

The Prompt Architecture

Six building blocks for directing AI — and a simple loop for improving the result

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.

Why You Need Structure

A simple prompt asks AI for an answer. A structured prompt **directs the work**: it tells the AI what perspective to take, why the work matters, what to produce, who it's for, what the limits are, and what a good result looks like.

Prompt architecture is the practice of organizing human instructions so that AI can better understand what is being asked, why it matters, and what a useful result should look like.

The Six Building Blocks

Role → Purpose → Task → Audience → Boundaries → Success Criteria

Block	The Question It Answers	What It Does
1. Role	Who should the AI be?	Tells the AI what perspective or expertise to work from.
2. Purpose	Why does this work matter?	Explains what the work is ultimately for.
3. Task	What exactly should it produce?	States the specific deliverable.
4. Audience	Who is the result for?	Sets the tone, depth, and vocabulary.
5. Boundaries	What are the limits?	Length, format, scope, sources, and what to avoid.
6. Success Criteria	What does "good" look like?	Defines the standard the result will be judged against.

You don't need every block every time. The skill is choosing the right ones without making the instructions more complicated than the job requires.

A Worked Example

The weak prompt: "Explain budgeting."

Now build it block by block.

Block	Added Instruction
Role	You are a personal finance educator.
Purpose	Help first-time renters take control of their monthly spending.
Task	Write a one-page guide to building a monthly budget.
Audience	Young adults with no finance background.
Boundaries	Under 400 words, plain language, no product recommendations.
Success Criteria	A reader can build a working budget in 15 minutes.

THE STRUCTURED PROMPT:

You are a personal finance educator. Your goal is to help first-time renters take control of their monthly spending. Write a one-page guide to building a monthly budget for young adults with no finance background. Keep it under 400 words, in plain language, with no product recommendations. A reader should be able to build a working budget in 15 minutes.

Both prompts are about the same topic. Only one tells the AI what a useful result actually looks like.

The Improvement Loop

Your first prompt doesn't have to be your best prompt. Good prompting is a conversation, not a single shot.

Prompt → Draft → Critique → Revise → Learn

Step	What to Do
Prompt	Send your structured instructions.
Draft	Read the first result as a draft, not a final answer.
Critique	Ask: "What are the weakest parts of this, and what might be wrong?"
Revise	Add missing context, tighten a boundary, or sharpen the success criteria.
Learn	Ask: "How should I ask next time to get a better result faster?"

The Human Stays in Charge

The building blocks organize the work. They don't replace your judgment.

Human Intent → AI Instructions → AI Execution → Human Evaluation

You set the intent at the beginning and judge the result at the end. The AI carries out the work in between. Check important facts against original sources, and never treat fluent writing as proof that the answer is correct.

Your Checklist

Before you send an important prompt, ask:

1. Did I give it a **role**?
2. Did I explain the **purpose**?
3. Is the **task** specific?
4. Did I name the **audience**?
5. Did I set the **boundaries**?
6. Did I define **success**?

Your Starter Prompt

Want the AI to coach you while you learn? Copy the prompt below and paste it at the start of a new chat. If your AI tool has a "custom instructions" or "project instructions" setting, you can put it there once so it applies every time.

For this conversation, act as my AI partner using the Prompt Architecture. Before you start any task I give you, check it for these six building blocks: Role, Purpose, Task, Audience, Boundaries, and Success Criteria. If any are missing and would change the result, ask me about them first, using short questions. Don't ask about ones that don't matter for the task. After each answer, tell me in one line which block, if I'd added it, would have improved the result most. Be honest, not flattering. If you're unsure about a fact, say so.

This isn't a shortcut. It's a coach. Every time the AI asks you for a missing block, you're practicing the framework — until you start including the blocks on your own.

The goal isn't to collect a bag of prompts. The goal is to learn how to think behind the prompt.