

Prompt Playbook

Clarity beats tricks.

11 techniques

Start simple. Add a technique only when the answer misses.

Zero-shot

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Ask directly, with no examples.

Use it when: quick questions; your first try.

Specify

Goal & definition of done

Tell the model what finished looks like.

Use it when: deliverables you will check.

Context & the why

Explain why it matters and who it's for.

Use it when: judgment calls; a specific audience.

Constraints & format

Set the limits and the shape of the answer.

Use it when: fixed templates; output for another tool.

Show

Few-shot

Show one example of what you want.

Use it when: formats that are hard to describe.

Split

Decomposition & chaining

Split a big task into steps; chain the results.

Use it when: multi-step work; review checkpoints.

Check

Self-check

Ask the model to check its work.

Use it when: outputs with a clear checklist.

Permission to say "I don't know"

Allow the model to admit what it doesn't know.

Use it when: your documents; facts and policies.

Clarify

Ask-me-first

Let the model ask questions before it starts.

Use it when: vague tasks; costly wrong guesses.

See

Images as input

Show an image and point at what matters.

Use it when: UI reviews; comparing two versions.

Image generation

Describe scene, subject, details, constraints.

Use it when: banners, slide visuals, quick variations.

Myth Busters

Shouting at the model → Write instructions in a normal voice.

"Think step by step" → Reasoning models already think. Use the effort setting.

The expert persona → A role sets the tone. Give clear instructions and context.

Giant templates → A few lines: the goal, the context, what done looks like.

A prompt to keep

Goal: [what you want]

Why it matters: [who it's for and why it matters]

Done means: [what finished looks like]

Format: [shape of the answer]. Maximum [length / rows].

Example: [one example of what you want]

Before you answer, check your draft against these criteria and fix anything that fails: [checklist].