

CHAPTER 4 - THE ART OF ASKING WELL

The RCTF Prompt Template

Role, Context, Task, Format. Four simple ingredients for a strong prompt.

Think of RCTF as a checklist, not a formula. The more of these you answer, the less AI has to guess.

Watch One Prompt Climb the Ladder

Level	Example
POOR	“Write a presentation.”
BETTER	“Write a presentation for my sales team.”
GREAT	“Write a ten-slide presentation for experienced sales managers explaining our new pricing strategy.”
EXCEPTIONAL	“Write a ten-slide presentation for experienced sales managers. Audience: Regional Sales Managers. Goal: Explain the new pricing strategy. Tone: Confident but practical. Include objections. Finish with three discussion questions.”

Build Your Own Prompt

Pick one real task you need done this week. Answer as many fields below as genuinely apply.

R - Role: Who should AI sound like while answering you?

C - Context: What would a sharp new colleague need to know before they could help you well?

T - Task: What exactly do you want, in the clearest, most specific version of the request?

F - Format: How should the answer be shaped? Length, structure, tone?

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Five Invisible Questions

Every prompt is quietly trying to answer five questions. The more clearly you answer them, the less AI has to guess.

Who am I?

What am I trying to achieve?

What should you know before you begin?

What should the final answer look like?

How will I know if you have done a good job?

A model to work from

Before: "Write a marketing email for my store's sale." One bare line, nothing else.

After: "You are an experienced email marketer who writes warm, friendly emails for small retail businesses. Our store is Maple and Clay. We are running a weekend sale, 20% off everything. Our customers are women aged 30 to 55. Write a promotional email. Keep it under 150 words, include a friendly subject line, and end with an invitation to visit this weekend."

Same task. Thirty extra seconds of typing. The difference between something you delete and something you actually use.

Specificity beats cleverness, every time.