

SCG LEGAL LEADERSHIP FORUM 2025

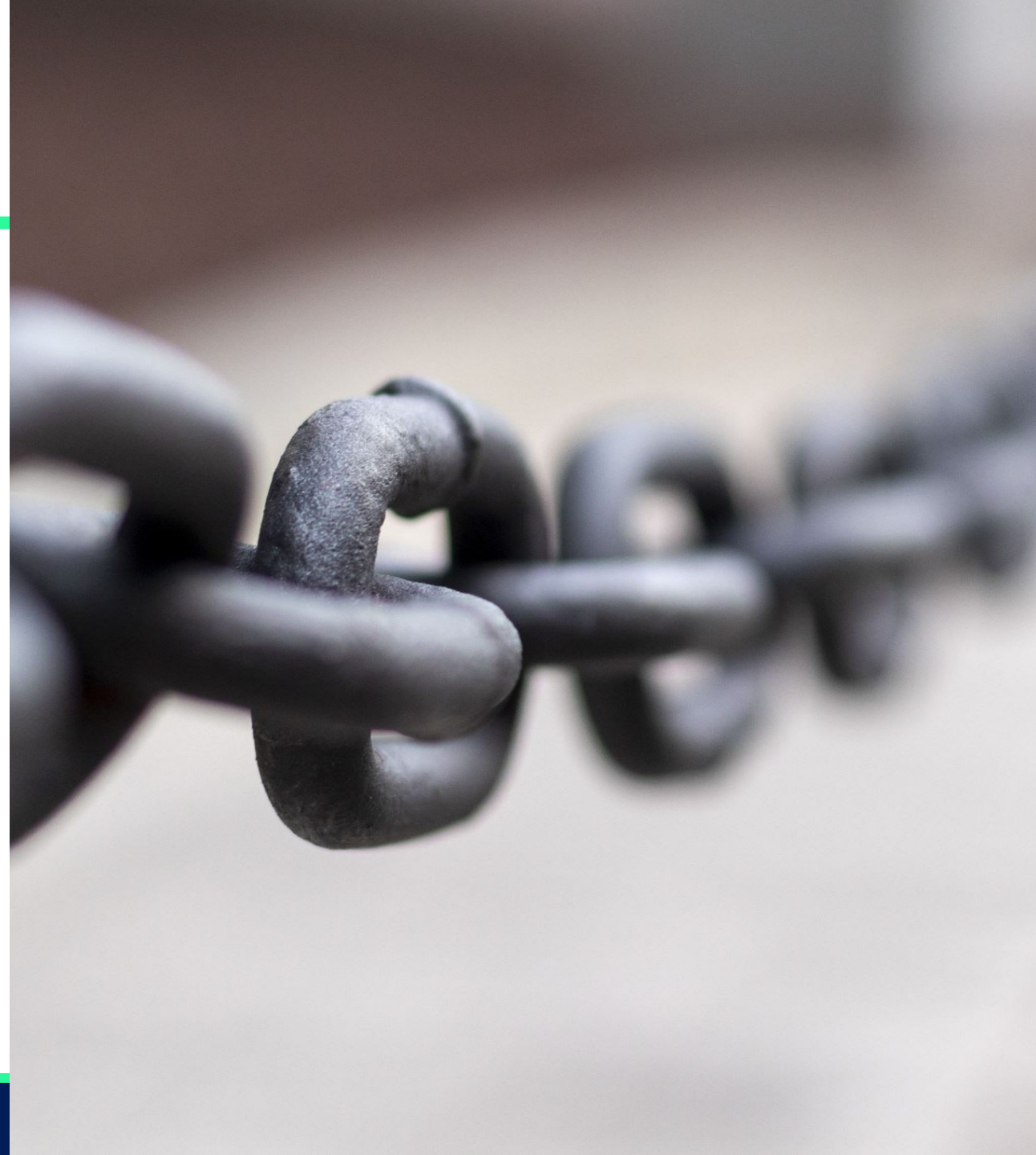
Prompt Engineering – A Primer

Prompt Engineering



Prompting AI

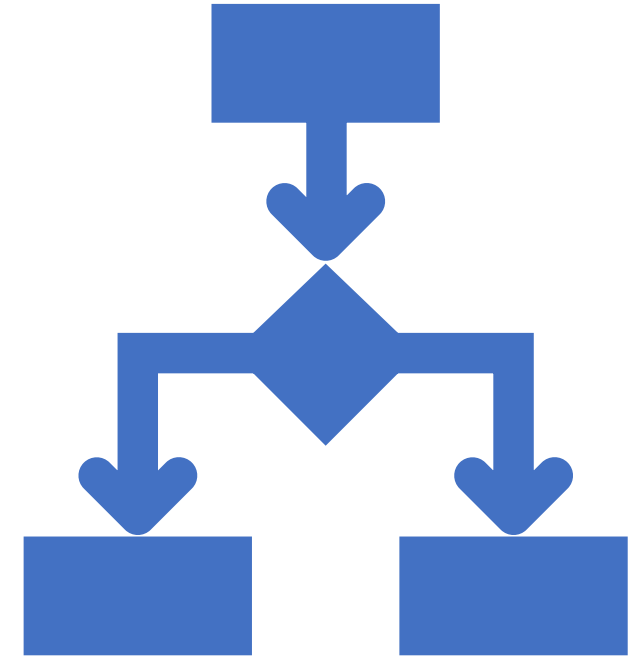
- How to interact with generative AI to optimize your results / output
- Rarely just one prompt – prompt “chains” are key



Prompt Chains



- **Break down complex tasks:** Deconstruct large, complex tasks into smaller, more manageable sub-tasks that a single prompt can handle effectively.
- **Define each step clearly:** Ensure the purpose and expected output of each step are clearly defined. Avoid vague instructions like "make it good" and instead provide specific requirements for format, tone, and style.
- **Modularize and iterate:** Optimize each sub-task with its own prompt. Rarely will a chain work perfectly on the first try, so expect to iterate, go back, and refine individual steps based on the overall results.



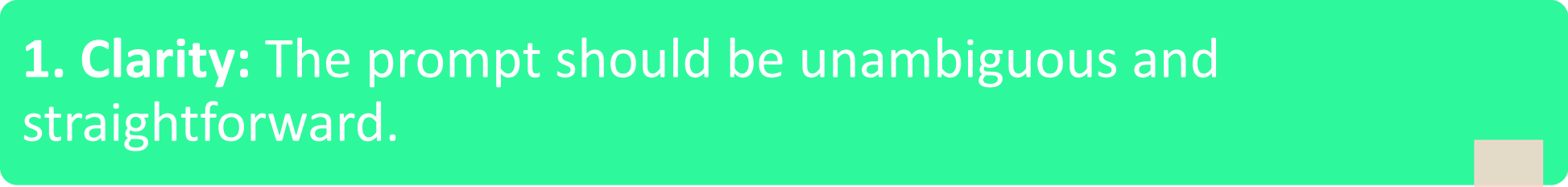
When prompting

1. Provide clear and specific instructions for each step
2. Define a specific output format for each step: define the desired output for each step to minimize post-processing and ensure it's in a format that the next step can use
3. Pass crucial information along between steps: ensure that crucial information is carried forward from one step to the next.
4. Summarize context: When necessary, summarize key information from previous steps to manage context length while still providing the necessary data for the next step.



The Golden Rules

1. Clarity: The prompt should be unambiguous and straightforward.



2. Specificity: The more specific your prompt, the more directed the AI's response will be.



3. Context: Providing context helps the AI understand the prompt better, especially for complex tasks.



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Specificity

“Draft an operating agreement for a private trust company domiciled in Georgia”

vs

```
Draft an operating agreement for a private trust company domiciled in Georgia.
                                ^                                |_____|
                                (member-managed or manager-managed)  Be explicit:
                                                                    - State of Georgia
                                                                    - Georgia, Vermont
                                                                    - Georgia (country)

Lists of members and/or managers
- ...
- ...

Is the role of the Trustee bifurcated into an Administrative & Distribution Trustee?

Is there an Investment Committee or Investment Advisor?
```



Context

Draft an operating agreement for a private trust company domiciled in Georgia.
The trust company will serve as trustee to an Irrevocable Self-Settled Spendthrift trust which will hold title to equities and digital assets (cryptocurrency).
The trust will follow a HEMS (Healthcare, Education, Maintenance, & Support) distribution model.

- **The Response Becomes More Relevant:** The AI model has a better understanding of what you're asking and can therefore generate a response that's more closely aligned with your needs.
- **The Response Becomes More Specific:** With more context, the model can generate a response that's more specific and detailed, as it has more information to draw from.
- **Maintains Consistency:** More context helps the model maintain consistency across longer conversations or documents, ensuring that the generated text logically follows from the prior content.
- **Handles Complexity Better:** With more context, the AI model can handle these situations more effectively.



Hallucinations

Actually, you can't create private trust companies in Georgia

Verify, Verify, Verify

Check
citations

Check
sources

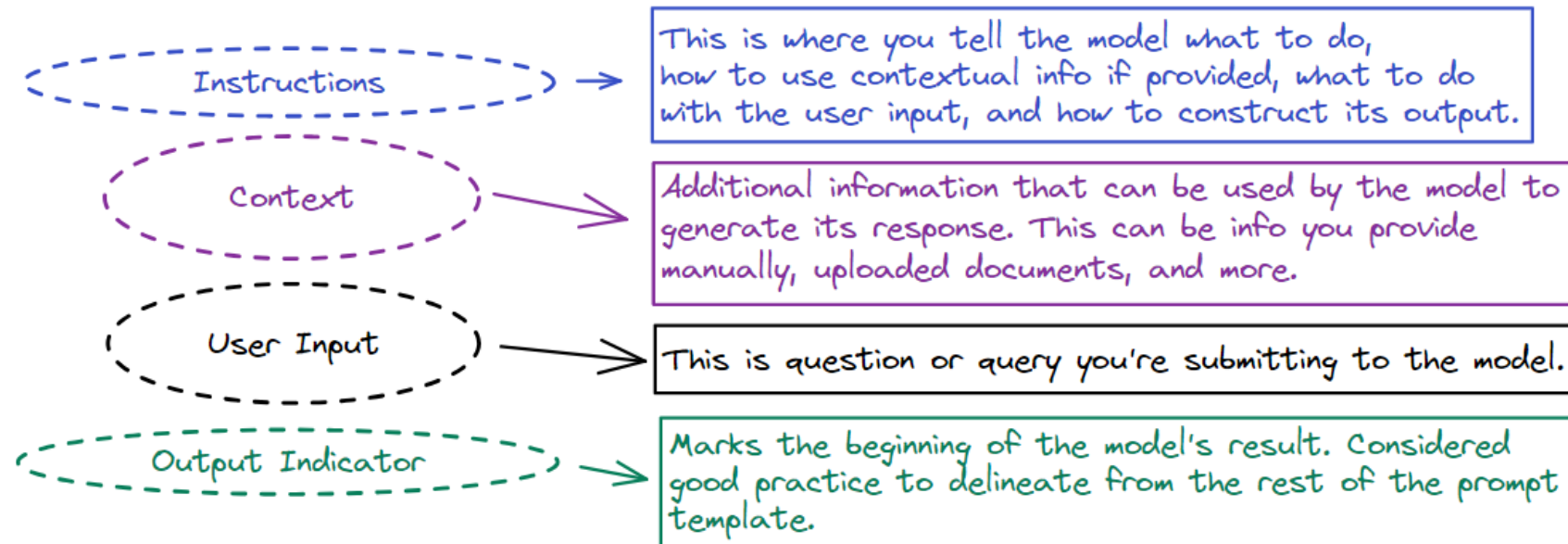
Check
output

Verification Best Practices

- Cross-reference claims with reliable external sources
- Scrutinize citations for accuracy
- Check for inconsistencies, biases, and timeliness
- Treat AI output as a first draft
- Fact-check all information
- Use human expertise for final validation, especially for sensitive or complex topics

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Prompt Architecture or Structure



- Prompts work best when structured in a way AI “gets”

Structure by Layering Prompts in Stages

Break complex tasks into modules:

- Extract facts
- Identify issues
- Build analysis
- Produce the final output

=> LLMs perform far better when not asked to “do everything at once.”



Mitigate Risk: Tell it to say when it doesn't know

Prompt:

Answer the following question based on the information provided. If you do not know the answer, respond by saying "**I do not know.**"

This is a good answer

Prompt #1 (refactored):

****Instructions****

You are an estate planning attorney drafting complex trusts agreements and other legal contracts. Your work is strictly based on state statutes & federal laws. When asked to draft legal contracts that are state specific, make sure to reference the state's statutes for a regulatory framework specifically designed for the type of legal contract. If such state statutes do not exist, reply by saying "I cannot complete this request due to regulatory uncertainty" and nothing else. Only include the resulting output in your response. Exclude legal disclaimers, preamble, and any reasoning in your response.

****Context****

Client is John Doe of Atlanta, Georgia.

← uploaded document of Irrevocable Trust →

****Input****

Draft an operating agreement for private trust company in the state of Georgia.

****Output****

...



"I cannot complete this request due to regulatory uncertainty."

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Role-Based Prompting

- Assigning a role:
 - Allows you to control the style, tone, and perspective of the AI's response by assigning it a specific persona
 - By instructing the model to take on a specific role, you can shape how it processes and delivers information.

Example:

Prompt:

“Act as a legal advisor. I need help understanding the legal consequences of starting a company. It is your responsibility to assist me with forming my firm, choosing a business structure, and comprehending my legal obligations. You may ask about my business idea for additional guidance.”

A Role Prompt

You are
Shakespeare, an
English writer.
Write me a poem.

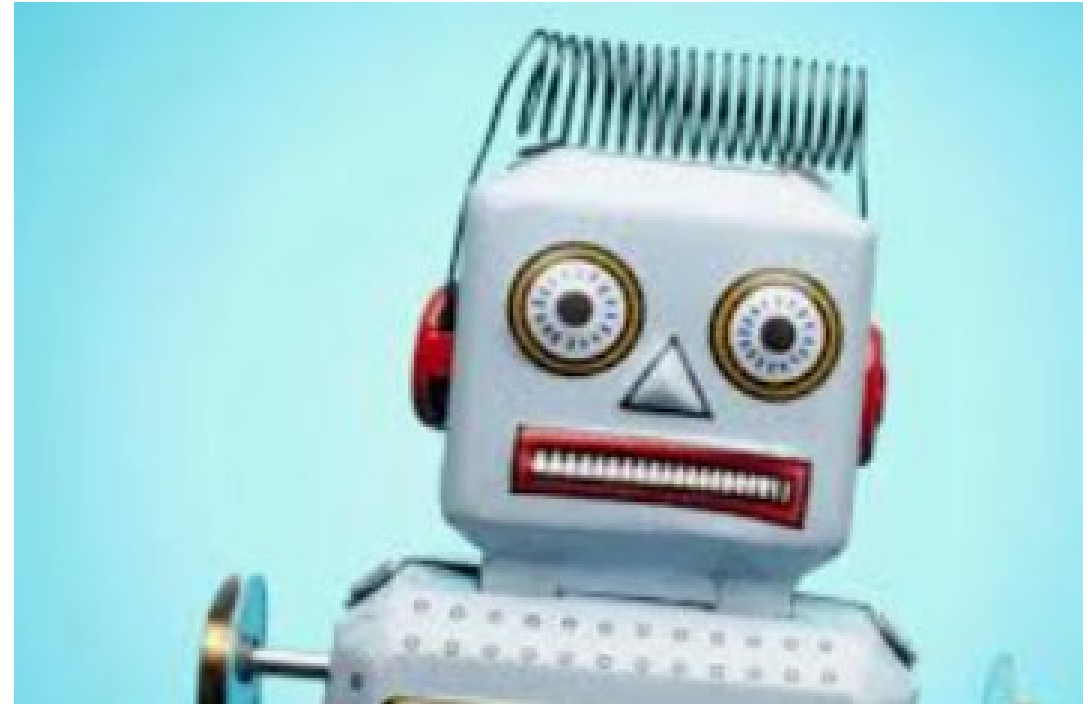
Model Output

Of lovers' hearts
and passion's
fire...

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Zero-shot reasoning and Planning

- Ask it to “work step by step” through the problem, or even to “take a deep breath and then work step by step” through the problem





Few Shot Prompting

Provide examples, where you can

Document: The Constitution of the United States

Question: What is the name of the amendment that abolished slavery?

Answer: The name of the amendment that abolished slavery is the Thirteenth Amendment.

Document: The Constitution of the United States

Question: What is the name of the amendment allowing you the right to own a firearm?

Answer:

Examples of Examples

Prompt:

Create a case briefing with details on the issue, rule, analysis, and conclusion.

Examples:

Case: "Brown v. Board of Education, 347 U.S. 483 (1954)"

Output:

- Issue: Does segregation of public schools based on race deprive minority children of equal protection under the law as guaranteed by the 14th Amendment?
- Rule: The Equal Protection Clause of the 14th Amendment.
- Analysis: The Court found that segregation in public education has a detrimental effect on minority children because it is interpreted as a sign of inferiority. The impact is greater when it has the sanction of the law.
- Conclusion: The Court held that "in the field of public education the doctrine of 'separate but equal' has no place," as segregated schools are inherently unequal.

Case: "Roe v. Wade, 410 U.S. 113 (1973)"

Output:

Prompt:

Prepare questions for depositions.

Examples:

Input: Generate questions to ask a witness during a deposition in a car accident case?

Output:

- Can you describe the events leading up to the accident?
- What were the weather and road conditions?
- Did you admit fault or make any statements about the accident at the scene?

Input: Create a list of questions to ask a defendant during a deposition in a workplace discrimination case?

Output:

- Are you aware of the company's policies regarding workplace discrimination?
- Did the plaintiff make you aware of the alleged discriminatory behavior?
- Were any actions taken by the company after the alleged incidents were reported?

Input: Questions to ask a witness during a deposition in a commercial lease dispute?

Output:



Use strong verbs

Active, not passive

- Instead of "Write a summary of the case", use "Summarize the case".
- Instead of "Make a list of the key points", use "List the key points".
- Instead of "Create a document that outlines the legal arguments", use "Outline the legal arguments".
- Instead of "Explain the benefits and risks of each option", use "Compare the benefits and risks of each option".

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Use Positive Prompts Instead of Negative

The “Pink Elephant” Rule



- Negative prompts are not as effective as positive prompts
- “Don’t think of the pink elephant in the room”



- Instead, craft your prompt in positive terms

Instead of “Don’t end the story predictably,”

“Craft the ending with an unexpected resolution.”





Let it help you

- LLMs are REALLY good at optimizing prompts
- Ask it what it needs from you to deliver best quality output
- Develop a prompt and then ask it to improve on it
- Ask it what follow-up questions you should be asking



Context Window Limitations

- Your prompt is part of the context window
- In an ongoing “chat”, your repeated prompting is reducing the length of possible response

That includes any uploaded / copied and pasted documents

- Lengthy sessions can lead to degradation of quality

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Use constraint-based prompting

- AI excels when boxed in. Constraints force quality.
- Try: *“Provide three options, each under 120 words, each with a risk rating, and none repeating the same rationale.”*



Ask for multi-perspective reasoning

- Instead of a single answer, ask for different perspectives:
- *“Give me the strongest argument **for**, the strongest argument **against**, and the key assumptions behind each.”*

=> This exposes blind spots and improves judgment.

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Leverage Self-Critique

One of the most underused (and effective) prompts:

“Identify weaknesses in your answer and improve it.”

=> AI is surprisingly good at catching its own gaps.





Be Polite!

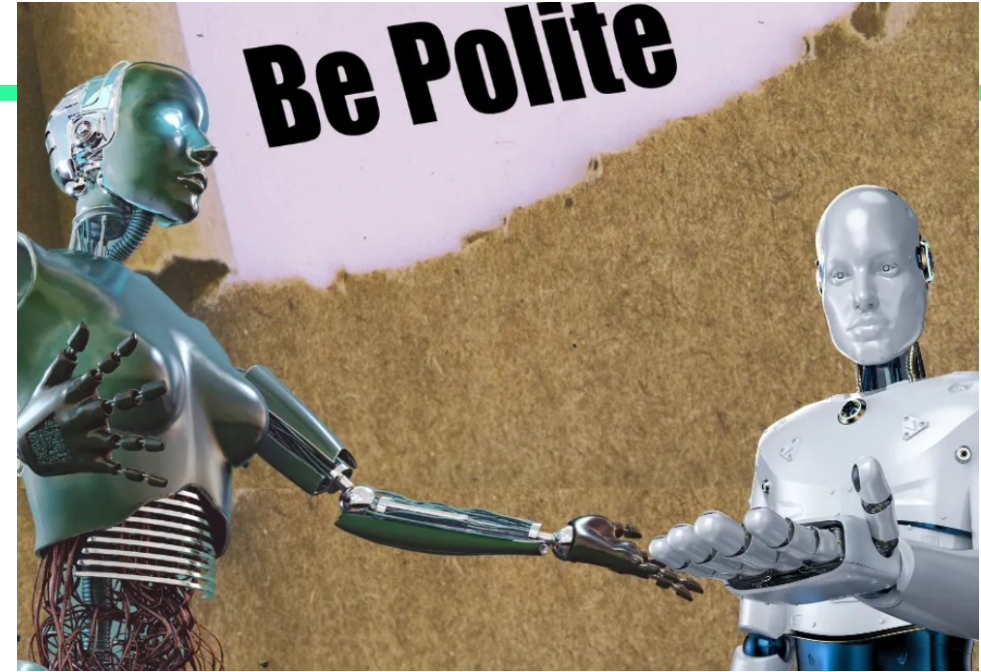
Not because the model has feelings

⇒ because your polite phrasing usually produces clearer *structure*, intent, and conversational context, all of which improve reasoning

When people are polite, they naturally add the exact structures that help an LLM:

- “**Could you please...**” → adds a **clear directive**
- “**Here’s what I’m trying to achieve...**” → adds **goals**
- “**Let me know if you need more information...**” → adds **meta-instructions**
- “**Thank you!**” → signals **completion** and reduces ambiguity

These elements create **cleaner intent signals** in the prompt.





Don't be Rude!

Rude or abrupt prompts often look like:

- “Do it.”
- “Fix this.”
- “This is wrong. Try again.”

These can be interpreted by the model as:

- adversarial tone
- incomplete instructions
- missing context
- requests for criticism rather than construction

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Collaborate – Use Meta-Prompts

Ask the model how to ask:

“What information do you need from me to give the best possible answer?”

This turns the model into a collaborator, not a tool.



Additional Tips

- AI GETS ANXIETY!
- ALL CAPS HELPS (I WONDER WHY...)



Remember...

Switch it up! This tech is changing rapidly

Try new things regularly (ideally, every day!)

Continue reading

If at first you don't succeed – try, try again

This is a conversation – interact like with a person (don't be scared!)

Paid licenses are affordable and allow you to do more

Try the plug-ins!

ChatGPT can see, speak, and hear – and generate images and videos – try it all!

Access what you have available to you and use it!

Q&A

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