



# Advanced Styles and Insights with Midjourney

Imagine Beautiful AI Prompts

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Irina Shamaeva

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# About the Author

**Irina Shamaeva** is an AI artist at The Prompter, where lately she has been spending most of her time generating images with all available Midjourney techniques and some she has invented. She is a partner at Brain Gain Recruiting, specializing in teaching online research in application to talent sourcing. Irina is the author of a blog, BooleanStrings, which has gained 2.5 million views, and a frequent speaker at international conferences on topics like Google and LinkedIn search. Previously, Irina worked at San Francisco software start-ups and biotech firms developing software. She has an MS with Honors in Math. Irina's education and research background experience facilitate understanding and predicting complex software behavior. Irina has successfully applied these skills to navigating creative AI image-generation techniques.



# Introduction

Welcome to the exploration of AI art by Midjourney, the most advanced currently available text-to-image generative artificial intelligence program and service. Give Midjourney a text picture description, and it will draw four rendered images.

Midjourney is created and hosted by the San Francisco-based independent research lab, Midjourney, Inc. It generates images from natural language descriptions, called prompts. The tool entered open beta on July 12, 2022. The service can recreate art styles, from realistic to abstract, and is recognized in the AI art community for its detailed and highly rendered images.

I started using Midjourney at version 4.0 in January 2023. Since then, there have been several versions – v 5.1, v 5.2, v 5.2R (secret version), and the current v 6.0 – with various capabilities that I will describe. Before I started using Midjourney, I could not draw. In a short time, I was creating awesome images I never could. The [Facebook page](#) where I share my art has gained over 8K followers in the year since its creation.

My book's goal is to provide a better understanding of how to craft creative prompts to achieve the desired output. This is not a Midjourney tutorial, and the book is not intended to cover all its capabilities, especially since it's a moving target. Midjourney offers two models: the default model and the Niji model. The default model is primarily what I use, and I will be focusing on it in this book. The Niji model is primarily used to create anime-style images.

## INTRODUCTION

This book aims to help you learn to create incredible images and styles with Midjourney and potentially other AI Image systems. I expect the readers to have started working with Midjourney and know the basics. This includes understanding how to invoke Midjourney commands and using parameters in your prompts. I will only cover concrete Midjourney version features and parameters as necessary since they change fast. (The company keeps the documentation and FAQs up to date.) Our focus will be on understanding what to expect of Midjourney when giving it this or that prompt and how to enhance and vary outcomes. I will describe the features of the drawing algorithms and how to think about prompting in a helpful way.

The more you use Midjourney, the better you'll get at steering it. It's like learning to drive – initially, you might struggle to find the right gears, but soon you'll be cruising.

I want to thank fellow AI artists who have reviewed my drafts and given valuable comments: Jade Jenerai and Valerija Mezhybovska.

## **My Art Before and After Midjourney**

Midjourney has made a difference in my life. When an image emerging on the screen delights and satisfies you, there is a glimmer of happiness (see Figures 1 and 2)! Sharing images with friends and on social media and getting “likes” is mood-uplifting. Many Midjourney users report improved emotional health. I am confident that AI drawing tools will be used in therapy, continuing the “art therapy” approach. AI artists, including me, also use their creations for work – on blog posts, newsletters, advertisements, and social shares.



**Figure 1.** Before



**Figure 2.** After

AI Image creation has become a social adventure and a community. For me and many others, Facebook is the central hub: it has hundreds of diverse groups with shared images, prompts, ideas, and interaction. It is customary to “borrow” someone’s prompt, modify it, and draw with it. “AI collective art” is happening in some of those groups.

Viewers feel a special connection if they can relate to the image. Examples are your home place, culture, favorite art style, or subject.

## INTRODUCTION

A reference to a long-forgotten artist, your favorite, or to an obscure computer game of your childhood that you loved makes images special. In Facebook group comments, it becomes a quick gathering of birds of a feather.

Carl Rogers once said, “What is most personal is universal.” AI art is one way of realizing we are part of a community with the commonality of feelings and expressions, wherever we are in the world and whatever age. “Is AI art really art?” is a frequent topic of online debates. I support calling AI-generated images art. While AI does not have feelings, AI art evokes people’s feelings. Naturally, humans react to images emotionally and personally. AI creations can make people feel the mood in a picture, to which they respond.

I am leaving out the important legal and ethical considerations regarding AI art. Others are better qualified than I am to cover the topic.

After briefly introducing Midjourney’s impact on AI art, we now move to practical aspects. We’ll see how different styles and syntax affect results, laying a foundation for more complex techniques discussed in later chapters. Let’s start with understanding the core elements of prompt crafting in Midjourney.

## CHAPTER 1

# Midjourney and You

In this chapter, I describe working with Midjourney as a partnership that blends creativity with technology. I share how fine-tuning prompts turn Midjourney from a tool into a co-creator. Picture it like a kitchen crew: each word in a prompt is an ingredient, and not all get used. This analogy helps us grasp why specific prompts soar and others fall flat.

Prompt crafting is both science and art. Starting simple is a good idea. It's about guiding the AI without boxing it in, leaving room for those surprising moments of creativity. Through trial and error, we find what resonates.

Before we begin working with Midjourney, let's take a closer look at its versions.

## Midjourney Versions

The latest Midjourney version is 6.0. When it came out, following nine months of development, in December of 2023, the AI drawing community realized that it significantly differs from the previous version, 5.2. Its strong side is image stylizing, and it better understands longer prompts and natural language. But it does not have the vivid imagination of version 5.2.

Important! Please do not consider v 6.0 to be superior to the previous v 5.2. Both are great at certain things, which I will outline in the following text. The prompting styles for the two versions are also different.

There is also a secret Midjourney version, v 5.2R. This version offers unique, sometimes unconventional, styles, expanding the creative possibilities within Midjourney.

## The Best Prompt Template for v 5.2

Early in my experimentation with Midjourney versions before v 6.0, I discovered a valuable yet simple hack. If you want your image to be awesome, include “awesome” in the prompt. The output may improve even more if you use several synonyms, like “gorgeous,” “wonderful,” “masterpiece,” “ideal,” “perfect,” or “contest winner.” Combine several synonyms for an increasingly better effect, but don’t overdo it since your scene may drown in a long prompt. Sometimes, the difference “awesome” words add is negligible; it depends on the scene.

Here is a quick example. Compare the prompts (I would prefer the second one for artistic quality):

- Wild animal photo --v 5.2 (see Figure 1-1, left)
- Gorgeous wild animal best ever photo masterpiece --v 5.2 (see Figure 1-1, right)



**Figure 1-1.** *Wild animals – without and with adjectives*

The following prompt has generated three images, which got recognition at an online image competition with mixed painting, photography, and AI submission. It was my first attempt to enter such an event. My entry ranked 5th overall out of 470 submissions from 26 countries. “masterpiece gorgeous” in the prompt has improved the outcome!

Prompt: Masterpiece gorgeous eagle full body photorealistic wildlife art, action paintings, naturecore, figurative naturalism, impressionist coloration shades --v 5.2 (see Figure 1-2)



**Figure 1-2.** *Wild animals*

Try the prompt with other animals instead of an eagle – a rabbit, penguin, koala, hippo, hummingbird, or anything else. The results will be excellent.

Version 6.0 does not need “beautifying” words – it does well without them.

Appendix E contains a sizable list of qualifiers for your prompts to make the images prettier. Adding them at the prompt’s end might be preferable to keep the scene less affected. Feel free to experiment – the possibilities are endless!

Prompt for the images: A wonderful vase, fractured, dazzling, misty, blurry, magical, perfect, acrylic ink --v 5.2 (see Figure 1-3)



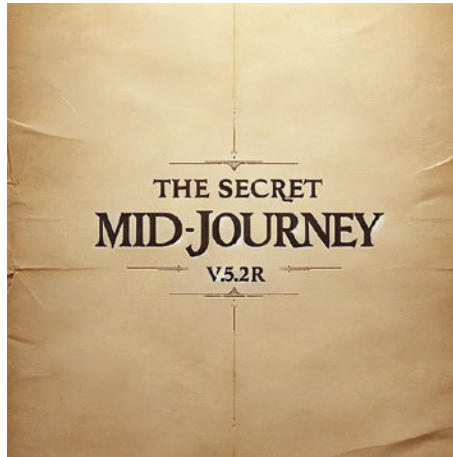
*Figure 1-3. Unusual vases*

A mix of several qualifiers has created an unusual look.

## The Secret Midjourney, v 5.2R

We now have Midjourney version 6.0, which differs from v 5.2 so much. I love the imagination of 5.2; I appreciate the factual and realistic renderings of v 6.0. In addition, there is a secret version of Midjourney – I call it **v 5.2R** – which has never become official (Figure 1-4). During MJ’s office hours, they once mentioned that it was the future version 5.3. (It was never released.) I wonder if this algorithm was ever intended to become a version because it is original and sometimes weird. Version 6.0 couldn’t be more different.





**Figure 1-4.** *The secret version*

There is no button or menu function to render a prompt in v 5.2R. You can do it by running Vary(Region), where you select all of a previously created image (in any version) and enter your prompt using "--v 5.2."

I encountered v 5.2R soon after Midjourney introduced the Vary(Region) function. I noticed that if I select all the images and run Vary(Region), the outcomes manifest different styles. I first called it "Midjourney Hack," then, a friend suggested calling it "Recycling."

I have recently run into a (rare) [video where it is called "Secret"](#). It suggests some applications, but I have found the use of the secret version beyond that. The algorithm is not widely known.

If your image looks unsatisfactory or dull in 5.2, try Recycling. If you want Midjourney to run its imagination wild, try Recycling. With experience, I have an intuition about the cases where it may work, but it has been hard to put it in words.

As a note, **you can start Vary(Region)/Select-All on ANY image from v 5.2.** Midjourney just goes to that secret version; the image you start with does not matter – it does not affect the outcome.

Also, Midjourney will use the secret algorithm if you select most of the image or your prompt does not relate to the original image. (If it's a smaller portion, it uses whatever version is in the prompt, 6.0 or 5.2.)

Some recent examples:

Prompt: Skin made from whimsical elements (version 5.2R, see Figure 1-5)



**Figure 1-5.** *Skin made from whimsical elements (5.2R)*

Prompt: A snowy landscape, each snowflake is colored, creating a mosaic on the ground, kaleidoscopic whimsical folk tale --no sun (version 5.2R, see Figure 1-6)



*Figure 1-6. Snowy landscape with mosaic*

## Collaborate with AI

Some users perceive Midjourney as a hard-to-master, imperfect, and stubborn tool. A member of a Facebook Midjourney group shared their perspective: “I love MJ and use it every day, but most days I feel like I’m dealing with a disobedient child who ignores most of what I say.”

But for me, Midjourney is an imaginative, intelligent, creative, and somewhat unconventional partner. It is more than a tool; I engage with it (Figure 1-7). I focus on understanding it more deeply to co-create compelling images. I’m gradually grasping the prompts Midjourney responds to effectively. This understanding develops into an intuitive skill, guiding me on what to propose.



*Figure 1-7. Midjourney and you*

My journey with Midjourney’s prompting has been delightful and effortless, with some exceptions when specific requirements were involved. For instance, creating book character illustrations and images for social media for professional use and producing ordered prints have presented challenges. I recall struggling in the Midjourney v4 phase to depict a classroom with laptops, even without including people. Nonetheless, I’ve learned to better balance Midjourney’s inventive nature and the level of detail in the prompt needed to capture the intended idea.

## **How Midjourney’s AI Kitchen (Likely) Works**

The computer has a certain amount of memory allocated for a drawing. When Midjourney reads your prompt, words take up more or less memory depending on how close they are to the beginning and how important they are for Midjourney (like “cat” is essential, “hedgehog” is less important, “a” and “the” are unimportant). When the memory limit is reached, it ignores the rest. That’s why you won’t see some things requested in overloaded,

long prompts. You can remove other words (“tokens” in this context) if you want what’s ignored in your long prompt back. When the allocated memory is exhausted, Midjourney may draw poor-quality images.

How does Midjourney read a prompt? Its code is proprietary, but it may go this way. I am no computer scientist, so please do not take the following literally, but this view helps me understand Midjourney’s reactions to prompts.

With each word and word combination, a drawing AI pulls associations, or contexts, from its knowledge base, where text is connected to images. (It does not keep any text or images “as is” but has the knowledge obtained by learning.) The associations happen on several levels: the lowest level of colors and textures, then, at higher levels, styles, objects, and actions. Several software components are working in parallel on each level. It is like several cooks preparing dinner together, each with their specific role (Figure 1-8).



**Figure 1-8.** *Midjourney kitchen*

When the cooks are asked to make something they haven’t before (like, even contradictory), they become very creative; otherwise, they may follow a recipe. The creative work is called “zero-shot learning” in AI.

In AI image creation, zero-shot learning means the AI can make images of things it has never learned explicitly about. Midjourney can generate pictures of things it hasn't seen before. Contradictory prompts combining things, qualities, and actions that have never been depicted together can have fantastic results!

Compared to cooks, AI drawing compares the results with the request and may redo the image-making several times.

## Prompts and Styles

Crafting effective prompts for Midjourney itself requires artistic skills. The key lies in striking a balance between being specific enough to guide the AI and leaving enough open-endedness to allow for creative surprises and styles.

The choice of words, their arrangement, and the concepts they convey influence the outcome. This section offers practical tips for mastering the art of prompt crafting to yield the most compelling and relevant results.

Midjourney has documentation on its website and more in Discord's FAQs. However, no amount of writing or videos would constitute "complete" documentation for an AI drawing system due to its "black box" nature. Experimentation is critical in learning AI Image art - or any AI modality. I sincerely hope that the book will become your experimentation companion and guide.

Midjourney text prompts have a particular syntax consisting of words and parameters. We will review the parameters later and only use "pure text" prompts now.

## Prompts and Series of Images As AI Art Form

Sometimes, your goal is to create one image, for example, for your social profile banner or to print on canvas. But for many applications and social shares, AI artists create not one but a series of images from the same



prompt. In this context, a prompt and several images generated from it become the creation within the audience of people who appreciate AI art. Short or unusual prompts with captivating results attract special attention.

“Cup couple” is a two-word prompt that produces a variety of images. The simplicity of the prompt is part of the attraction (see Figures 1-9 and 1-10 for examples).



*Figure 1-9. Cup couple, version 5.2*