

# Prompting Cheat Sheet

Quick reference for writing effective AI prompts. Print this and keep it by your workspace.

## THE 5 PROMPT COMPONENTS

Component	What It Does + Example
Role	Sets tone and expertise level. "You are a patient coding tutor who explains every step."
Task	What you want AI to do. Use a clear verb. "Create a 4-week workout plan for a beginner."
Constraints	Rules and limits. "Keep it under 300 words. No jargon. Free tools only."
Examples	Show the pattern you want. "Here's the format: Feature: [name] — Description: [1 sentence]"
Output Format	How to structure the response. "Format as a numbered list with bold headings."

## ADVANCED TECHNIQUES

Technique	When to Use + How
Few-Shot	Show 2–3 examples of input → output pattern before your real request. Best for consistent formatting.
Chain-of-Thought	Add "Think step by step" or "Walk me through your reasoning." Best for complex analysis.
Socratic / Questions	Ask "What should I consider?" instead of "Tell me what to do." Best for exploration and planning.
Devil's Advocate	"What are the weaknesses in this plan?" Best for stress-testing ideas before building.
Negative Constraints	"Don't use jargon. Don't suggest paid tools." Best for preventing AI defaults you don't want.
Style Matching	Provide a writing sample and say "Match this style." Best for consistent voice across your project.

## ITERATION MOVES

**Too long?** → "Keep your response under [X] words."

**Too vague?** → Add specific constraints or an example of what you want.

**Wrong tone?** → Add a role or "Write as if explaining to a friend."

**Missing something?** → "Also include [specific thing]."

**Completely off?** → Start a fresh conversation with a rewritten prompt.

## DEBUGGING PROMPT TEMPLATE

*"I'm building [context]. I expected [behavior]. What actually happens: [problem]. I've tried: [what you did]. Here's the relevant code: [paste]. What's wrong and how do I fix it?"*

## GOLDEN RULES

- Your first prompt is a rough draft. Iterate 2–3 times.

- Specific > vague. Always.
- Show > tell. Examples beat descriptions.
- AI output = first draft. You review, direct, and refine.
- When stuck: start a fresh conversation, don't keep patching a confused one.