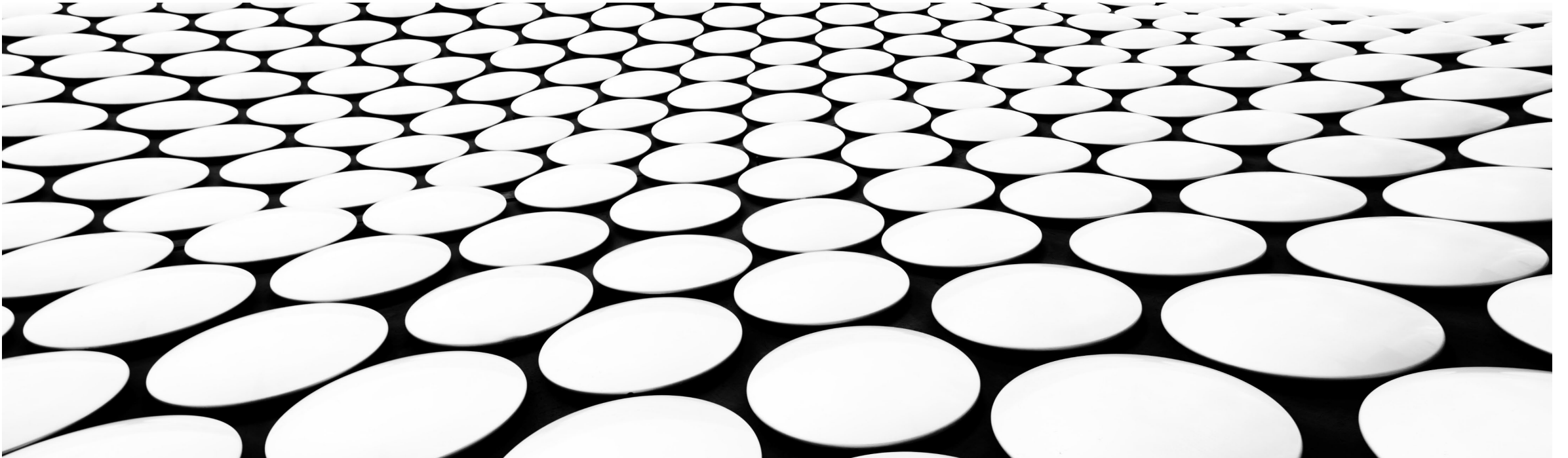

AI PROMPTS: RECIPES FOR SUCCESS

PRACTICAL TECHNIQUES FOR NOVICES

FRANK FOTA, DIRECTOR AT LARGE, POTOMAC AREA TECHNOLOGY AND COMPUTER SOCIETY (PATACS)



MASTER THE PROMPT

- **How to Talk to AI:**

Get Exactly What You Need Every Time.



Photo - <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/User:Shixart1985>

WHAT IS AN AI PROMPT?

- **An AI prompt is just a clear set of directions.**
 - AI is like a smart helper who does not know you yet.
 - Vague directions result in confusing answers.
 - Clear directions result in great answers.



U.S. Navy photo by Journalist 2nd Class Jim Williams., Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons

METHOD 1 – THE RTF RECIPE



- **Role:** Who should the AI pretend to be?
- **Task:** What do you want it to do?
- **Format:** How should the final answer look?

RTF IN ACTION

- **Planning a Wonderful Dessert.**
 - ❌ Vague Setup: "Give me after-dinner dessert ideas."
 - As an **expert chef (Role)**, describe **the recipe for flan (Task)** on **one page**, using steps **(Format)** a novice can understand.

ROLE TASK FORMAT

■ **Example:** As an expert chef, describe the recipe for **flan** on one page, using steps a novice can understand.

Flan is a creamy, sweet custard dessert topped with a smooth caramel sauce. This classic recipe breaks down the baking process into simple, foolproof steps for beginners.

Ingredients

For the Caramel:

- 1 cup white sugar

For the Custard:

- 4 large eggs
- 1 can sweetened condensed milk (14 ounces)
- 1 can evaporated milk (12 ounces)
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract

Step-by-Step Instructions

1. Melt the sugar

1. Put sugar in a saucepan.
2. Heat it on medium.
3. Stir until it melts.
4. Stop when it turns golden brown.

2. Coat the pan

1. Pour hot caramel into your baking dish.
2. Swirl it to coat the bottom.
3. Let it cool and harden.

3. Mix the custard

1. Put eggs in a blender.
2. Add both cans of milk.
3. Add the vanilla extract.
4. Blend until completely smooth.

4. Prepare the water bath

1. Preheat your oven to 350°F (175°C).
2. Pour custard over the hard caramel.
3. Place your dish inside a larger pan.
4. Fill the large pan with hot water.
5. Water should reach halfway up the dish.

5. Bake and chill

1. Bake for 50 to 60 minutes.
2. The center should jiggle like gelatin.
3. Remove from the water bath.
4. Cool to room temperature.
5. Refrigerate for 4 hours.

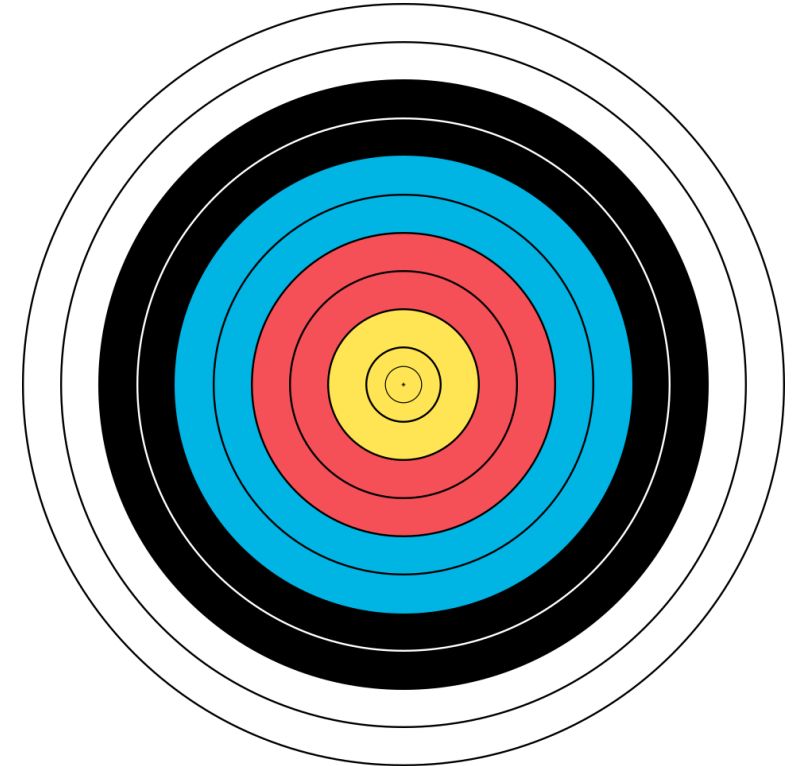
6. Flip and serve

1. Run a knife around the edge.
2. Put a large plate upside down on top.
3. Flip the plate and dish together quickly.
4. Lift the dish away slowly.
5. Let the caramel sauce run down the sides.

METHOD 2 – THE TAG RECIPE

TAG: Task, Action, Goal

- **Task:** The chore you want done.
- **Action:** How the AI should complete the chore.
- **Goal:** The final purpose of your request.



TAG IN ACTION

Learning New Technology

- o **✗ Vague Setup:**
"How do I make a video call?"
- o **TAG Setup:**
"Explain how to **start a video call (Task)**. **List the steps one by one (Action)**, so I can **chat with my family without getting confused (Goal)**."



Zoom Meetings: Conference call service for virtual collaboration
<https://media.zoom.com/images/assets/reduce-silos-increase-productivity.webp/Zz1lOWl0YmNlYWQ2NWExMWYwOGUzZWYyNzgWY2YzOGE0YQ==>

Here is your simple, step-by-step guide to starting a video call using the **TAG (Task, Action, Goal)** framework.

Task: How to Start a Video Call

Action: Step-by-Step Instructions

- **Pick an app:** Open your chosen video app (like FaceTime, WhatsApp, or Zoom).
- **Find your contact:** Tap the search bar or scroll to find your family member's name.
- **Select the contact:** Tap on their name to open your conversation or options.
- **Tap the video icon:** Look for a button shaped like a small **video camera icon**.
- **Press call:** Tap that camera icon to start ringing their phone.
- **Wait for connection:** Hold the phone up and wait for them to answer.
- **Check your camera:** Make sure your face is visible on your own small screen preview.
- **End the call:** Tap the **red phone icon** when you are ready to hang up.

Goal: Stress-Free Family Connection

Following these steps ensures you connect instantly with your family without pushing the wrong buttons or feeling overwhelmed by technology.

If you want to tailor this further, let me know:

- **What specific app** are you using (e.g., WhatsApp, Zoom, FaceTime, Skype)?
- **What device** are you using (e.g., iPhone, Android, iPad, laptop)?

I can provide custom screenshots or button descriptions based on your exact setup!

METHOD 3 – THE BAB RECIPE

- **BAB: Before, After, Bridge**
 - **Before:** Your problem right now.
 - **After:** What life looks like when the problem is solved.
 - **Bridge:** The product, method, or steps needed to move someone from Before to After.



Bridge across the Rogue River in Gold Beach, OR

Robert Ashworth from Bellingham, WA., USA, CC BY 2.0 <<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/2.0>>, via Wikimedia Commons

BAB IN ACTION

❑ Cleaning My Guest Room

- **✗ Vague Setup:** "How do I clean my room?"
- **BAB Setup:** "My guest room is full of school books and dirty laundry (Before). I want it to be neat enough for a guest to sleep in it (After). Give me a simple plan to sort through it this weekend (Bridge)."



<https://www.boredpanda.com/cleaned-up-rooms-before-after/>

🗑️ My guest room is full of school books and dirty laundry
(Before)

🗑️ The Destination (After)

A peaceful, clutter-free guest room with a clear bed and organized space.

🛠️ The Bridge (Your Weekend Action Plan)

Saturday Morning: Clear the Floor

- **Gather tools:** Get trash bags, three laundry baskets, and two empty boxes.
- **Sort laundry:** Put all dirty clothes into baskets immediately to clear floor space.
- **Strip the bed:** Strip any old linen off the guest bed and set it aside.
- **Start washing:** Run the first load of laundry while you move to the books.

Saturday Afternoon: Attack the Books

- **Consolidate:** Pile every single school book onto the bare mattress to work at waist height.
- **Purge:** Quickly toss damaged papers or outdated notes into trash bags.
- **Categorize:** Separate remaining books into "Keep," "Donate," and "Sell" boxes.
- **Shelve:** Place the "Keep" books neatly onto shelves or into a closet.

Sunday Morning: Reset and Refine

- **Remove items:** Put the donate/sell boxes in your car trunk so they leave the house.
- **Clean surfaces:** Dust the bookshelves, desk, and bedside tables.
- **Vacuum:** Deep clean the floor now that it is completely visible.

Sunday Afternoon: The Guest Finish

- **Make the bed:** Put fresh, clean sheets and pillows on the bed.
- **Fold laundry:** Fold the clean laundry and put it away in its proper home.
- **Add a welcome touch:** Clear a small surface for a guest's phone and water glass.

METHOD 4 – THE CARE RECIPE

CARE: Context, Action, Result, Example

- **Context:** The background story.
- **Action:** The letter or note you need written.
- **Result:** How you want the reader to feel.
- **Example:** A short sample of your personal style.

Context

Action

Result

Example

CARE IN ACTION

- **Writing a Thank-You Note.**
 - **✗ Vague Setup:** "Write a thank you note."

CARE Setup:

- **Context:** My neighbor shoveled my driveway.
- **Action:** Write a short thank-you note.
- **Result:** Make them feel appreciated.
- **Example:** Keep it casual, like: 'Hi Bob, you really saved the day!'



CARE IN ACTION – THE RESULT...

Hi Bob,

You really saved the day! I woke up to all that snow and dreaded the cleanup, so seeing the driveway already cleared was an incredible surprise. I can't thank you enough for your kindness—we're lucky to have you as a neighbor!

Best,

[Your Name]

METHOD 5 – THE RISE RECIPE

- **RISE: Role, Instructions, Steps, Examples.**
 - **Role:** The type of expert you need.
 - **Instructions:** The rules the AI must follow.
 - **Steps:** The order of the information.
 - **Examples:** A model layout to copy.



Grendelkhan, CC BY-SA 4.0 <<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/>>, via Wikimedia Commons

RISE IN ACTION

- **Understanding Local News.**

- **✗ Vague Setup:** "Explain the new ballpark rules."

- **RISE Setup:**

- Act as a **friendly neighbor (Role)**.
- Explain the Frednats ballpark (Virginia Credit Union Stadium) rules **using short sentences and no legal jargon (Instructions)**.
- First, **list what is allowed, then list what is banned (Steps)**.
- Format it **like this: 'Rule: Description' (Example)**.



Hey there, neighbor! Heading out to a Fredericksburg Nationals game at [Virginia Credit Union Stadium](#)? It's a blast, but they do have a few strict stadium rules you'll want to know before you head through the gates.

Here is a simple breakdown of what you can and cannot bring:

What Is Allowed

- **Rule:** Clear bags. Only clear totes and purses are allowed inside.
- **Rule:** Small clutches. You can bring a tiny, non-clear clutch if it is 5" × 7" × 3/4" or smaller.
- **Rule:** Diaper bags. These are permitted if you have a little one with you.
- **Rule:** Medical bags. ADA and medically necessary bags are completely acceptable.
- **Rule:** One water bottle. You can bring one sealed, label-less water [bottle](#) up to 20 oz. per person.
- **Rule:** Cards and digital payments. The ballpark is 100% cashless, so bring your cards for parking, tickets, and concessions.
- **Rule:** Service animals. Actual service animals are always welcome.
- **Rule:** Pups on special days. Dogs are allowed only during specific "Bark in the Park" games with a special Pooch Pass.

What Is Banned

- **Rule:** Mesh or tinted bags. If it isn't completely clear, leave it in the car.
- **Rule:** Outside food and drinks. No outside snacks, sodas, cans, or coolers are permitted.
- **Rule:** Cash. Leave your paper bills at home because no stadium registers accept cash.
- **Rule:** Tailgating. Grilling and open alcohol are strictly prohibited in the parking lots.
- **Rule:** Re-entry. Once you scan your ticket and walk out of the ballpark, you cannot come back inside.
- **Rule:** Regular pets. Standard pets are not allowed on regular game days.
- **Rule:** Weapons and drugs. Absolutely no weapons or illegal substances are allowed on the property.

Have an awesome time at the game, and enjoy those fireworks if it's a Friday night!

METHOD 6 – THE CRIT RECIPE

- **CRIT: Context, Role, Interview, Task.**
 - **Context:** Your current situation.
 - **Role:** The expert helping you.
 - **Interview:** Telling the AI to ask you questions first!
 - **Task:** The final plan.



Matthew Henry matthewhenry, CC0, via Wikimedia Commons

CRIT IN ACTION

Planning a Day Trip

- o **✗ Vague Setup:** "Plan a trip to the coast."

CRIT Setup:

- o I want to take a day trip **next month near Petersburg, VA (Context).**
- o **Act as a local tour guide (Role).**
- o **Ask me 3 questions (Interview)** about what I like before
- o **writing the trip plan (Task)."**



CRIT IN ACTION – RESULTS

I can absolutely act as your local tour guide for an exciting day trip around the historic Petersburg area.

To help me tailor the perfect itinerary for you, please answer these three quick questions:

- **What are your primary interests?** (e.g., Civil War history, boutique shopping, outdoor parks, or the local culinary and craft beverage scene?)
- **Who is traveling with you?** (e.g., going solo, a romantic getaway, or traveling with kids or pets?)
- **What is your preferred pacing for the day?** (e.g., packed with activities from morning to night, or a relaxed schedule with plenty of downtime?)

Once you share your preferences, I will craft your customized day trip plan!

YOUR QUICK RECIPE GUIDE

Recipe Name	What it Means	Great For
RTF	Role, Task, Format	Fast lists and quick chores
TAG	Task, Action, Goal	Learning hobbies and skills
BAB	Before, After, Bridge	Sorting out messy problems
CARE	Context, Action, Result, Example	Writing warm letters and notes
RISE	Role, Instructions, Steps, Examples	Reading hard or long articles
CRIT	Context, Role, Interview, Task	Have the AI interview you and suggest choices



THREE GOLDEN RULES

- Keep these three prompt rules in mind:
 - ✓ **Talk (i.e., Write) Like a Person:** Use your normal voice. No tech skills required!
 - ✓ **Keep the Chat Going:** If the answer is too small or too big, tell AI to fix it.
 - ✓ **Double Check:** AI is a helpful assistant, but it can make silly mistakes. Always read it over.



Here is a ready-to-print text handout that you can keep right next to your computer or tablet.

AI Prompt Recipe Cheat Sheet

Think of AI as a helpful digital assistant. To get the best answers, use these simple formulas!

1. The RTF Recipe (Best for quick lists and simple tasks)

- **Role:** Who should the AI pretend to be?
- **Task:** What do you want it to do?
- **Format:** How should the answer look?
- 👉 **Example:** "Act as a chef. Create a 3-day dinner menu using chicken. Put it in a simple bulleted list."

2. The TAG Recipe (Best for learning new hobbies and skills)

- **Task:** The chore you want done.
- **Action:** How the AI should complete the chore.
- **Goal:** The final purpose of your request.
- 👉 **Example:** "Explain how to start a video call. List the steps one by one so I can chat with my family without getting confused."

3. The BAB Recipe (Best for fixing a problem or organizing)

- **Before:** Your problem right now.
- **After:** What life looks like when the problem is solved.
- **Bridge:** The advice to get you there.
- 👉 **Example:** "My spare room is full of old photo albums. I want it to be neat enough for a guest. Give me a simple plan to sort through it this weekend."

4. The CARE Recipe (Best for writing warm letters and notes)

- **Context:** The background story.
- **Action:** The note you need written.
- **Result:** How you want the reader to feel.
- **Example:** A short sample of your personal style.
- 👉 **Example:** "**Context:** My neighbor shoveled my driveway. **Action:** Write a short note. **Result:** Make them feel appreciated. **Example:** Keep it casual, like: 'Hi Bob, you really saved the day!'"

5. The RISE Recipe (Best for reading hard or long articles)

- **Role:** The type of expert you need.
- **Instructions:** The rules the AI must follow.
- **Steps:** The order of the information.
- **Examples:** A model layout to copy.
- 👉 **Example:** "Act as a friendly neighbor. Explain the new park rules using short sentences and no legal jargon. First list what is allowed, then list what is banned. Format it like this: 'Rule: Description'."

6. The CRIT Recipe (Best when you want the AI to do the heavy lifting)

- **Context:** Your current situation.
- **Role:** The expert helping you.
- **Interview:** Telling the AI to ask you questions first!
- **Task:** The final plan.
- 👉 **Example:** "I want to take a day trip next month. Act as a local tour guide. Ask me 3 questions about what I like before you write the trip plan."

💡 3 Golden Rules to Remember

1. **Talk Like a Person:** Use your normal voice. No special tech skills needed!
2. **Keep the Chat Going:** If the answer is too long or too short, just tell the AI to change it.
3. **Double Check:** AI is a helpful assistant, but it can make silly mistakes. Always read it over.

Free AI Websites to Try at Home

You can use these tools for free on your computer, tablet, or smartphone. Just open your internet browser and type in these web addresses:

- **Microsoft Copilot**
 - **Website:** microsoft.com
 - **What it is:** A friendly assistant made by Microsoft. It is great for writing letters, planning trips, and answering everyday questions.
- **ChatGPT**
 - **Website:** chatgpt.com
 - **What it is:** The most famous AI assistant. It feels just like text messaging with a very smart friend.
- **Google Gemini**
 - **Website:** gemini.google.com
 - **What it is:** Google's free AI helper. It is excellent at summarizing long articles and explaining complex news topics.