

# Be **SPECIFIC** to Write Strong AI Prompts

## **S** Specify your task.

What do you want the AI to do? Ask directly and concisely. Be clear about your end goal.

Instead of ordering something broad like “Write a lesson plan,” give the AI tool more detail. Try, for example, “Create a forty-five-minute lesson plan for eighth-grade history students on westward migration. Include a hands-on activity and a short quiz.”

## **P** Protect privacy.

Even if a chatbot seems secure, it is never appropriate to include names, identifying details, or sensitive information about yourself or your students. You can still get useful results by describing situations in general terms, for example, “What are some strengths-based ways to support a tenth-grade student who reads significantly below grade level?”

## **E** Include examples if helpful.

Give examples to help the AI match your expectations and to help it better understand your intentions. Be clear about the output you’d like in return (a.k.a. what to do) and the output you would *not* like in return (a.k.a. what *not* to do).

## **C** Provide context.

Provide enough context to help the tool provide a useful response. Good old “who, what, when, where, why, and how” instructions apply here. It’s also helpful to directly name the tone (warm, friendly, polite, professional) you’d like to see in the output.

You can also include sources and content for the tool to work with. Use wording such as, “Here is a draft of my rubric. Help me make it more student-friendly and aligned to the following sixth-grade writing standards,” and include your rubric and the applicable standards. If you’re asking for help with a lesson plan, you might include the text students are learning from or your own teaching notes about the content.

## **I** Instruct AI to **impersonate** someone in a particular role.

Asking AI to respond as a friendly tutor or a wisecracking friend affects the tone, diction, and complexity of the response. Who would give you a helpful answer to your query? Ask AI to play that role. For example: “You are an experienced fifth-grade math teacher who differentiates instruction. Suggest three ways to explain division with remainders to students who are struggling.”

## **F** Ask for a **format** in which you’d like to receive the response.

Essay, poem, list, email? Tell the AI what format to respond in.

## **I** Iterate to improve.

Prompting is a process, not a one and done. If the response you get to your initial prompt isn’t what you need, try again. You may have to try prompting in several different ways to get the result you desire. For example, you might ask first for ideas, then structure, then a polished draft. Continue to follow up with instructions until you get the results you need.

Also, if a prompt is getting unwieldy, you can give the chatbot a general explanation and ask it to write the prompt for you. Then, have it respond to the prompt it created.

## **C** Check and clarify the output.

Never use an output as it is returned to you without a critical review. Always double-check any information the tool has provided. If the AI has given you questionable information, you might point out the error and ask it to correct the problem, or you might ask it to share its sources. Even in these cases, or in situations when AI claims to have “fixed” a mistake, you still need to check the results. AI is programmed to sound authoritative and confident. Don’t let that fool you. Also, remember that AI reflects the biases of the data it has been trained on.