

Tesseract Setup Guide & Starter Prompts: Make Your First Reviewed Edit

Set up Tesseract in a supported ChatGPT Desktop local workspace, edit a real video, and correct the result without learning a traditional editing timeline. By the end, you will have a repeatable Direct → Preview → Correct workflow for future clips.

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01 Make your first reviewed edit

Tesseract combines an official ChatGPT plugin with a video-editing runtime that previews and renders locally on your computer. Your first goal is simple: turn one low-stakes talking-head clip into a tighter, captioned vertical preview while keeping the editable Tesseract project and withholding the final export until you have reviewed it.

Pre-flight

- The current ChatGPT desktop app on a supported Mac or Windows PC. The simplest local path in this guide does not run through a browser-only ChatGPT conversation.
- A ChatGPT account or workspace that can install and use the Tesseract plugin. Availability can depend on your plan, region, role, and workspace settings; a managed workspace may require administrator approval.
- A computer supported by both ChatGPT Desktop and Tesseract. Tesseract supports Apple Silicon and Intel Macs and 64-bit Windows 10 or later. Linux x86_64 is also supported in compatible local-agent environments but requires additional system dependencies and is not the simplest ChatGPT Desktop path.
- A copy of a short, nonconfidential talking-head clip with a few pauses, wide framing, and no captions.
- Optional but helpful: a checked transcript of the spoken words. Tesseract can place editable captions, but its local CLI does not perform transcription by itself.
- Permission to edit the footage if someone else owns or appears in it.

Start with a copy, not your only original. Do not use confidential, client-owned, or sensitive footage until you have reviewed the ChatGPT, Mirage, and applicable workspace data-handling terms. Local rendering does not automatically make every instruction, file-handling step, or third-party component private.

1

FIRST

Protect the original and make a project folder

Create a new folder for this practice project. Copy the clip into it and give the copy an obvious name such as Practice Edit.mp4. If you have a transcript, place it in the same folder. Use only these copies during the guide.

2

OPEN

Use ChatGPT Desktop

Open the current ChatGPT desktop app and sign in to the account or workspace you intend to use. Do not begin this local setup from a browser-only chat.

3

INSTALL

Add the official Tesseract plugin

Open Plugins in ChatGPT Desktop, find Tesseract, confirm that Mirage is the publisher, review its setup requirements, and select Install plugin. If you cannot find or install it, check your plan, role, region, and workspace plugin policy before continuing.

The official plugin and the separately installed Tesseract skills provide the same creative guidance. Use the plugin for this beginner path; you do not need to install both.

4

SET UP

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Start a fresh local session

After installing the plugin, start a new local ChatGPT session with access to your project folder. Select or mention Tesseract if needed, then paste the setup prompt below.

SETUP PROMPT

Set up Tesseract by Mirage in this local environment. Follow the official plugin installation guide, install the runtime version required by the installed plugin, verify the download checksum, confirm the installed version, and test that a short preview renders correctly. Report any unsupported system, missing permission, or unresolved error before editing my footage. Keep the editable Tesseract project and source assets in this project folder.

1

VERIFY**Wait for the setup test to pass**

Approve only the installation actions you understand. Do not continue until the agent confirms that the required runtime is installed, its checksum and version were checked, and a short test preview rendered without an unresolved error.

2

PROVIDE**Identify your practice footage**

Confirm that the local session can read your project folder. Tell ChatGPT the exact filename of the copied clip and, if available, the transcript. If your version of ChatGPT presents a file or folder chooser, use it to grant access to the project folder rather than selecting your original elsewhere.

3

DIRECT**Paste the first editing instruction**

Paste the following prompt after the copied footage is available to the local session.

PROMPT

Use Tesseract to edit Practice Edit.mp4 into a tight vertical Reel. Remove long pauses and obvious dead air, but keep natural breaths and pauses that support emphasis. Reframe the shot to keep my face sensibly positioned in 9:16. Preserve the original spoken words and source audio, and add no music. Add readable, editable captions using the actual words and verified timing from my supplied transcript, reviewed audio, or an available local transcription tool. If no trustworthy caption source is available, stop and ask me for the spoken text instead of inventing captions. Keep the editable .tsrct project. Render a playable draft preview for review before creating the final export.

9:16 means an upright, phone-shaped frame. Dead air means an unnecessary stretch with no meaningful speech or sound. Natural breaths and useful pauses should remain unless you specifically direct otherwise.

1

PREVIEW

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Wait for the draft result

Let Tesseract complete the first pass, then open the playable draft preview it provides. Do not approve the final export yet. Confirm that the editable Tesseract project was saved for revision.

02 Test the result

The first preview does not need to be perfect. It needs to prove that you can direct a change, inspect the evidence, and identify a specific correction.

1

WATCH

Review once with sound

Watch from beginning to end. Listen for missing words, clipped consonants, unnatural cuts, rushed transitions, doubled audio, sound problems, or useful pauses that disappeared.

2

READ

Review the captions

Watch again while reading every caption. Check each word against the audio, then inspect spelling, punctuation, timing, line breaks, and whether important phrases stay together.

3

LOOK

Inspect the framing

Confirm that the video is vertical, your face stays sensibly positioned across cuts, and captions do not cover your face or sit so low that common interface controls could obscure them.

4

VERIFY

Check the boundaries

Confirm that no music was added, your spoken words and intended source audio were preserved, an editable .tsrct project exists, and the workflow stopped at a draft preview rather than treating the first pass as final.

What success looks like

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TEST	PASS CONDITION
Setup	The required local runtime passed its version, checksum, and short-render checks.
Workflow	You received a playable draft made from the copied footage and retained an editable .tsrct project.
Pacing	Obvious dead air is reduced without clipping words or removing every human breath.
Framing	The clip uses a vertical 9:16 frame and keeps the subject sensibly positioned.
Captions	Captions use verified words and timing, remain editable, and generally follow the spoken delivery.
Boundaries	No music was added, source audio and spoken words remain intact, and no final export was approved without review.

A generated preview is a workflow pass. It becomes an editorial pass only after you have checked pacing, captions, framing, sound, accuracy, context, and the encoded result.

03 Nothing happened? Check these first

- Confirm that you are using the current ChatGPT desktop app, not a browser-only conversation.
- Confirm that you installed the official Tesseract plugin published by Mirage in the same ChatGPT account and workspace you are currently using.
- Confirm that you started a fresh local session after installation. An older conversation may not have loaded the newly installed plugin guidance.
- Confirm that the session has local file and command access and can read the project folder containing the copied video.
- Confirm that the agent installed the plugin-required runtime version, verified its checksum, and successfully ran a short preview test.
- Confirm that you gave the exact copied filename after granting folder access. A filename mentioned in text is not enough if the session cannot read the actual file.
- If captions are missing, ask what verified transcript or transcription source was used. Tesseract does not bundle transcription and should not invent the spoken words.
- If the picture has no sound, ask the agent to enable the video layer's embedded source audio, preserve its timing, and verify the rendered file with sound.
- If media is reported missing, confirm that the clip was not renamed, moved, or deleted after the project was created.
- On Windows, a security warning may appear because the runtime bundle is unsigned. Review the warning and follow your organization's approval process; do not ask the agent to bypass SmartScreen.
- On Linux, verify x86_64, glibc 2.35 or newer, the required rendering dependencies, and a compatible Vulkan driver or Mesa lavapipe. H.264 MP4 export also requires a separate FFmpeg installation with libx264 and AAC.
- If an error remains, capture the exact message and runtime version. Retry the same low-stakes clip without changing the clip, prompt, and setup simultaneously; change one variable so you can tell what fixed it.

04 Correct one judgment call

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Now make the workflow prove its value. Assume the final transition feels rushed and one caption breaks across the wrong words. A caption card is the group of words displayed together at one moment.

PROMPT

Revise the existing Tesseract project. Restore a little space before the final point so it can land naturally. Keep that sentence on one caption card, and move the captions slightly higher so they remain clear of the interface buttons. Change only those items, preserve the source audio and all other timing, framing, wording, and design, and show me a revised playable preview.

Send the correction, then compare the revised preview with the first one.

CHECKLIST

- The final point has enough space to land without dragging.
- The selected sentence appears together instead of breaking at the wrong emphasis.
- The captions sit slightly higher and remain readable.
- Sections you did not ask to change remain intact.
- The revised delivery still sounds like a person, not a machine prosecuting every pause.

If the revision changes too much, narrow the next instruction: “Change only the pause before the final point and that sentence’s caption placement. Leave all other timing, framing, captions, source audio, and graphics unchanged.”

05 Practice with starter prompts

After your complete first edit, learn what each instruction controls. Start each practice pass from a fresh copy of the original clip or a clearly saved project version so you can see the effect without losing approved work.

Practice A: Remove dead air only

PROMPT

Use Tesseract to remove only obvious dead air and unusually long pauses. Inspect and listen to the source audio before choosing each cut. Preserve complete words, natural breaths, useful emphasis, the original framing, and the original source sound. Do not add captions, graphics, effects, or music. Keep the editable project and show me a playable preview before final export.

Practice B: Change framing only

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PROMPT

Use Tesseract to reframe this existing clip for a vertical 9:16 video. Keep my face sensibly positioned throughout and maintain consistent eye height across cuts. Do not change the timing, spoken words, source sound, or pacing, and do not add captions, graphics, effects, or music. Show me a playable preview.

Practice C: Add captions only

PROMPT

Use Tesseract to add editable, readable captions using the actual spoken words and verified timing from my supplied transcript, reviewed audio, or an available local transcription tool. Keep important phrases together when possible and place the captions high enough to avoid common interface controls without covering the speaker. If no trustworthy words or timing are available, ask me for them rather than inventing captions. Do not change the timing, framing, spoken words, or source sound. Show me a playable preview before final export.

Practice D: Produce a bounded full pass

PROMPT

Use Tesseract to edit this existing talking-head clip into a concise vertical 9:16 video. Remove obvious dead air while preserving complete words, natural breaths, and pauses that support emphasis. Keep my face sensibly positioned, preserve the source audio, and add readable editable captions from verified words and timing. Add no music or invented dialogue. Keep the editable .tsrct project, and do not create the final export until I review a playable draft and approve the cut.

06 Repeat the workflow

Use the same operating pattern for every future clip: Direct → Preview → Correct.

Direct

State the desired result and its boundaries. A useful instruction tells Tesseract what to change, what must remain untouched, which source files and references matter, the intended format, and what must happen before final export.

CHECKLIST

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- Name the outcome: tighter edit, vertical framing, captions, motion graphics, sound changes, or another visible result.
- Name the source material and intended audience.
- Name what may change: pauses, framing, caption placement, graphics, audio level, or timing.
- Name what must stay: spoken words, source sound, natural breaths, selected sections, approved graphics, or brand choices.
- Name prohibited additions: for example, no music, no invented dialogue, and no generated footage.
- Request a playable draft before final export.
- Ask to keep the editable .tsrct project and its packaged media.

Preview

Inspect the actual render instead of assuming that a polished prompt produced a polished edit. Watch at normal speed with sound, and check both requested changes and unintended side effects.

Correct

Point to one visible or audible issue at a time. State the desired correction and explicitly protect the parts that should remain unchanged.

SCRIPT

Revise the existing Tesseract project. Change only the pacing immediately before the final point. Restore enough space for the point to land naturally. Leave all other timing, framing, captions, spoken words, source sound, and graphics unchanged. Show me the revised playable preview.

“Make it better” hides the standard. “Remove dead air, preserve complete words and natural breaths, keep my wording and source audio, use vertical framing, retain the editable project, and wait for approval” creates a job you can inspect.

07 Know what else Tesseract can do

This first edit uses only a narrow slice of Tesseract. The same editable project system can support broader creative work without requiring you to master a traditional timeline first.

AREA	WHAT IT CAN DO
Footage editing	Cut and rearrange supplied footage, reframe shots, adjust timing, create speed changes, and retain linked source audio.
Motion graphics	Create editable typography, titles, diagrams, overlays, keyframe animation, easing, groups, and adjustment layers.
Compositing and effects	Combine footage, images, shapes, masks, color treatments, blending, and supported native or custom effects.
Sound	Use embedded video audio, imported music and effects, gain changes, timed ducking, local waveform inspection, and simple procedural sound accents.
Design	Create editable static graphics such as thumbnails, covers, posters, social layouts, and campaign assets using the same visual system.
Custom controls	Have an agent build a focused local browser interface for recurring choices such as title text, timing, color, crop, or caption placement.
Project conversion	Import supported Premiere Pro or After Effects projects for inspection and conversion. Support is partial, and After Effects export remains experimental.

Important boundaries

- Tesseract edits and renders supplied material; it does not bundle generative video, avatar creation, dubbing, or footage generation.
- It can display editable captions, but it does not bundle transcription. Captions require supplied or otherwise verified words and timing.
- The local CLI does not provide cloud rendering or direct publishing. Retrieve and publish the finished file through your chosen destination.
- The editable source is the .tsrct project. Keep it with the finished video so future revisions do not begin from a flattened export.
- For this first vertical clip, 1080p at 30 fps in H.264 MP4 is a practical default. The current CLI also supports 720p, 1080p, or 4K at 24, 30, or 60 fps, plus ProRes 4444 MOV for supported transparent motion-graphics workflows. Higher output settings cannot create detail or motion that is absent from the source.
- ChatGPT Mobile can use Tesseract in a hosted environment, but that is a separate setup path from the local desktop workflow taught here.

08 Keep human control

Tesseract can absorb repetitive mechanics. It does not take responsibility for the finished message. Before approving an export, complete the final human review.

CHECKLIST

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- Every spoken word needed for meaning and context remains present and audible.
- No consonants, syllables, breaths, or room tone were damaged at edited joins.
- Caption words, spelling, punctuation, timing, and line breaks match the audio.
- The pace feels intentional rather than relentlessly fast.
- Natural breaths and useful pauses remain where they help the audience.
- The framing supports the message, maintains continuity, and keeps captions readable.
- Sound remains clear, embedded audio is enabled as intended, and no unwanted music or effects were added.
- Factual claims still mean what you intended after the cuts.
- The result matches any brand, client, permission, disclosure, or approval requirements.
- The final resolution, frame rate, duration, orientation, and audio match the delivery brief.
- You have watched the complete final preview before authorizing the finished render.
- You retained the matching .tsrct project and can identify which project version produced the final video.

“Runs locally” describes the editing and rendering engine, not necessarily every instruction, file transfer, transcription tool, or third-party component involved in the broader ChatGPT workflow. Review the relevant data-handling terms before using sensitive footage.

Free does not mean unrestricted for every commercial use. Under Mirage’s Tesseract terms last updated September 21, 2026, commercial use by or on behalf of a for-profit business with at least US\$1,000,000 in worldwide gross annual revenue requires a separate written agreement with Mirage. The rule includes internal work, marketing, paid services, and commissioned client work, and eligibility depends on the businesses performing or commissioning the work. Review the current terms before commercial or client use.

The eligible Tesseract engine is free and requires no Mirage account for local use. Your ChatGPT subscription, model usage, outside transcription tools, licensed media, and other agent costs remain separate. Apparently, separate billing categories remain one task technology refuses to automate away.

For complex, highly technical, or brand-sensitive productions, judge the workflow by whether it removes friction without sacrificing needed control. Professional judgment still decides what stays, where an audience should pause, and which imperfections make the speaker feel human.

09 Cross the finish line

1

REVIEW

Watch the final preview

Run the complete human-control checklist one last time. If anything fails, correct that one issue in the existing project and request another payable preview.

2

APPROVE

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Render only after the checks pass

When the preview is accurate, natural, and within your stated boundaries, ask the workflow to create the finished render. For this practice clip, use 1080p, 30 fps, and H.264 MP4 unless your source or destination requires something different.

FINAL PROMPT

The reviewed preview is approved. Render the finished vertical video as a 1080p, 30 fps H.264 MP4. Preserve the approved source audio and captions. Keep the matching editable .tsrct project and its packaged media in this project folder. Verify the final file's duration, dimensions, frame rate, audio, and complete playback, then tell me where the finished video and editable project were saved.

1

VERIFY

Check the delivered file

Open the actual finished MP4 and watch it from beginning to end. Confirm that it matches the approved preview and that the reported .tsrct project is present.

2

REPEAT

Apply it to one recurring friction point

Use the same Direct → Preview → Correct sequence on another low-stakes clip. Begin with the task you repeatedly avoid: cutting pauses, fixing framing, adding verified captions, building a title, or balancing sound.

You have completed the guide when you can provide an existing clip through a supported local workspace, request bounded edits in plain English, inspect the rendered evidence, correct one weak moment without needlessly disturbing the rest, preserve the editable project, and approve the finished export responsibly.

Want the reasoning behind the workflow?

Read the companion article, “AI Replaced Your Editor! 🤖 🤖,” for the larger distinction between traditional editing, generative video, and conversational control: <https://chuckgoetschel.com/ai-insights/ai-replaced-your-editor>

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Let AI move the controls; you keep the judgment.