

The Importance of Prompts

Text

In the world of artificial intelligence, there is a simple but fundamental concept that every user should understand: the prompt. This English term refers to the message or instruction that a user sends to an AI system in order to request a task. Although it may seem like a small detail, the prompt is actually the central element that determines the quality, relevance, and usefulness of the response generated by the AI.

Understanding the importance of prompts means understanding a key principle: AI cannot read minds. It can only respond to the information it receives. If the instruction is vague, the response will likely be vague as well. If the instruction is precise, structured, and clearly written, the result will be far more relevant and useful. For this reason, a prompt is much more than a simple question. It is a way of guiding and controlling how the AI performs a task.

Organizations working on AI systems, such as OpenAI, explain that the way a prompt is written can strongly influence the accuracy, tone, and usefulness of the generated response. Learning how to formulate effective prompts is therefore a key skill for anyone who wants to use AI efficiently.

Why Are Prompts So Important?

To understand why prompts are so influential, imagine two users who both want help writing a professional email.

The first user simply writes: "Write me an email."

The second user writes: "Write a professional and polite email to a client explaining that their delivery will be delayed by two weeks, offering sincere apologies and proposing a compensation solution."

These two requests will clearly not produce the same result. The first user will likely receive a very general email that lacks context or relevance. The second user, however, will receive a message tailored to a specific situation and ready to be used.

This example illustrates why prompt formulation is so important. Artificial intelligence has the ability to generate large amounts of content in many forms, but it needs sufficient information to guide its response in the right direction. It is the user's responsibility to provide this guidance.

The Key Elements of an Effective Prompt

An effective prompt is usually more than just a short sentence. It can include several elements that help the AI produce a clear and professional result.

The first element is the role. This means specifying the perspective or position the AI should adopt when answering. For example, the user may ask the AI to act as a marketing expert, a mathematics teacher, a legal advisor, or a business consultant. Defining a role helps shape the tone, level of expertise, and approach used in the response.

The second element is the objective. The user should clearly state what outcome is expected. Is the goal to write a text, summarize a document, generate ideas, analyze a situation, or answer a specific question? When the objective is clearly defined, the response becomes more focused and useful.

The third element is context. Providing background information about the situation helps the AI better adapt its response. Who is the intended audience? In what environment will the content be used? What is the problem or situation that led to the request? These details prevent the AI from producing answers that are too general.

The fourth element involves constraints. Constraints can include limits or conditions that guide the AI's output. For example, the user may specify a word limit, a particular tone, subjects that should be avoided, a specific language level, or formatting rules. These constraints help ensure that the final response matches the user's expectations.

The fifth element is the expected format. The user may want a written paragraph, a bullet-point list, a table, a

structured outline, a script, or a short summary. By clearly indicating the format, the user ensures that the response will be directly usable without requiring additional editing.

Researchers studying human interaction with AI, including teams at the Stanford University Human-Centered AI Institute, often emphasize that clear and well-structured instructions significantly improve the usefulness of outputs generated by large language models.

Learning to Guide AI Effectively

Mastering prompt construction means learning how to guide AI in a deliberate and strategic way. Instead of passively accepting whatever answer the system produces, the user becomes an active participant in the process. They guide the tool, refine the instructions, and gradually adjust their requests until the desired result is obtained.

This approach also involves experimentation. It is rare to obtain the perfect response on the first attempt. In practice, experienced users often test different ways of phrasing their prompts. They observe how the AI responds and then modify their instructions accordingly. Over time, this process helps develop a deeper understanding of how to interact effectively with AI systems.

Another useful technique is gradually improving a prompt during a conversation. If the first response is helpful but incomplete, the user can ask the AI to expand on certain points, change the tone, add examples, simplify the explanation, or restructure the content. AI interactions are flexible and can evolve as the user clarifies their expectations.

A Tool to Guide, Not to Passively Accept

This topic highlights an essential idea: using artificial intelligence is not simply about asking a question and waiting for an answer. It is an active process of communication that requires thought, precision, and method.

A user who knows how to build effective prompts will consistently obtain better results than someone who sends vague or incomplete requests. This ability is not reserved for technical experts. It is a skill that anyone can develop with practice.

In many cases, learning how to write better prompts can completely transform the way people use AI tools in their daily lives. Tasks become faster, results become more relevant, and the interaction with the technology becomes more productive.

Ultimately, the prompt is the key that unlocks the real potential of artificial intelligence. Learning how to construct prompts carefully allows users to take full advantage of this powerful technology and turn it into a reliable partner for achieving their goals.



Vocabulary (60 Words)

Artificial intelligence → Intelligence artificielle

Prompt → Prompt / consigne

Instruction → Consigne

AI system → Système d'IA

Task → Tâche

Central element → Élément central

Quality → Qualité

Relevance → Pertinence

Usefulness → Utilité

Generated response → Réponse générée

Key principle → Principe clé

Vague → Vague

Precise → Précis

Structured → Structuré

To guide → Guider

To control → Contrôler

Accuracy → Exactitude

Tone → Ton

Effective prompt → Prompt efficace

Professional email → E-mail professionnel

Polite → Poli

Client → Client

Delivery → Livraison

Delayed → Retardé

Sincere apologies → Excuses sincères

Compensation → Compensation
Context → Contexte
Specific situation → Situation précise
Prompt formulation → Formulation du prompt
Content → Contenu
Guidance → Orientation / guidage
Role → Rôle
Perspective → Perspective
Marketing expert → Expert marketing
Mathematics teacher → Professeur de mathématiques
Legal advisor → Conseiller juridique
Business consultant → Consultant d'affaires
Expertise → Expertise
Objective → Objectif
Outcome → Résultat attendu
To summarize → Résumer
To generate ideas → Générer des idées
Background information → Information de contexte
Intended audience → Public cible
Constraint → Contrainte
Word limit → Limite de mots
Language level → Niveau de langue
Formatting rule → Règle de mise en forme
Expected format → Format attendu
Paragraph → Paragraphe
Bullet-point list → Liste à puces
Table → Tableau
Structured outline → Plan structuré
Script → Script
Human interaction → Interaction humaine
Large language model → Grand modèle de langage
Active participant → Participant actif
Experimentation → Expérimentation First
attempt → Premier essai
To refine instructions → Affiner les consignes
Reliable partner → Partenaire fiable

Questionnaire (8 Questions)

1. What is a prompt?
 - a) A message or instruction sent to an AI system
 - b) A type of computer screen
 - c) A programming language only
2. Why is the prompt important?

- a) Because it influences the quality, relevance and usefulness of the AI response
 - b) Because it changes the computer hardware
 - c) Because it replaces all human work
3. What happens when an instruction is vague?
- a) The response will likely be vague as well
 - b) The response will always be perfect
 - c) The AI will refuse all answers
4. Which request is more effective?
- a) Write me an email
 - b) Write a professional email to a client explaining a two-week delivery delay
 - c) Do something
5. What is the first element of an effective prompt mentioned in the text?
- a) The role
 - b) The weather
 - c) The colour
6. What does context help the AI do?
- a) Adapt its response better to the situation
 - b) Forget the user's goal
 - c) Avoid answering
7. What can constraints include?
- a) A word limit, tone, language level or formatting rules
 - b) Only the user's age
 - c) Only the name of the AI
8. What is the prompt described as in the conclusion?
- a) The key that unlocks the real potential of AI
 - b) A useless detail
 - c) A legal document only

Answers

Question 1: a

Question 2: a

Question 3: a

Question 4: b

Question 5: a

Question 6: a

Question 7: a

Question 8: a