three distinct causes?
- Are the studies cited recent (within the last 2-3 years)?
- Are the links functional and do they lead to credible sources?
- Is there sufficient explanation accompanying each cause?
- Is the information presented in a logical, organized manner?

Try these variations to practice different research approaches:

1. "Summarize the findings of the most recent study on microplastics in drinking water."
2. "What are the opposing viewpoints on using nuclear energy as a solution to climate change?"
3. "Find statistics about smartphone usage among teenagers from 2020-2023."

Effective research prompts typically include specific parameters like time periods, number of examples requested, source quality indicators, and exactly what kind of information you're seeking. The more precise your research prompt, the more tailored and useful Perplexity's response will be.

Research Challenge: Think of a topic you're genuinely curious about or need to research. Create a research-based prompt that specifies exactly what information you need and what sources you prefer. How does Perplexity handle your real research need?

Exercise 8: Exploring Suggested Questions

After providing an answer, Perplexity often suggests related questions you might want to ask next. These suggestions can help you explore topics more thoroughly and discover aspects you hadn't considered. This exercise focuses on using these built-in suggestions effectively.

Instructions:

1. Start with a broad question like: **"What is artificial intelligence?"**
2. After receiving the initial answer, look at the bottom of the response for suggested follow-up questions
3. Select one of these suggested questions by clicking on it
4. Observe how Perplexity builds on its previous answer while addressing the new question
5. Continue this process through at least 3 suggested questions, noting how the conversation develops

What to observe:

- How relevant are the suggested questions to your initial query?
- Do the suggestions anticipate logical next steps in learning about the topic?
- Is there a good mix of broader and deeper questions?
- How does the conversation flow as you follow these suggested paths?
- Are you discovering information you wouldn't have thought to ask about?

> The suggested questions feature serves as a kind of "intelligent curiosity guide," helping you explore topics more thoroughly than you might on your own. This is especially valuable when researching unfamiliar subjects where you may not know what important questions to ask.

The suggested questions feature works particularly well for educational exploration, as it mimics the structure of thoughtful learning where one question naturally leads to another. It can help students develop more comprehensive understanding of subjects by guiding them through logical learning progressions.

Exploration Activity: Choose a topic related to a hobby or interest of yours. Start with a basic question, then follow only the suggested questions for at least 5 steps. Draw a simple map of how the conversation evolved. Did you learn anything surprising or valuable that you wouldn't have specifically asked about?

Exercise 9: Using Sidebar Navigation

If you're logged into Perplexity, you'll have access to your conversation history. The sidebar navigation helps you organize and revisit your previous queries. This exercise will help you manage your research sessions effectively.

Finding Your Conversation History

1. Look for the sidebar menu (typically on the left side of the screen)
2. Find the section labeled "History," "Threads," or "Library"
3. Click to expand and view your previous conversations
4. Select any past conversation to revisit it

Note: If you're using Perplexity without an account, your conversation history may be limited to your current session only.

Organizing Your Research

If the option is available in your version:

1. Start a new conversation about a specific topic
2. Look for the option to name or rename the thread (often near the thread title)
3. Give it a descriptive name related to your research topic
4. Practice creating several named threads for different topics

Organizing your research into named threads makes it much easier to find and continue previous research sessions.

Navigation Practice:

- Create at least three different conversations on distinct topics
- Practice switching between them using the sidebar
- Within each conversation, ask at least two follow-up questions
- Close your browser completely, then return to Perplexity
- Use the sidebar to find and continue one of your previous conversations

Effective organization of your research is crucial for ongoing projects and learning. By keeping related queries together in named threads, you create a searchable knowledge base of your interactions with Perplexity. This is especially valuable for students working on term papers, professionals researching industry trends, or anyone exploring a complex topic over multiple sessions.

If you're using Perplexity without an account, consider creating one to access these organizational features. The ability to save and categorize your research provides significant value beyond the immediate session.

Organization Challenge: Think about three research projects or interest areas in your life. How would you name and organize threads for these topics? What specific subtopics might warrant their own threads versus being kept as follow-ups in a main thread?

Exercise 10: Mini Research Project

This final exercise brings together all the skills you've practiced to complete a small but comprehensive research task. You'll use a structured approach to gather information on a complex topic.
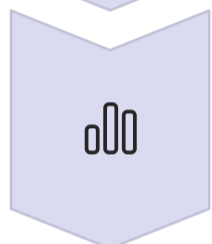
Your Research Question:

> "How has AI impacted education in the past 5 years?"
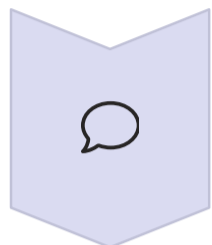
Get a General Summary

Start with your main question to get a broad overview

Request Key Statistics

Ask: "What are the key statistics about AI adoption in education?"

Explore Pros and Cons

Ask: "What are the benefits and challenges of AI in education?"

Create a Presentation Paragraph

Ask: "Write a concise paragraph summarizing this information for a presentation"

Evaluation Checklist:

- Did your initial query provide a comprehensive overview of AI in education?
- Were you able to get specific statistics with sources you could cite?
- Did the pros and cons section present a balanced view?
- Was the final paragraph well-written and suitable for presentation purposes?
- Did you need to refine any of your follow-up questions to get better information?

This exercise demonstrates how Perplexity can support a complete research workflow—from initial exploration to specific data gathering to final content creation. By breaking down your research into logical steps, you can build comprehensive understanding of complex topics while maintaining a clear structure.

The mini research project approach is valuable for academic assignments, professional reports, or personal learning. It helps you gather and synthesize information systematically rather than trying to get everything in a single query.

Final Challenge: Choose a topic related to your studies, work, or personal interests. Design your own 4-5 step research plan with specific questions for each stage. Execute the plan using Perplexity and evaluate how well it worked. What would you change about your approach for your next research project?

End of Manual

> Thank you for reading the Perplexity AI Training Manual (2025 Edition). I hope this guide helps you make the most of this powerful research tool.