

Build, Test, and Reuse a CRISP Prompt

Turn one vague AI request into a clear, usable assignment. By the end, you will have run, corrected, tested, and saved a CRISP prompt you can adapt to future work.

WHAT'S INSIDE

- Get your first CRISP win
- Choose one real low-risk task
- Assign the decision rights
- Build and run your prompt
- Diagnose and correct the result
- Practice across variations
- Save the reusable version and finish

01 Get your first CRISP win

CRISP turns a prompt into an assignment: Clear, Role-Specific, Inclusive of Context, Specific About Output, and Prescriptive About Process. Start by seeing the difference in an AI assistant, not by memorizing the letters.

Use an AI assistant approved for your intended work. Do not enter confidential, restricted, proprietary, or personally sensitive information unless the tool and use are approved. Replace unnecessary identifiers with neutral descriptions.

1

GO HERE

Open an AI assistant

Open a generative AI assistant such as ChatGPT and start a new conversation. The message you type is the prompt, and you can continue correcting the work in the same conversation.

2

PASTE

Run the vague version

Paste the first prompt below and send it. This is a fictional practice case, so you do not need to add work information.

PROMPT

Help me write an email about a project delay.

1

LOOK FOR THIS

Inspect the decisions the AI made

Check whether the response chose an audience, cause, tone, timeline, request, or facts you never supplied. Also check whether the actual purpose of the email is obvious.

2

CHANGE THIS

Replace the request with a CRISP brief

Paste the next prompt into the same conversation and send it.

PROMPT

Act as a business writing coach who helps executives handle difficult conversations. I am a project manager telling my VP that our launch must move back two weeks. This is the second delay, he is already frustrated, and he wants solutions before explanations. Draft an email that gets his approval for the revised date. Lead with the recovery action, then give the revised timeline and prevention measure. Keep it under 150 words, use direct language, and avoid an apology paragraph. Put brackets around any facts I have not supplied instead of inventing them.

1**TRY AGAIN****Correct one priority conflict**

The response may still follow the recovery-action instruction while burying the more important approval request. Paste this targeted correction rather than starting over.

PROMPT

Put the approval request in the first sentence. Replace defensive language with neutral language. Keep every placeholder, stay under 150 words, and do not add facts. If an instruction conflicts with obtaining approval quickly, prioritize the approval objective.

Your first success is complete when the request appears immediately, unknown facts remain visible as placeholders, and the response follows the requested length and tone. Exact wording may differ. What matters is that the consequential decisions are no longer hidden.

02 Choose one real low-risk task

Now apply the method to work you actually need. Choose one task from this menu before moving on:

- A short email asking a known person for a decision or approval.
- A comparison of two or three options using information already supplied to you.
- A meeting agenda built around a specific decision or outcome.
- A checklist created from existing notes or instructions.
- A rewrite that makes an existing paragraph clearer for a named audience.

If several qualify, choose the recurring task that has caused the most avoidable revision. If none qualifies, use the decision-email option. Keep this first attempt low-risk and easy for you to judge.

CHECKLIST

Before opening a new conversation, confirm that you have:

- a recognizable deliverable such as an email, table, agenda, or checklist;
- an audience or intended user;
- a result the output should help produce;
- facts you are permitted to use;
- at least one requirement that would make the result usable; and
- the ability to review the answer yourself.

03 Assign the decision rights

Before adding detail, sort the assignment into four buckets. This prevents a long prompt from becoming a long collection of ambiguity.

1. Fixed decisions: facts, requirements, and boundaries the AI must preserve.
2. Delegated decisions: choices the AI may make without creating meaningful risk.
3. Unresolved decisions: missing facts the AI should flag, ask about, or mark rather than invent.

4. Definition of done: observable conditions that make the result usable.

Worked decision map

BUCKET	PROJECT-DELAY EMAIL
Fixed	The launch moves by two weeks, this is the second delay, the VP wants solutions first, and approval is required.
Delegated	Subject-line wording and low-stakes sentence phrasing.
Unresolved	Current date, revised date, recovery action, checkpoint owner, and decision deadline.
Done	The approval request is in the first sentence, unknowns are bracketed, the tone is direct and neutral, and the email is under 150 words.

Do not confuse a delegated choice with an unresolved fact. The AI may propose three subject lines. It should not quietly invent the revised launch date.

For your chosen task, identify the expensive wrong decision first. It might be addressing the wrong audience, hiding the recommendation, inventing evidence, omitting a required comparison criterion, or returning prose when you need a table. Protect that decision before polishing anything else.

04 Build and run your prompt

Use each part of CRISP to assign a different part of the job.

PART	WHAT TO SPECIFY	USEFUL QUESTION
Clear	Objective, audience, and intended change	What should someone know, decide, feel, or do?
Role-Specific	A relevant lens that changes what the AI notices	Which perspective should shape the work?
Inclusive of Context	Material facts, history, stakes, constraints, and supplied evidence	Which changed detail could sensibly change the answer?
Specific About Output	Deliverable, structure, length, headings, columns, or placeholders	What usable object should come back?
Prescriptive About Process	Order, criteria, checks, priorities, and treatment of uncertainty	How should the visible work be organized and tested?

Copy the template below into a new conversation. Replace the bracketed descriptions with information for your chosen task. Delete any instruction that does not apply.

TEMPLATE

Use the perspective of [a relevant role or working lens] to help me [complete the objective] for [audience or intended user]. The result should help them [know, decide, feel, or do something observable].

Context: [include only facts, relevant history, stakes, supplied evidence, and constraints that could materially change the answer].

Preserve these fixed decisions: [facts and boundaries that must not change]. You may decide: [low-stakes choices the AI may make]. The following information is unresolved: [missing facts]. Do not invent unresolved information; mark it as [not provided], use a clear placeholder, or ask about it when it could materially change the deliverable.

Return [specific deliverable] using [required structure, length, headings, columns, or number of alternatives].

Develop the result by [sequence, comparison criteria, checks, or priorities]. If instructions conflict, prioritize [most important objective] over [lower-priority preference].

The result is done when [observable success criteria].

Ready-to-adapt option: decision email

PROMPT

Act as a business writing coach focused on clear executive communication. Draft an email to [decision-maker] that obtains a decision about [specific issue] by [deadline]. The reader already knows [relevant history] and currently expects [relevant preference or concern]. Preserve these facts: [supplied facts]. Do not invent dates, causes, commitments, or evidence; place brackets around anything not supplied. Put the decision request in the first sentence, follow with the minimum supporting context, and end with the required next step. Keep it under [word limit] and use direct, neutral language. The email is done when the requested decision, deadline, and unresolved facts are immediately visible.

Ready-to-adapt option: evidence comparison

PROMPT

Act as an evidence organizer. Compare [options] for [audience or decision] using only the information supplied below. Use a table with columns for cost, accessibility, implementation effort, support, missing evidence, and source notes. Mark absent information as not provided. Do not infer a feature, fact, or advantage that is not in the supplied material. After the table, list the questions that must be answered before a recommendation is defensible. Do not make the final decision if missing evidence prevents a responsible comparison. Supplied material: [paste approved evidence here].

Send your prompt. Do not evaluate the response by whether it sounds polished. Evaluate whether it performs the assigned job.

05 Diagnose and correct the result

The first response is both a draft and evidence about your brief. Inspect it using the clarity test.

CHECKLIST

A usable response should let you identify:

- the objective and intended audience;
- the facts and constraints that were preserved;
- the choices the AI was allowed to make;
- the required deliverable and definition of done;
- the criteria or sequence used to shape the work; and
- the unknowns requiring questions, placeholders, or verification.

IF YOU SEE THIS	LIKELY DEFECT IN THE BRIEF	CORRECTION TO MAKE
Bland, generic content	The objective, audience, or stakes are too generic.	Name the reader and the change the output should create.
Useful ideas in an unusable shape	The deliverable is underspecified.	Request the exact email, table, checklist, agenda, or memo structure needed.
Wrong order or emphasis	The process or priority hierarchy is missing.	State what comes first and which objective wins if instructions conflict.
Invented details	Supplied facts and unknowns were not separated.	Require placeholders, not provided labels, or focused questions.
Polished but strategically wrong	The definition of success is absent or incorrect.	State the intended decision, action, or observable finish condition.
Ignored constraint	The requirement may be buried, conflicting, or beyond what the tool can reliably follow.	Remove low-value rules, expose the conflict, and restate the priority.

Choose the single most consequential failure and issue a targeted correction. Avoid the wonderfully unhelpful instruction to simply try again.

SCRIPT

Revise the result. The main failure is: [name one observable problem]. Change [specific part] so that [required result]. Preserve [facts, placeholders, structure, and constraints that already worked]. Do not add facts. If any instruction conflicts with [primary objective], prioritize the primary objective. Return only the revised deliverable.

Run the correction and compare the two results. You have completed the understanding-through-doing stage when you can point to the instruction that changed the result and explain which decision it reassigned.

Review still has a job. Verify facts against appropriate sources, identify remaining assumptions, and confirm that the result fits the real situation. A role prompt supplies a lens, not credentials or authority. Medical, legal, financial, safety, hiring, and other consequential judgments remain human responsibilities.

06 Practice across variations

Do at least one variation so you learn the mechanism rather than merely copy one prompt.

1

VARIATION 1

Change the audience

Run the same assignment for a different legitimate audience. Change the audience, desired action, and any related context while preserving the underlying facts. Check whether the emphasis and usable format change appropriately.

2

VARIATION 2

Test an unresolved fact

Remove one non-sensitive fact that materially affects the work. Instruct the AI to mark it as not provided or ask a focused question. Check whether the missing fact becomes visible instead of being invented.

3

VARIATION 3

Change output and process

Request the same supplied information first as prose and then as a comparison table using named criteria. Compare which version better supports the intended decision or action.

Add a stop condition when it matters

Use the following addition for personalized or consequential tasks when missing information could materially change the deliverable. Do not add an interview when the assignment is already complete and low-risk.

PROMPT

Before drafting, ask up to five focused questions about the objective, audience, constraints, missing facts, and previous attempts. Wait for my answers if any missing information could materially change the deliverable.

Test representative cases

- Run the prompt on a normal case you expect to encounter regularly.
- Run it on a case with one important missing fact.
- Run it on a case where two requirements could conflict.

Adjust the reusable instructions only when a test exposes a recurring defect. More rules are not automatically better. Protect consequential choices and leave harmless variation open.

07 Save the reusable version and finish

When the prompt works across representative cases, save its structure. Keep the objective pattern, decision buckets, output specification, process, uncertainty rule, and definition of done. Replace stale names, dates, assumptions, evidence, and conclusions with clear placeholders.

CHECKLIST

You have completed the guide when you have:

- run the vague and CRISP versions of the practice prompt;
- chosen and completed one real low-risk task;
- identified fixed, delegated, unresolved, and done decisions;
- made one targeted correction based on an observable failure;
- tested at least one variation or missing-information case;
- verified the facts and reviewed the result yourself; and
- saved a reusable structure without stale case details.

Before reusing the prompt, reread every fixed fact and constraint. Yesterday's useful instruction can become today's hidden error when the situation changes.

The finished asset is not merely a longer prompt. It is a repeatable decision-rights map: what the AI must preserve, what it may choose, what it must not invent, and what you remain responsible for deciding.

Want more practical AI guidance?

Explore Chuck Goetschel's AI Insights at <https://chuckgoetschel.com/ai-insights>

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A strong prompt does not make every decision. It makes clear which decisions are yours.