



True Intelligence Prompt Guide

How to Ask Better Questions and Get Useful Answers

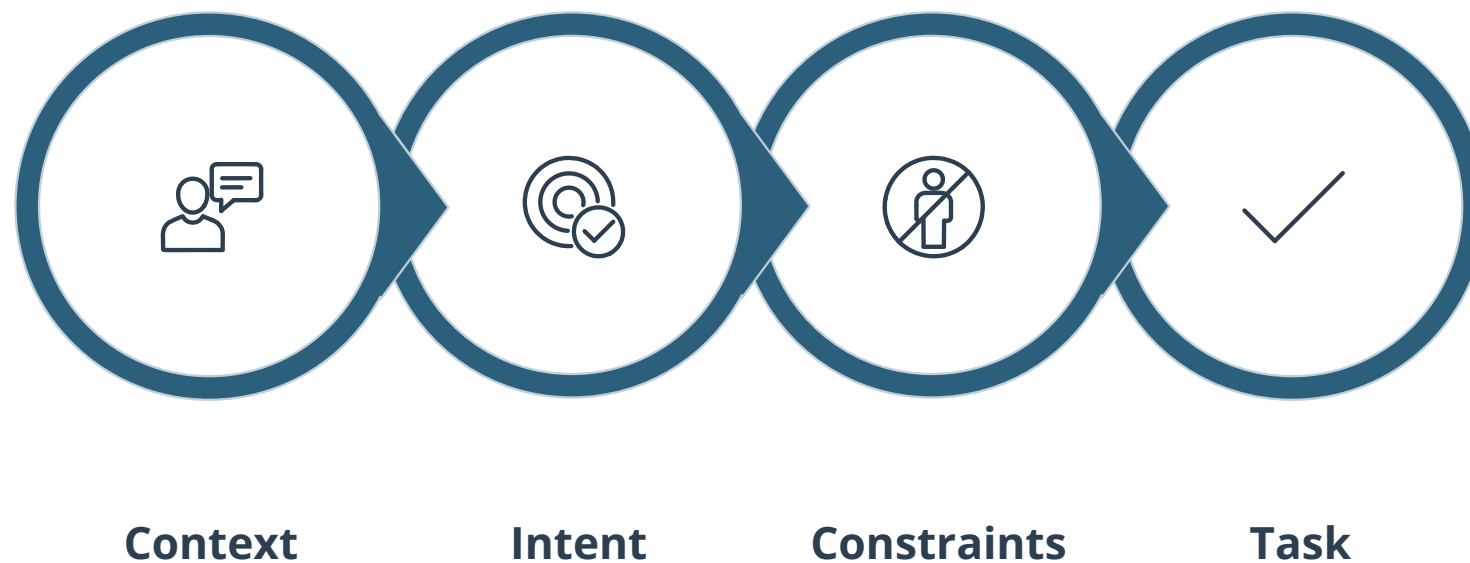
Using the CICT Pattern: Context, Intent, Constraints, Task

Why This Matters

AI tools can help you learn, write, plan, and solve everyday problems, but they only work as well as your instructions. A vague question gives a vague answer. A clear question gives a useful one. This guide shows you how to use different AI tools as collaborators, not replacements. The goal is to help you stay creative while getting real support.

Quick Reference: The CICT Pattern

Use this template to build stronger prompts. Not every prompt needs all four elements, but including them helps AI understand exactly what you need.



The Human Plus AI Philosophy

📌 **Core Principle:** AI works best as a thinking partner, not a replacement for your own voice and judgment.

What AI Does

- AI helps you organize, structure, and explore ideas
- Ask AI for outlines, options, and starting points
- AI can draft the agenda
- AI can suggest the outline

What You Do

- You add experience, personality, and final creative choices
- You fill in the details that make the work uniquely yours
- You lead the meeting
- You write the story

Think of it this way: AI is like a skilled assistant who can draft the agenda, but you lead the meeting. AI can suggest the outline, but you write the story. This approach keeps your voice front and center while using AI to handle structure and logistics.

Before and After: Complete CICT Examples

Here are real examples showing how the CICT pattern transforms vague requests into useful prompts.

Example 1: Learning a New Skill

BEFORE: Teach me about Excel.

AFTER: **Context** - You are helping a small business owner who has never used Excel. **Intent** - I want to learn how to track monthly expenses. **Constraints** - I can practice 15 minutes per day and need to start tracking by next week. **Task** - Create a simple daily learning plan with one skill per day.

Example 2: Planning Content

BEFORE: Help me write a blog post about gardening.

AFTER: **Context** - I run a community garden and want to share pruning techniques with beginners. **Intent** - I want to help people prune espalier apple trees without making common mistakes. **Constraints** - The post should be 500 to 700 words with three main sections. **Task** - Suggest an outline with key points for each section. I will write the full post using my own experience.

Example 3: Getting Feedback

BEFORE: Make this email better.

AFTER: **Context** - I am writing to a potential client who requested information about my consulting services. **Intent** - I want to sound professional but approachable and get them to schedule a call. **Constraints** - Keep it under 200 words. **Task** - Suggest two approaches, one more formal and one more conversational. Outline the key points for each so I can draft them myself.

Example 4: Research and Comparison

BEFORE: What are the best project management tools?

AFTER: **Context** - I manage a team of five remote workers in a nonprofit. **Intent** - I need to find a project management tool that helps us coordinate without overwhelming people with features. **Constraints** - Budget is under \$100 per month, must work well for remote teams, should be easy to learn. **Task** - Compare three tools that fit these criteria. For each one, list the main strengths and who it works best for.

The CICT Pattern: Breaking It Down

Now that you have seen CICT in action, here is how each element works.



Context: Frame the Conversation

Before you type anything, think about who the AI is helping and what situation it should imagine.

- Say who the response is for, such as a student, small business owner, or retiree
- Explain the background or setting
- Share relevant experience level

Weak prompt: Help me learn Excel.

Better prompt: You are a friendly teacher helping a beginner learn Excel to track monthly expenses.



Intent: Be Clear About Your Goal

State what you want to accomplish. Are you learning, planning, comparing, or deciding?

- Name your goal up front
- Explain why this matters to you
- Mention what outcome you need

Weak prompt: Tell me about solar panels.

Better prompt: I want to understand how solar panels work so I can explain the process to my teenager.



Constraints: Define Your Limits

Boundaries help the tool focus and give you results that fit your real situation.

- Time limits (15 minutes per day, ready by Friday)
- Budget or resource limits
- Length or detail level (brief, detailed, step by step)
- Format needs (list, outline, paragraph)

Example: Suggest three vegetarian dinners under 500 calories that take less than 30 minutes to cook.



Task: Describe What You Want the AI to Do

Tell the AI what action to take and how much detail you want.

- Use clear verbs like explain, summarize, outline, list, compare, or suggest
- Break big requests into smaller steps
- Point out what matters most

Weak prompt: Explain solar panels.

Better prompt: Explain how solar panels power a house in simple language. Use an everyday example that a teenager could understand.

Common Mistakes to Avoid

Even experienced users make these errors. Recognizing them helps you adjust your prompts quickly.

1

Being Too Vague

Problem: Help me with my business plan.

Why it fails: AI does not know what part you need help with, what industry you are in, or what kind of output you want.

Fix: Add Context and Constraints. "I am writing a business plan for a small bakery. Help me outline the financial projections section. I need to show three years of revenue estimates based on selling 200 items per day."

2

Asking for Too Much at Once

Problem: Write a complete training manual for my team covering customer service, sales techniques, product knowledge, and company policies.

Why it fails: The request is overwhelming and produces generic results that need massive editing.

Fix: Break it into steps. "Help me create an outline for a customer service training manual. Include the main sections and 3 to 4 topics under each. I will write the detailed content for each topic."

3

Asking for Finished Work Instead of Collaboration

Problem: Write a thank you email to my client for their recent order.

Why it fails: AI writes something generic that does not sound like you.

Fix: Ask for structure, not finished text. "I need to write a thank you email to a client for their recent order. Ask me a series of questions to help me brainstorm what's important to communicate. Then help me organize those ideas into a brief outline so I can write it in my own words."

4

Not Specifying the Audience

Problem: Explain blockchain.

Why it fails: AI does not know if you want a technical explanation or a simple analogy.

Fix: Add Context about who needs to understand. "Explain blockchain to someone who has never heard of it before. Use an everyday analogy that does not require technical knowledge."

5

Forgetting to Refine

Problem: Accepting the first response even when it does not quite fit.

Why it fails: First attempts rarely give you exactly what you need.

Fix: Follow up with adjustments. "Make it shorter," "Add more detail about the benefits," "Try a more conversational tone," or "Give me two more options."

Tips for Stronger Results



Assign a Role

Why it works: Roles help AI adopt the right tone and approach.

Example: Act as a librarian recommending books for readers who liked *The Martian*.



Add Specific Limits

Why it works: Boundaries prevent overwhelming or irrelevant results.

Example: Suggest three vegetarian dinners under 500 calories that take less than 30 minutes to cook.



Ask for Options

Why it works: Multiple versions give you choices and help you see what works best.

Example: Suggest two ways I could write a thank you email. Outline key points or phrases for a casual version and a formal version so I can draft them myself.



Use Examples

Why it works: Showing what you like guides AI toward the right style.

Example: I want a friendly tone like this example: "Thanks for stopping by! We are excited to work with you." Write something similar for my new client welcome message.

Troubleshooting Your Prompts

When your prompt does not work, use this decision tree to figure out what to adjust.

The answer is too vague or generic

Fix: Add more Context and Constraints. Say who it is for, what the situation is, and what limits apply.

The answer is too long or detailed

Fix: Add Constraints about length or format. "Keep it under 200 words," or "Give me just three main points."

The tone feels wrong

Fix: Specify the tone in your Task. "Use a friendly, conversational tone," or "Keep it professional and formal."

The answer does not match my goal

Fix: Clarify your Intent. Say why you need this information and what you plan to do with it.

The answer is not actionable

Fix: Make your Task more specific. Use action verbs and say what format you need (list, outline, step by step).

AI wrote the whole thing and it does not sound like me

Fix: Ask for structure or options instead of finished work. "Give me an outline" or "Suggest key points" puts you back in control.

Prompt Templates for Common Scenarios

Use these templates as starting points. Fill in the blanks with your specific details.

1

Learning Something New

Context: I am a [your role/experience level] who wants to learn [topic].

Intent: I need to [what you want to accomplish].

Constraints: I can spend [time limit] and need to [deadline or format].

Task: [Create/explain/outline] [specific request] that [level of detail].

2

Planning a Project

Context: I am working on [project description] for [audience].

Intent: I want to [goal or outcome].

Constraints: [Timeline, budget, or resource limits].

Task: Help me [create an outline/identify steps/suggest a structure]. I will [what you will do with it].

3

Getting Feedback on Writing

Context: I wrote [type of content] for [audience].

Intent: I want to [improve clarity/change tone/make it shorter].

Constraints: Keep it under [length] and maintain [tone].

Task: Suggest [number] ways to improve [specific aspect]. Give me options so I can rewrite it myself.

4

Researching a Topic

Context: I need to understand [topic] for [purpose].

Intent: I want to [make a decision/learn the basics/compare options].

Constraints: Focus on [specific criteria or limits].

Task: [Summarize/compare/explain] [specific aspect] in [format]. Provide sources so I can read more.

Adjusting Prompts for Different AI Tools

Each AI tool has strengths and limits. The CICT pattern works everywhere, but small adjustments help you get better results.

Tool	Best For	Approach	Example Prompt
ChatGPT	Creative tasks, brainstorming, conversational exploration	Iterative refinement, ask follow up questions	Help me prepare to teach pruning techniques. Outline key steps. I will write the explanation.
Gemini	Research, finding current info, synthesizing sources	Ask for summaries with sources	Find current best practices for espalier pruning and summarize main ideas.
Claude	Structured thinking, analysis, document creation	Request detailed organization and clear structure	Help me draft class notes on espalier trees. Write a summary and leave space for my examples.
Copilot	Working with existing documents, integration with Office	Reference specific files or sections	Create bullet points for pruning based on my Word doc. Leave room for my advice.
Perplexity	Finding and citing reliable sources quickly	Ask for summaries with links	Find recent resources about espalier pruning. Summarize three techniques with links.

Practice Prompts

Try these examples to practice the CICT pattern. Notice how each includes multiple elements:

As a travel planner, suggest a structure for a two day trip to Seattle for a family with young children. Focus on indoor activities since it might rain. I will fill in restaurant choices and personal notes.

I wrote this paragraph for a client proposal: "Our comprehensive service offering leverages synergistic methodologies to optimize stakeholder engagement and drive transformational outcomes." As a writing coach, outline three ways to make this sound more natural and conversational. Keep the main idea but suggest ways to simplify the language. I will rewrite it based on your feedback.

As a tutor helping a middle school science class, show me three different ways to explain photosynthesis. Use everyday examples that do not require scientific background. I will adapt one of these for my lesson plan.

As a hobby gardener preparing for next spring, help me plan a month by month checklist. Focus on tasks for a vegetable garden in the Pacific Northwest. Leave space for me to list specific plants and varieties.