

ADOBE FIREFLY PROMPT GUIDE

ADOBE FIREFLY

# Mastering text-to-image prompts

Adobe **Firefly**



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**Have you ever struggled to write a prompt for a text-to-image generator?**

**Or maybe you've written a prompt that you thought was perfectly clear, only to have the AI return an image you didn't want?**

That can be frustrating, and sometimes it feels like you're fighting against a machine that will never understand what you want.

Luckily, there's an easy solution: Adobe Firefly. It has a unique blend of features that can create beautiful, inspiring images with just a few words. And its impressive array of tools empowers users to make, refine, and curate their generated images without ever leaving the Firefly website.

But no matter what, step one is always the same for any image generator: You must first tell the program what you want to create in a way it understands.



**Prompt**

3d cartoon; bunch of colorful question marks; white background

**“  
With generative AI, the barriers to  
big thinking fall away—the only  
limit is your own creativity.”**

**—Meredith Cooper**  
Senior Director of Product Marketing, Adobe



# Designing an effective prompt.

The first step to writing an effective text prompt is to get yourself into an artistic mindset. Firefly can only do what you tell it to do, so you must get used to describing what you want clearly and creatively.



# Let's start with a mental exercise:

Imagine you're standing in front of Leonardo da Vinci's portrait, *Mona Lisa*, and you're trying to describe what it looks like to a friend over the phone. What are you going to say? How are you going to describe the painting to your friend when they can't see it?

You might start by telling your friend, "It's an oil painting." And then you would probably go on to describe what Miss Lisa looks like, what she's doing, which direction she's looking, and what the environment is like behind her.

This series of descriptions is very close to how we write an effective text prompt. Generally, a good Firefly prompt looks something like this:

[Style/Medium] + [Subject] + [Action] + [Environment] + [Scene Props] | = image

example:

a drawing of a cat sleeping on a couch inside a log cabin next to a fireplace | = image

Your prompts don't need to include all of these elements in this exact order. For example, some creators like to put the [Style/Medium] element at the end of their prompts, like this:

[Subject] + [Action] + [Environment] + [Scene Props] + [Style/Medium] | = image

example:

a cat sleeping on a couch inside a log cabin next to a fireplace; black and white charcoal drawing | = image

Either way, describing the subject of the image near the beginning of the prompt generally produces a clearer, more focused image.



## Prompting tips

- No need to use complete sentences. Firefly works great with **simple phrases**.
- Try using **emotion and style words** like “cozy” or “mysterious” to evoke mood.
- Longer isn’t always better. Adobe recommends text prompts of **175 words or less**.
- **Try not to use command phrases** like “create an image of...” or “make me a...” These extra words are unnecessary, and they might add unwanted elements to your generated images.
- **Commas and semicolons** are great ways to keep text prompts organized and legible.
- Add **asterisks around descriptions** you want Firefly to concentrate on. (example: a \*yellow\* flower)
- Remember: the prompt bar is not a chat box. Firefly will not remember any of your previous prompts.

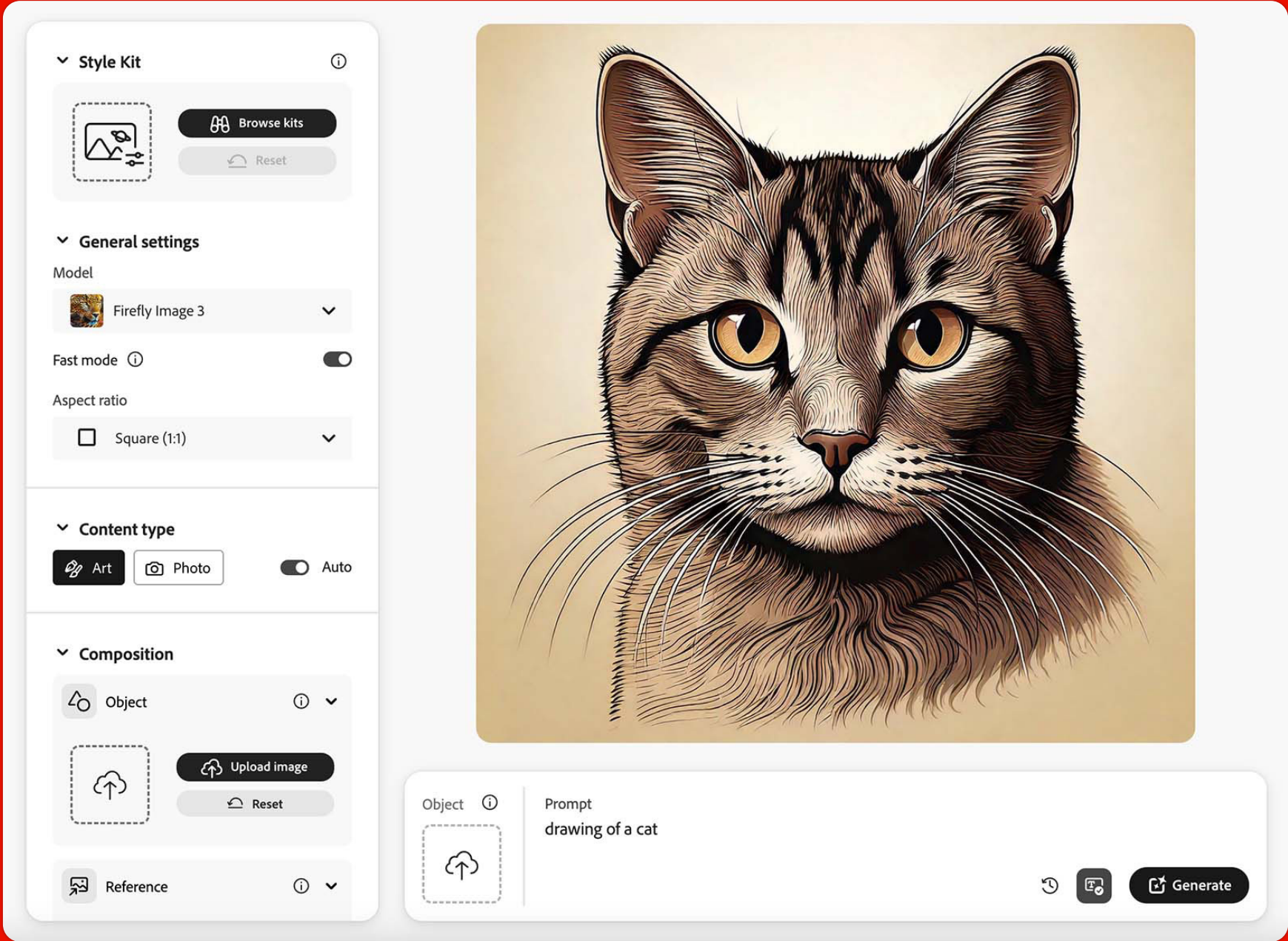
“  
**Sometimes you’ve got a rough idea in your head, you take it into Firefly, and it creates other options that might lead you on a new creative path to something that’s richer than you originally imagined.”**

—**Brian Eagle**  
Group Head of Design, Oliver Agency

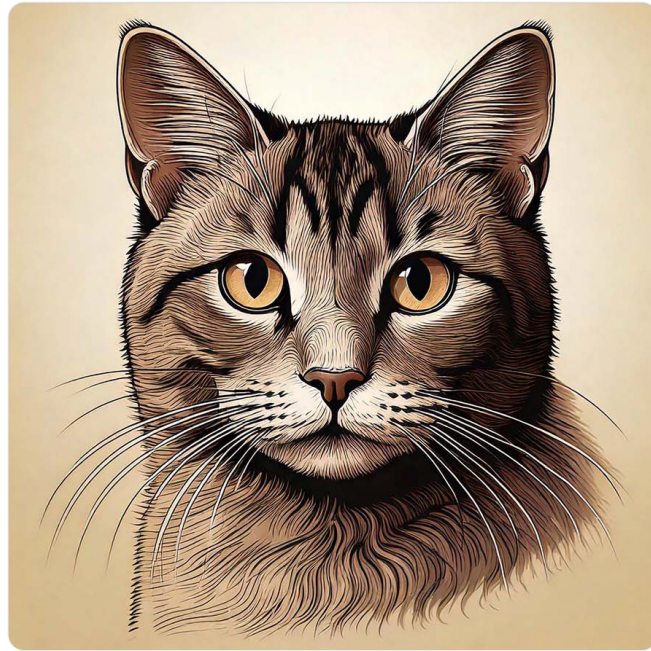


# Elements of a prompt.

Let's look at what each of these prompt elements does when we plug them into Firefly.



## [Style/Medium] + [Subject]



**Prompt**  
drawing of a cat

First, let's write a prompt that just says, "*drawing of a cat.*" This combines our first two prompt elements, **[Style/Medium]** (a drawing) and **[Subject]** (a cat).



**Prompt**  
photo of a cat

The **[Style/Medium]** description can be any kind of image. For example, we could write "*photo of a cat,*" and Firefly will generate a photorealistic image.



**Prompt**  
a wide-angle Polaroid photo of a cat

We can even dictate a specific style of photography. Let's try, "*a wide-angle Polaroid photo of a cat.*"



[Action] + [Environment] + [Scene Props]



**Prompt**  
drawing of a cat sleeping on a couch

Now let's get more specific with our drawing prompt. We'll add the [Action] "sleeping on a couch."



**Prompt**  
drawing of a cat sleeping on a couch inside a cozy log cabin

Next, we'll add an [Environment]. Let's try, "inside a cozy log cabin."

This cabin looks a little bare. Let's add some [Scene Props] to make it look less empty.



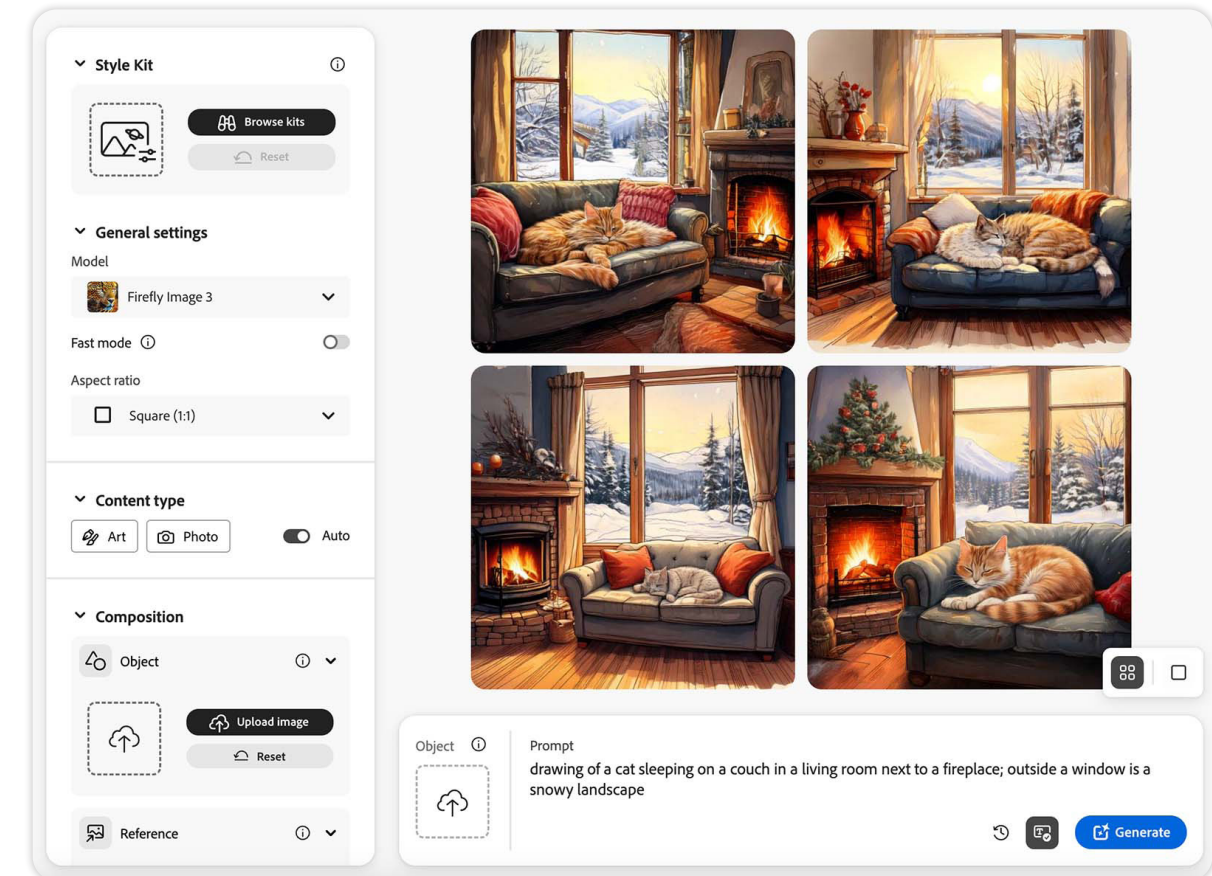
**Prompt**  
drawing of a cat sleeping on a couch inside a cozy log cabin next to a fireplace; outside a window is a snowy landscape

We'll type, "next to a fireplace; outside a window is a snowy landscape." You don't need to use a semicolon, but some prompters like to add them to keep their text organized.



**“When combined with human creativity, GenAI will unlock groundbreaking ideas, new forms of expression, and revolutionize how we bring brands to life.”**

—Heather Freeland  
Chief Brand Officer, Adobe

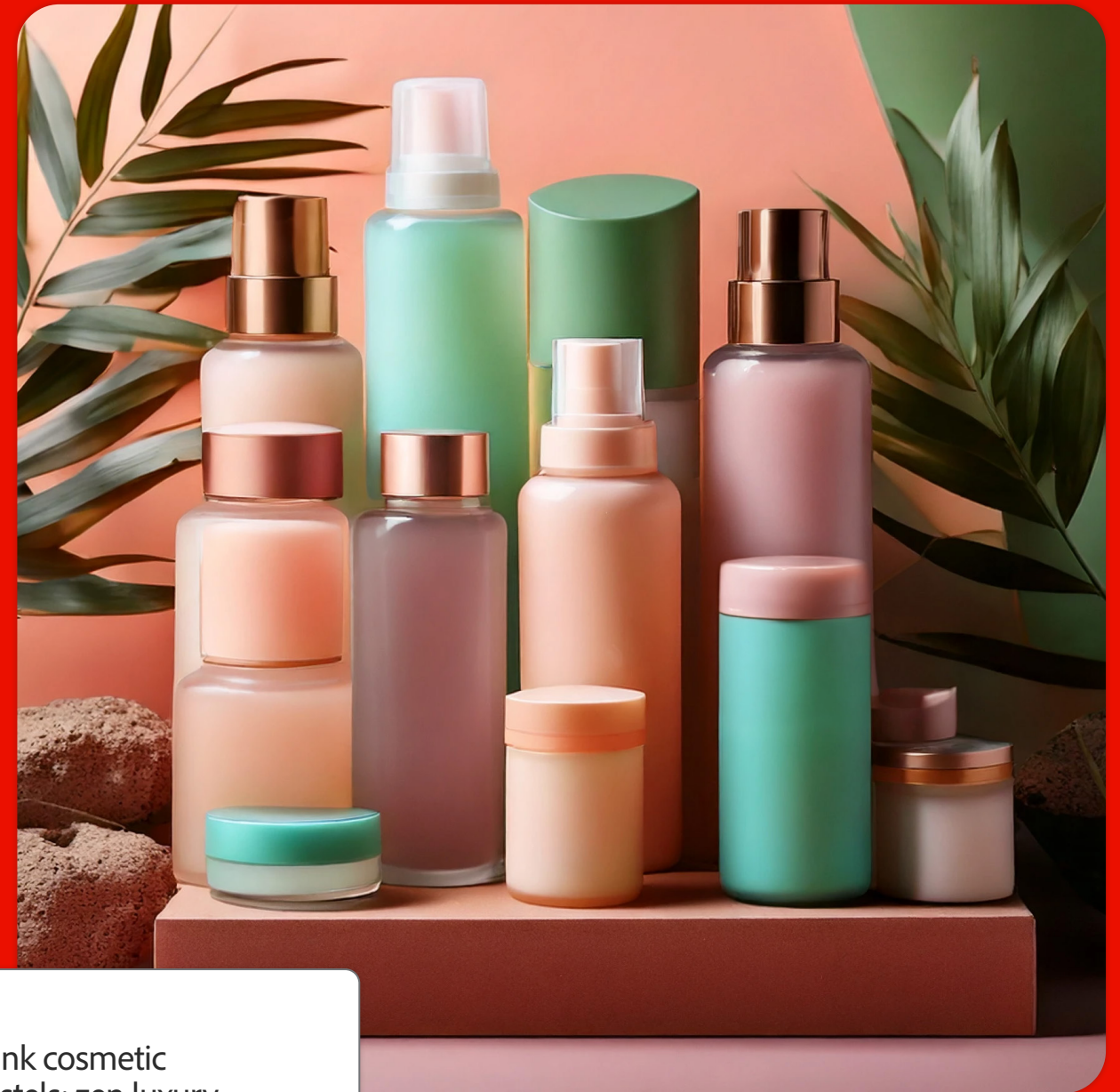


Now our prompt is generating a very precise image. And we can easily manipulate the content in our image by changing our keywords instead of adding more sentences, which would complicate the prompt.

Also, you don't need to use every single prompt element in every prompt. But if you're trying to generate a specific image, this formula typically gives the most predictable results in Firefly.

# Generating specific images.

Sometimes, you'll have a very specific idea of what you want to create. But how can you get Firefly to generate exactly what you're imagining?



## Prompt

an array of blank cosmetic containers; pastels; zen luxury



# Recreating the *Mona Lisa*.

For fun, let's prompt Firefly to generate an image that resembles *Mona Lisa*. But we don't want to recreate da Vinci's masterpiece out of whole cloth—that would be impossible, not to mention unethical—we just want to make an image that kind of matches *Mona Lisa*'s composition, posture, style of dress, and even her mysterious smile.

Let's start by trying a prompt that probably won't work, "*painting of a woman*."

The images are nice, but they're not exactly da Vinci-worthy. They're not at all what we were trying to create. Let's rewrite our prompt using our prompt formula, making sure to include lots of clear, vivid details.



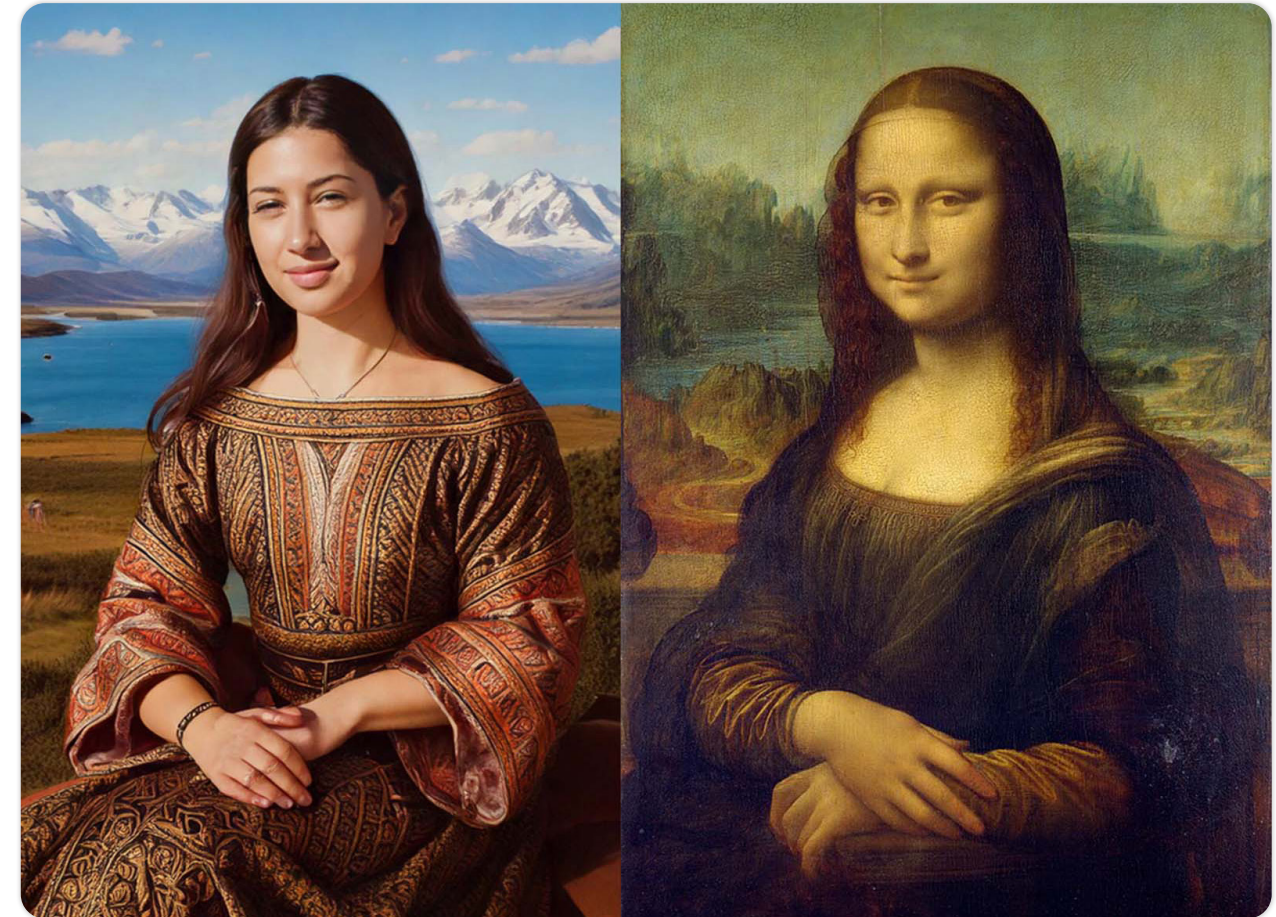
## Prompt

painting of a woman



**Prompt**

a 14th-century oil portrait of a woman with brown hair wearing a Renaissance dress sitting with her hands slightly crossed in front of her, looking at the viewer, smiling mysteriously; behind her is a vast landscape with winding dirt paths and a large lake that recedes to icy mountain peaks



That's pretty good! With just one prompt, we've managed to roughly match *Mona Lisa*'s composition, style of dress, posture, and lots of other important elements too.

But how can we use text to generate specific, predictable results like this every time?



# Breaking it down.

The secret lies in keywords. Firefly works best when there are at least three keywords in each prompt, and vivid descriptive words usually produce the best results. Let's take a closer look at our *Mona Lisa* prompt to see what we mean.

[Style/Medium]

[Subject]

[Action]

[Environment]

[Scene Props]

a 14th-century oil portrait of a woman with brown hair wearing a Renaissance dress sitting with her hands slightly crossed in front of her, looking at the viewer, smiling mysteriously; behind her is a vast landscape with winding dirt paths and a large lake that recedes to icy mountain peaks

=



This is a much longer prompt than Firefly usually needs. But since we're trying to generate a **very** specific image, we need a prompt with lots of detailed keywords. This prompt uses descriptive words like "oil portrait," "brown hair," and "Renaissance dress" to tell Firefly exactly what to create. It also uses vivid language like

"smiling mysteriously" and "icy mountain peaks" to tell Firefly the scene's mood. Also, describing our subject's posture in detail tells Firefly just how to pose her body. Firefly uses all these keywords to create exactly the image we want to see. You can use any kind of keyword in your prompts. Sensory details, evocative adjectives, and

figurative language all work great in Firefly. Try using words like cold, harmonious, adorable, or dangerous. You can even use similes, such as "her eyes are like stars," or you could try describing a romantic atmosphere. The sky is the limit, so don't be afraid to experiment.

# Dos and don'ts of prompting humans.

We've all seen those AI images where people look like they belong in a Picasso painting. Strange postures, too-many-fingered hands, or "melting" faces are usually the most common peculiarities.

Prompt  
a chef in the kitchen





# Be exact.

The best way to avoid generating “Picasso people” is to always tell Firefly exactly **what** your human subjects are doing. Using action words like “*standing*,” “*walking*,” or “*sitting*” tells Firefly how to correctly create your person’s body. If you leave those words out, you might accidentally generate a backwards arm or a wobbly-looking leg.

Also, clearly stating where your human is **looking** will tell Firefly how to render their face. The same goes for pairs or groups of people. Instead of just writing, “*two people*” in your prompt, try writing, “*two people conversing*” or “*three people looking at a computer*.” That way, Firefly will know exactly which direction they should all be facing.

Text prompts in Firefly should be clear and descriptive but not overly long. While there’s no set character limit, Adobe suggests a maximum length of **175 words** for Firefly prompts. Longer prompts may not necessarily produce better results, and using too many words may actually make your image worse.



## Prompt

two people conversing



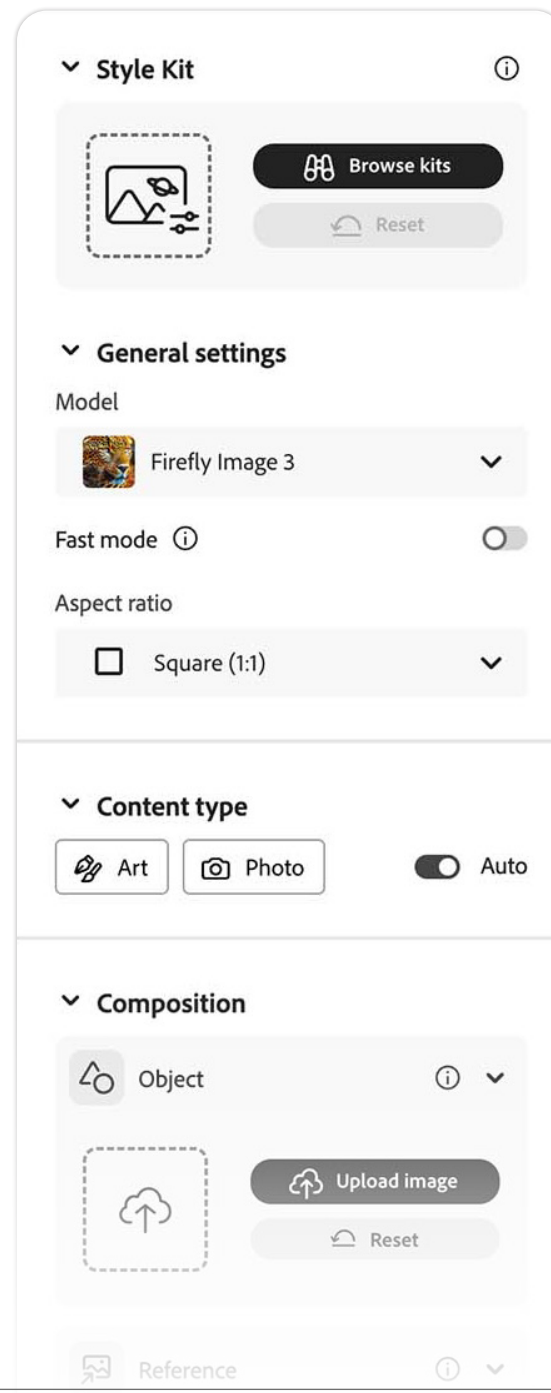
## Prompt

three people looking at a computer

# The Firefly side panel.

But how do you create the image you want with such short prompts? The easiest way is to use Firefly's side panel system. It works alongside your text prompts to refine your images and make them exactly the way you're imagining. Using the side panel keeps your text prompts short and sweet without sacrificing your image's style or quality.

For example, if you navigate to the side panel and set the Content type to "Photo," Firefly will always generate a photorealistic image, no matter what kind of prompt you type. With "Photo" selected, you don't need to type out the word "photo." You can just type, "a cat," and Firefly will always return a photorealistic image of a cat.



“  
**Gen AI is a tool  
for democratizing  
access to creativity.  
I think there are  
incredible benefits  
from being  
able to create  
more connections  
between people.”**

—**Ron Friedman**  
Vice President, Mattel Future Lab, Mattel

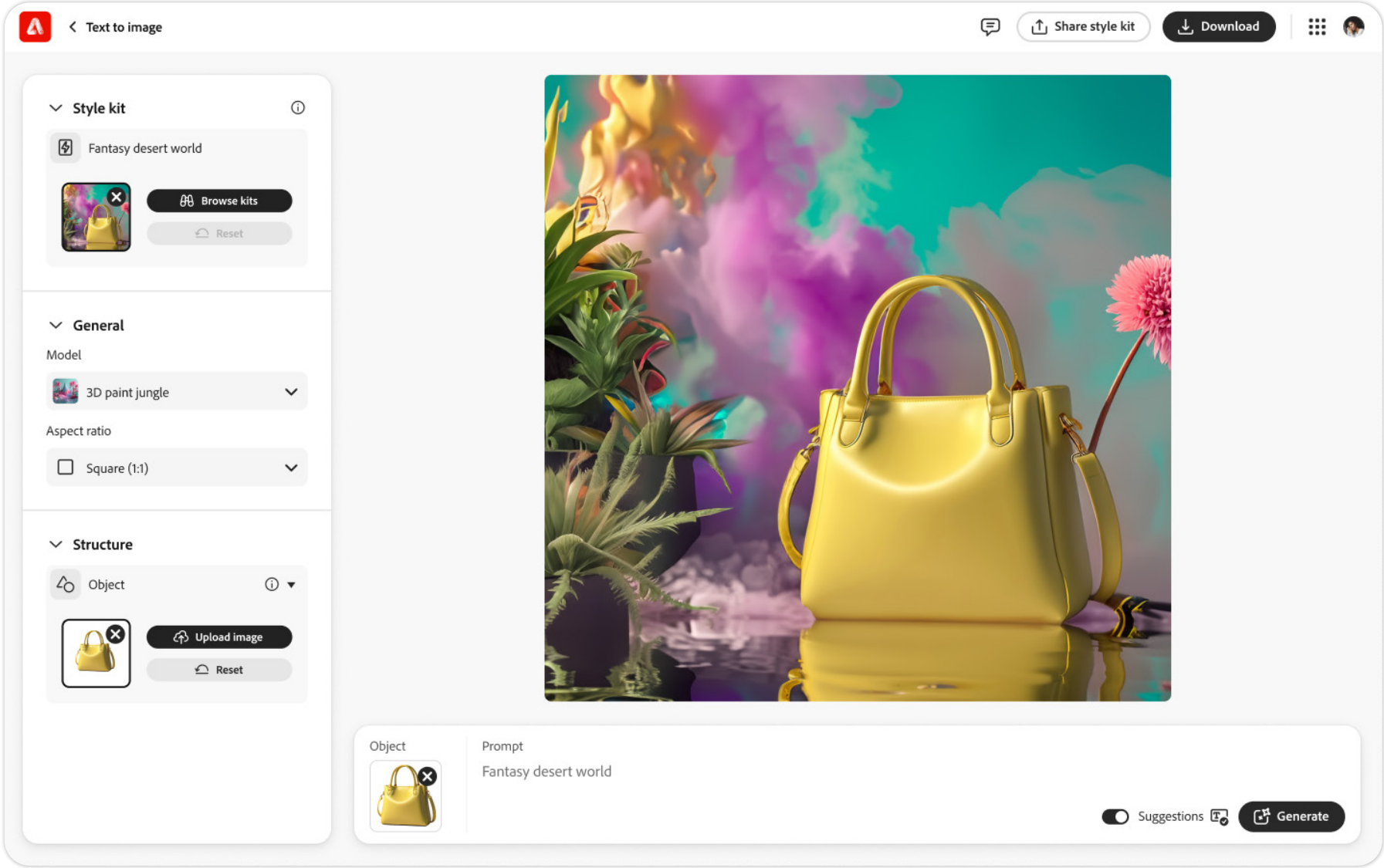


# Get detailed for better results.

The side panel has lots of other tools, too. You can specify your image’s aspect ratio, visual style, add effects and objects, and even upload reference images that tell Firefly how to style or compose your generated picture.

Click below to learn all about each section of the Firefly side panel.

Learn more



# Visual Intensity and the “AI look.”

The “AI look” is kind of like putting an Instagram filter over your image. It’s usually very smooth with lots of unnatural lighting, oversaturated colors, and it generally has a “plastic” appearance. Some creators love this aesthetic, but others think it’s a little too much.

## Prompt

running shoe with fierce lion in the background





# Avoiding the “AI look.”

To avoid the “AI look”, you can include style words like “*realistic*” or “*naturalistic*” in your prompts. Or you can use the **Visual intensity** slider in the Firefly side panel.


At first glance, the Visual intensity slider seems to be part of the Style Reference section that sits directly underneath it—**but it’s not**.

Visual intensity is a separate Style option in Firefly that controls the amount of detail and complexity in your generated image. Lowering Visual intensity down to zero will give you a cleaner, simpler image, and maxing it out will give you an extremely detailed, vivid image.

An example of Visual intensity  
set to maximum

▼ Style

Visual intensity




Prompt

a man smiling; colorful; 3/4 view

An example of Visual intensity  
set to minimum

▼ Style

Visual intensity



Prompt

a man smiling; colorful; 3/4 view

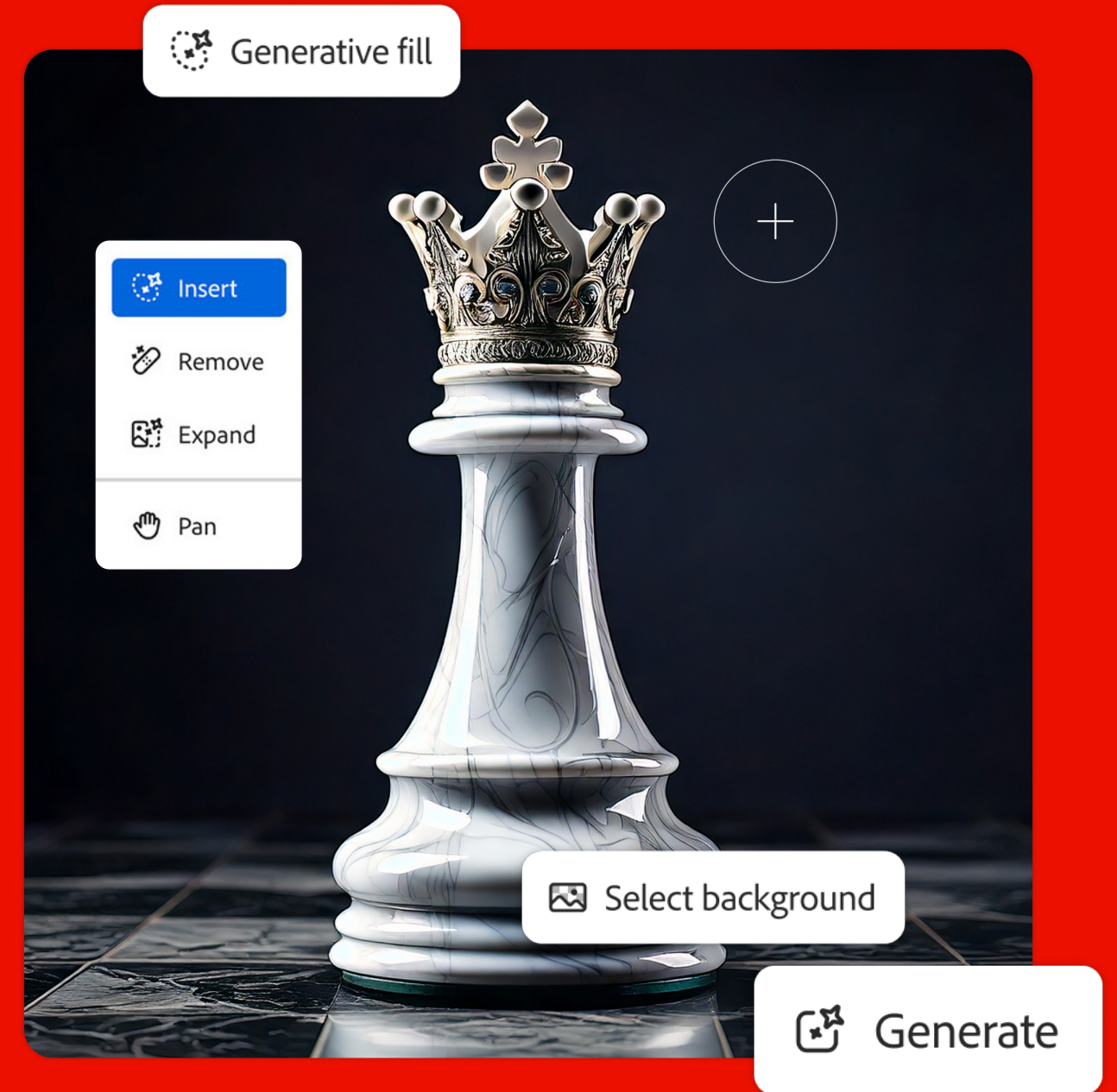
Usually, lowering Visual intensity will make your image look more realistic, and raising it will make your picture look more intense and stylized.

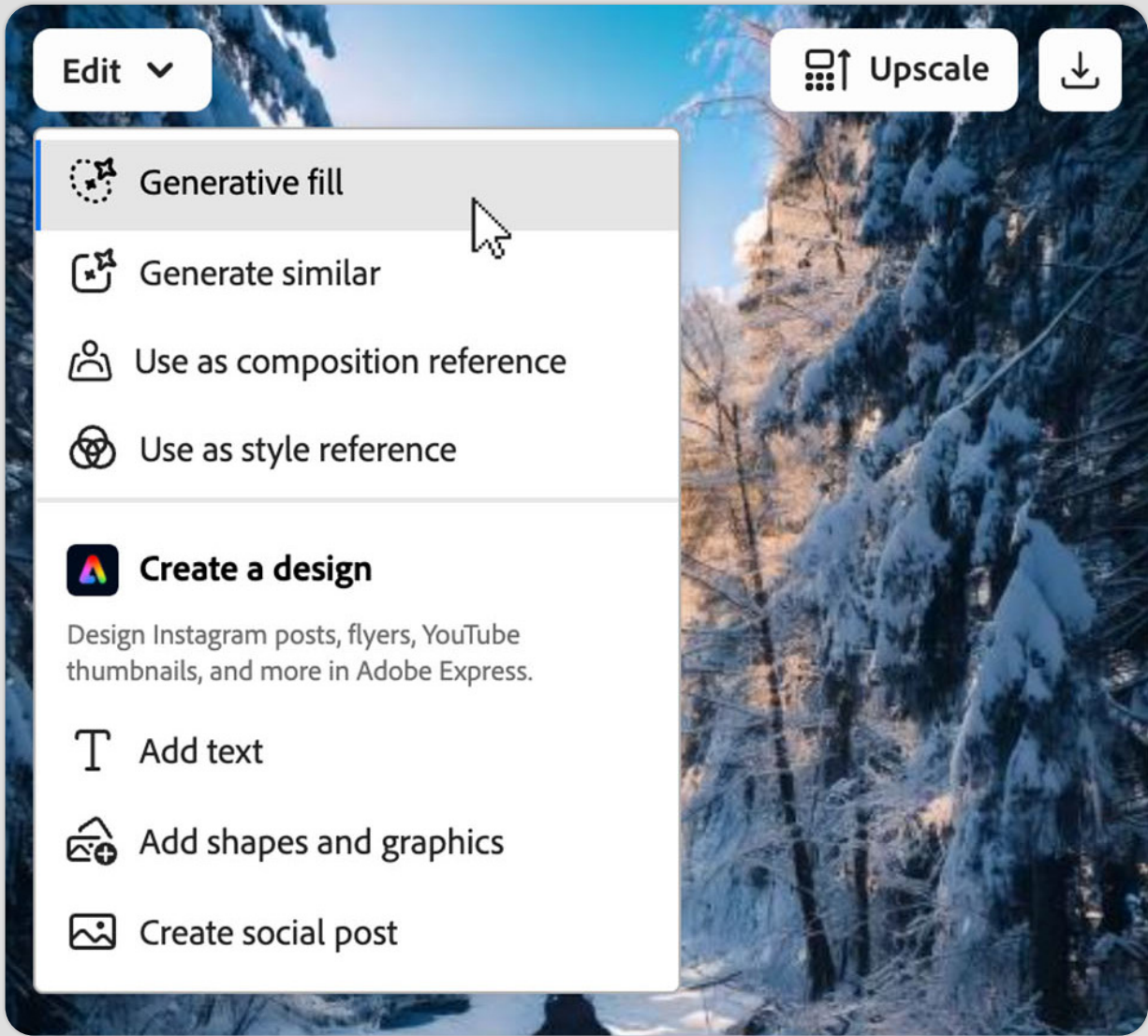
So, if your Firefly images are starting to look a little “too AI,” try lowering Visual intensity down to zero and regenerate. This might lead to a more natural look.



# Editing generated images in Firefly.

Another great Firefly feature is its second layer of text-to-image generation.






# Generative fill.

Generative fill gives you four different options:

 Insert

Use the selection tool to mark the area where you want to insert new content. Then type a prompt describing exactly what you want, and Firefly will add it to your image.

 Remove

Use Generative fill to remove any unwanted elements from your image.

 Expand

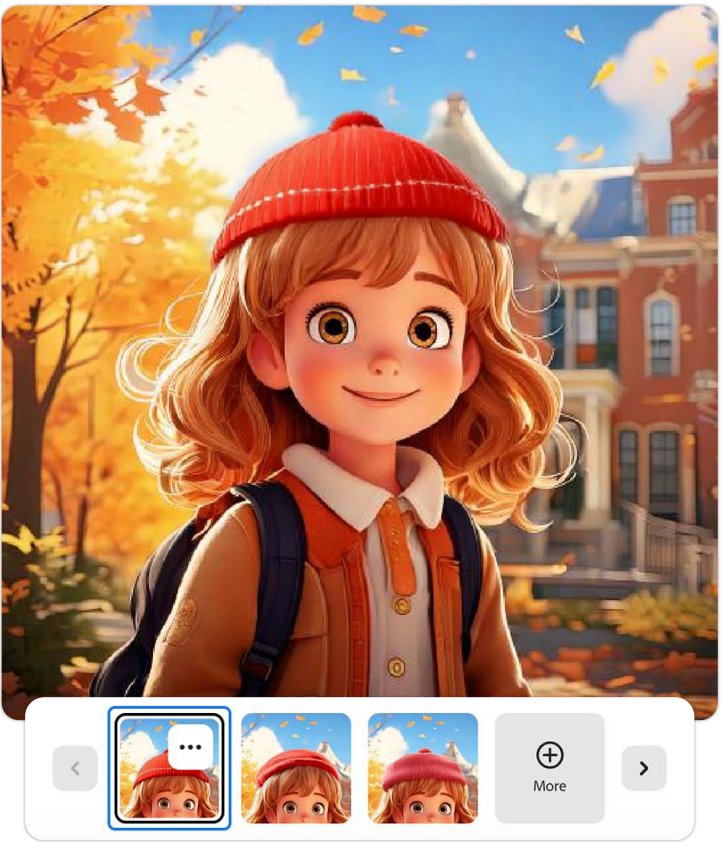
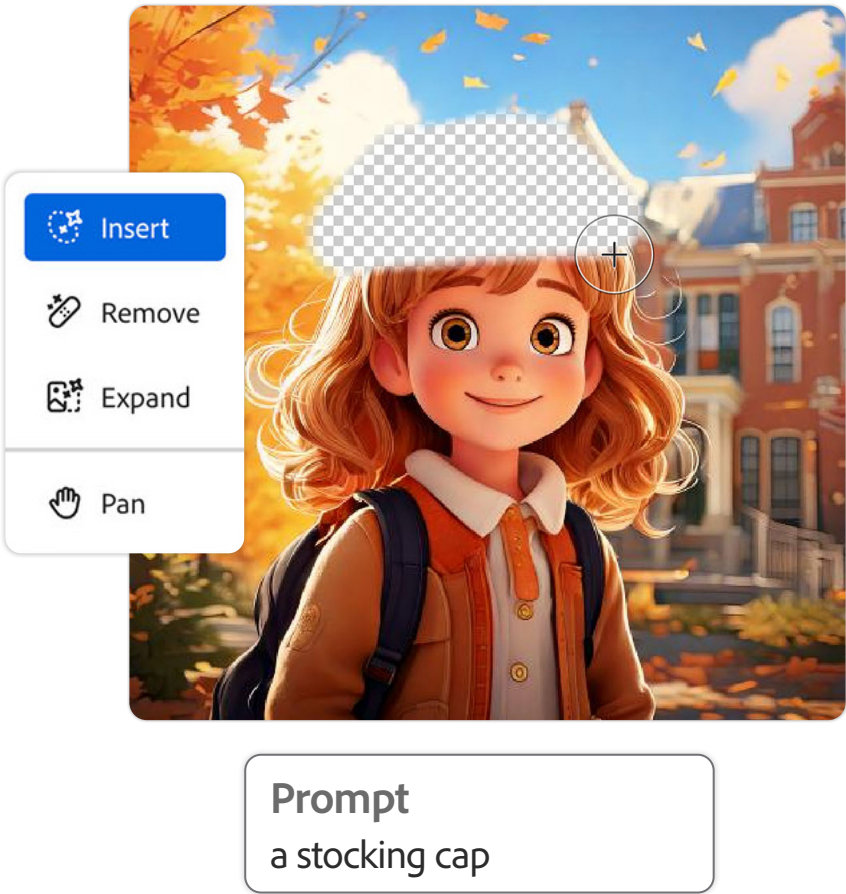
To crop or expand your image. You can write a prompt to guide the content in your expanded areas or leave it blank to let Firefly expand the image for you.

 Pan

Useful for adjusting your image's position to precisely target the area you want to edit.



# How Generative fill works.

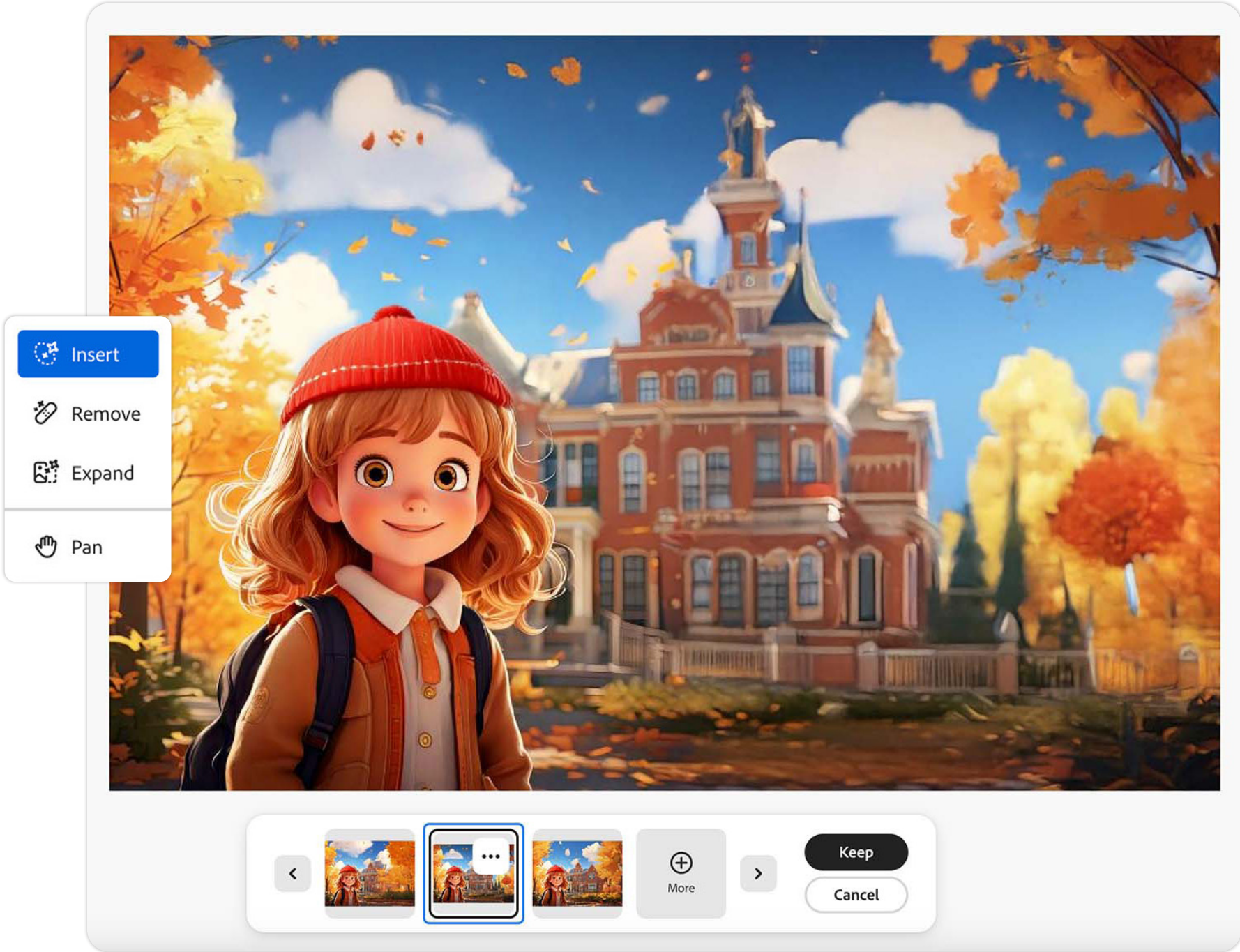


Firefly did a great job with this image, but now I want the little girl to wear a stocking cap.

Using Generative fill, I can select where I want the cap to appear...

...and Firefly will add the prompted content to the image.





# Explore more.

I can even use Generative fill to expand the image and show more of the school.

Click below to learn more about Generative fill and Firefly’s other editing features.

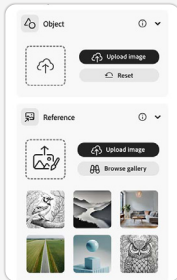
Learn more



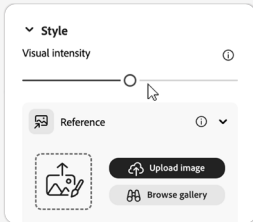
# Tips and key takeaways.



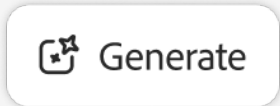
When writing prompts, try to think like an artist or designer.



The Firefly **side panel** can refine images without adding words to the text prompt.



You can control the “AI look” with the Visual intensity slider.



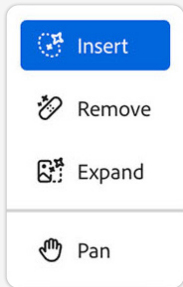
text prompt |

[Subject] +  
[Action] +  
[Environment] +  
[Scene Props] +  
[Style/Medium]  
= image



young, black and white, happy puppy

Firefly works best when using at least **three descriptive keywords**.



Generative fill lets you add or remove content or expand your images without regenerating a whole new image.

Put your new image prompting skills to the test.

Try Firefly now

# Find your inspiration.

The Firefly website comes with an expansive, interactive gallery of images generated on the platform. Each image includes the text prompt and side panel settings that created it, and you can see how Firefly used those settings and prompts to generate the final image.

Here are some other useful resources to give you some prompting inspiration:


How to write AI art prompts that get results. >

Image generation using text descriptions >

### Get inspired by the community

Discover Firefly prompts to remix and submit your own images to the gallery. ⓘ

View your submissions



Visit gallery



# Learn through play.

By learning to write effective prompts, anyone can unlock the power of Firefly to create amazing images. And the impressive range of tools and features offered in Firefly can help refine and perfect your generations, ensuring they align with your vision.

But remember, creating art should be fun. Don't be afraid to experiment. Try adding a line of poetry to your next text prompt and see what happens, or try giving your imagined character a whimsical name. Interesting, evocative language often produces very interesting results in Firefly.

So go ahead, unleash your imagination, and watch Firefly transform your creative ideas into stunning new realities. And remember to share your images with the Firefly Gallery so your work can inspire the rest of the Adobe creative community.

**Learn more from our Adobe Firefly experts  
and how it can support your business**

[Contact us](#)



**Prompt**  
ant; pest control company mascot



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