

DAY THREE

03 /10**The Art of the Prompt —
*briefing well for great results***

The gap between a mediocre Claude session and a brilliant one is almost never the model — it's the brief. Today your learners build the core habits of clear instruction, and learn to fix a weak result instead of giving up on it.

BY THE END OF DAY 3, YOU WILL BE ABLE TO TEACH OTHERS TO —

- Write prompts with the four core ingredients
- Specify format, length and audience
- Iterate deliberately instead of randomly
- Give context and examples that lift quality
- Diagnose why a weak answer was weak
- Coach someone else's prompt in real time

01 Why today matters

ORIENTATION

A prompt is a brief. When learners say “Claude gave me a generic answer,” they almost always handed it a generic brief. The model can only work with what it’s given — and most disappointing results trace directly back to a vague, contextless, format-free instruction. Today fixes that at the source.

Crucially, prompting is not a bag of magic phrases. It is the ordinary skill of explaining what you want clearly — the same skill that makes someone good at delegating to a colleague. Teach it as craft, not incantation. Learners who internalise that stop hunting for “the secret prompt” and start briefing well every time.

PREREQUISITES

Days 1-2. Learners should already see Claude as a collaborator and know how to iterate in the workspace. Today sharpens the quality of what they ask for.

02 The four ingredients of a strong prompt

CORE CONCEPT

A reliable prompt usually contains four things. Not every prompt needs all four, but when a result is weak, a missing ingredient is usually why.

INGREDIENT 1 — TASK

Say plainly what you want done.

State the actual job and the verb: draft, summarise, critique, compare, rewrite, plan, debug. “Help me with my email” is a topic; “rewrite this email to sound warmer and more concise” is a task.

INGREDIENT 2 — CONTEXT

Give the background only you know.

Who is it for? What’s the situation, the constraint, the goal? Context is the single highest-leverage addition — it’s the information Claude cannot guess and most people forget to include.

INGREDIENT 3 — FORMAT

Describe the shape of the output.

Length, structure, medium: “three short paragraphs,” “a bulleted checklist,” “a table with these columns,” “under 100 words.” If you don’t specify the shape, you accept whatever shape you get.

INGREDIENT 4 — EXAMPLES OR REFERENCES

Show, don’t only tell.

A sample of the tone you want, a piece of work to match, or a “good vs. bad” pair teaches faster than adjectives. One concrete example often outperforms a paragraph of description.

KEY IDEA TO INSTALL

Task · Context · Format · Examples. When a result disappoints, don't re-roll the dice — ask which of the four was thin, and add it. Prompting is diagnosis, not luck.

03 From vague to sharp — a worked transformation

WORKED EXAMPLE

Show this side by side. The improvement is dramatic and the lesson is self-evident.

THE VAGUE BRIEF

```
# Topic, no task, no context, no format
write something about our new feature
```

THE SHARP BRIEF

```
# Task + context + format + a reference
Draft a short announcement for our new feature, "saved views."
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Context: our users are busy operations managers; the feature lets them save a filtered dashboard and reopen it in one click. The tone should be plain and practical — no hype.

Format: a 4-sentence email body plus a one-line subject.

Match the voice of this past announcement: [paste example]

Same model, same feature — the second brief produces something usable on the first try. Walk learners through which ingredient each line supplies. That mapping is the skill.

COACHING MOVE

When a learner shows you a weak prompt, don't rewrite it for them. Ask: "What's the task verb? Who's it for? What shape should it be? Is there an example you could show?" They'll fix it themselves — and remember how.

04 Iteration — the second prompt matters most

CORE CONCEPT

The first answer is a draft, not a verdict. Skilled users treat the reply as a starting point and steer deliberately. Teach three kinds of follow-up:

- **Refine** — adjust what's there: "tighter," "warmer," "lead with the benefit," "cut the third point."
- **Redirect** — change the approach: "try this as a story instead," "argue the opposite case," "assume a sceptical reader."
- **Diagnose** — ask Claude to help: "what would make this stronger?" or "what did I leave unclear in my brief?"

"Don't grade the first answer. Steer it."

The mistake to name explicitly: vague dissatisfaction. “Make it better” gives Claude nothing to act on. “Better” must become a direction — shorter, warmer, more concrete, less formal. Specific feedback, specific improvement.

WATCH FOR THIS FAILURE MODE

Learners who stack correction after correction onto a derailed conversation. Once a chat is muddled, the cleaner fix is to edit the original prompt and re-run (Day 2’s habit) — start from a good brief rather than patching a bad one.

05

Reliable techniques worth teaching

CORE CONCEPT

A handful of techniques are dependable enough to teach as defaults. None are tricks — each is just a clearer way to brief.

TECHNIQUE	WHAT IT IS	USE IT WHEN...
Assign a role	“You’re a careful copy-editor / a patient tutor / a sceptical reviewer.”	...the kind of thinking matters as much as the topic.
Ask for reasoning	“Think it through step by step before answering.”	...the task is logical, mathematical, or multi-step.
Give positive & negative examples	Show one “do this” and one “not this.”	...tone or style is hard to describe in the abstract.
Set explicit constraints	“Under 150 words.” “No jargon.” “Only use the document I gave you.”	...you have real limits the output must respect.
Ask for options	“Give me three distinct approaches, then your recommendation.”	...you’re exploring, not yet committed.

THE META-SKILL

Every technique above is just being more specific about what you want. If learners remember one thing, make it this: specificity is the whole game. The “techniques” are simply named places to be specific.

LAB 03 ~25 MIN

The Prompt Clinic — rescue a weak brief

Worked in pairs. The point is to feel the difference a strong brief makes, and to practise diagnosing — not just rewriting.

1. **Start weak, on purpose.** Each learner sends a deliberately vague one-line prompt for a real task they have. Keep the result.
2. **Diagnose with the four ingredients.** The partner asks: which of Task / Context / Format / Examples is missing or thin? Name them out loud.
3. **Rewrite the brief** supplying every missing ingredient, and re-run it in a fresh prompt. Put the two results side by side.
4. **Iterate once.** On the strong result, practise one specific refine or redirect — no “make it better.”
5. **Swap and repeat** so both partners diagnose and rescue. Each learner leaves with one before/after pair.

every learner can point at a weak prompt and say which ingredient it lacks — and has watched a sharp brief outperform a vague one with their own task.

TEACHING NOTES**How to teach Day 3 well****OPEN WITH THIS**

Send a vague prompt live and let the room watch the generic answer arrive. Then add context, format and an example in front of them. The visible jump in quality is the entire pitch for the day — no persuasion needed.

PACE & EMPHASIS

The four ingredients and the worked transformation are the core — spend real time there. The technique table is reference; don't drill every row. Protect time for the Prompt Clinic — practice is where this sticks.

DISCUSSION PROMPTS

- Think of a time you delegated badly to a person — which of the four ingredients did you skip? · What's a piece of context you assume Claude knows but actually never told it? · What does “better” really mean for the work you do — name the specific direction.

COMMON MISCONCEPTIONS TO PRE-EMPT

“There's a secret prompt that unlocks everything.”

There isn't. There's clear briefing. Kill the magic-words mindset early.

“Longer prompts are always better.”

No — specific is better. A focused four-line brief beats a rambling page.

“If the first answer is off, the tool failed.”

The first answer is a draft. Steering it is the normal, expected workflow.

IF YOU ONLY HAVE 30 MINUTES Teach the four ingredients, run the live vague-to-sharp transformation, and do steps 1–3 of the Clinic. The technique table becomes reading.

Day 3 Cheat Sheet

Task	The actual job, stated with a verb — draft, summarise, critique, compare.
Context	The background only you know — audience, situation, goal, constraints.
Format	The shape of the output — length, structure, medium.
Examples	A sample to match, or a good/bad pair — showing beats telling.
Refine	Adjust what's there — tighter, warmer, reordered.
Redirect	Change the approach — new angle, opposite case, different reader.
Diagnose	Ask Claude what would strengthen it, or what your brief left unclear.
Role	Tell Claude what kind of thinker to be for this task.
Specificity	The whole game — every technique is a named place to be specific.

Check for understanding

Five questions. Learners should be able to answer all five before Day 4.

1. Name the four ingredients of a strong prompt. Which one is most often missing?
2. Rewrite “make a plan for the event” into a brief that supplies all four ingredients.
3. What’s wrong with the follow-up “make it better,” and what should replace it?
4. Give an example of refine, an example of redirect, and one way to ask Claude to diagnose.
5. Why is “find the secret prompt” the wrong mental model — and what’s the right one?

Answer notes — 1) Task, Context, Format, Examples; context is the most commonly missing. 2) Should name the task verb, who/what the event is and its constraints, the output shape, and ideally a reference plan. 3) It gives no direction; replace with a specific change — shorter, warmer, lead with the benefit. 4) Refine: “cut it to three sentences”; redirect: “argue this from the customer’s point of view instead”; diagnose: “what did I leave unclear in my brief?” 5) Prompting is clear briefing, a normal communication skill — not a bag of magic phrases.

Day 3 in five lines

- A prompt is a brief — weak results almost always trace to a weak brief, not the model.
- Strong prompts carry four ingredients: Task, Context, Format, Examples.
- Context is the highest-leverage addition — it's what Claude can't guess.
- The first answer is a draft; steer it deliberately with refine, redirect, or diagnose.
- Every technique reduces to one meta-skill: be specific about what you want.

TOMORROW — DAY 4 → **Advanced Prompting & Context — structure, system prompts, long context**

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