

Lesson 1: From Asking to Directing

Getting better results from AI is not about asking better questions. It is about directing the work.

Prompt Engineering Basics · Lesson 1 of 10

The Big Idea

Most people start by asking AI a question and seeing what comes back. That works for simple things. But as the work gets more serious, the question changes from *"What will AI give me?"* to *"How do I get AI to do the work I actually need?"*

That shift — from asking to directing — is what prompt engineering really is.

Asking vs. Directing

Asking	Directing
Communicates a question	Communicates an assignment
Accepts whatever comes back	Thinks about purpose, quality, and results
Works for simple, one-off tasks	Scales to complex, serious work

What a Prompt Really Is

A prompt isn't just a question. It's a set of instructions. And like any instructions, it can be vague or clear, incomplete or complete.

Question → Instruction → Task → Process → AI-Assisted Workflow

This course walks that path, one building block at a time.

Works with any AI tool. These lessons aren't tied to one product. The building blocks work the same way in ChatGPT, Claude, Gemini, Copilot, or any other AI assistant, free or paid. Use whichever one you have.

Try It

Ask any AI tool: *"Explain budgeting."* Save the answer. You'll rebuild this prompt piece by piece in the lessons ahead and compare the results at the end.

Want the AI to coach you through the rest of the lessons? Use the starter prompt at the end of [The Prompt Architecture](#).

Go Deeper

Read [From Prompting to Prompt Architecture](#).

Learn the principle. Then practice it.

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