

The Prompt Formula

Five things to tell AI every time you want something useful.

THE FORMULA — TELL AI THESE FIVE THINGS

- 1 WHAT YOU WANT**
Be specific about the task.
Write · Summarise · Explain · Plan · Compare · Brainstorm · Rewrite
- 2 WHY YOU WANT IT**
Context about your situation.
Who you are · What is happening · What you are trying to accomplish
- 3 WHO IT IS FOR**
The audience shapes tone and detail.
Yourself · A colleague · A client · A manager · A stranger
- 4 TONE OR FORMAT**
How you want it to sound or look.
Short or long · Formal or casual · Bullet points or prose · Warm or direct
- 5 WHAT TO AVOID**
Constraints that shape the output.
Jargon · Certain topics · Corporate-speak · Specific words or phrases

Tip: You don't need all five every time. For simple tasks, two or three elements are enough. For important or complex tasks, using all five consistently produces noticeably better results. Think of it as a checklist, not a script.

BEFORE & AFTER — THE SAME REQUEST, TWO WAYS

WEAK PROMPT

Write me an email about a meeting.

STRONG PROMPT

Write a short, professional email to my colleague reminding her about our project check-in on Thursday at 2pm. Keep it warm but brief. Don't include the meeting agenda.

QUICK CHECKLIST

WEAK PROMPT SIGNS

- One sentence with no context
- No stated goal or purpose
- No guidance on tone or format
- Could have been written by anyone

STRONG PROMPT SIGNS

- Context: who you are and the situation
- Goal: what you specifically need
- Tone: formal, casual, warm, direct
- Constraints: what to avoid or exclude