

M A V E R I C K A I

THE CLAUDE PROMPTING FRAMEWORK

OUTCOME. TASK. CONTEXT. FORMAT.

Most people use Claude wrong and get generic answers back. This is the four-part structure that takes you from beginner to expert, plus the prompts to copy.

The 4 pillars of a prompt that actually works

Before and after: bad prompt vs. good prompt

How to give Claude context (the step everyone skips)

Projects, Styles and memory, set up properly

The follow-up loop for fixing a weak answer

12 copy-paste prompt templates

A one-page cheat sheet you can keep open

2026 Edition

Why Your Answers Are Generic

Claude is not the problem. The prompt is the problem. Most people open a chat, type one line like "help me get customers," and then decide the AI is overrated when it hands back a list of tips they could have found on page one of Google.

Here's what's actually happening. Claude has no idea what you're trying to achieve, no idea what your business is, and no idea what a good answer even looks like to you. So it does the only safe thing it can do. It gives you the average answer. The middle of the road. A mid answer, because you gave it a mid prompt.

The fix is not a magic word. It's not "act as a world class expert." It's four pieces of information, in order, every time.

4

Pieces of info

60s

To write a good prompt

1

Framework for everything

THE FRAMEWORK IN ONE LINE

Give Claude the **outcome**, then the **task**, then the **context**, then the **format**. That's the whole thing. Everything else in this guide is just showing you how to do each one properly.

Do these four things and your answers get dramatically better. Not because you tricked the model. Because you finally told it what you actually wanted.

The Four Pillars

Read this page and you basically have the framework. The rest of the guide goes deep on each one.

Pillar	What it answers	What happens if you skip it
1. Outcome	Where am I trying to end up?	Claude optimizes for finishing the task, not for winning. You get technically correct, practically useless.
2. Task	What exactly do I want it to do right now?	Vague in, vague out. You get advice instead of work.
3. Context	What does it need to know about my situation?	It writes for a generic person with a generic business. Sounds like everyone else.
4. Format	How should the answer be delivered?	You get five paragraphs of prose when you needed a spreadsheet.

The order matters

Outcome first. Always. Because when Claude knows the end goal, it works backwards from it and every choice it makes downstream gets better. If you lead with the task, it just does the task. If you lead with the outcome, it does the task in the way most likely to get you the outcome.

TIP

You don't need to label the parts. You don't have to write "Outcome:" and "Task:" like a form (though you can, and it works fine). You just have to include all four things.

1

Give It the Outcome

Tell it where you're trying to end up, not just what to do.

This is the one that separates beginners from people who get incredible answers. If Claude knows the end goal, it works backwards to give you the best possible path to it.

Think about it like hiring someone. If you tell a new employee "write me a cold email," they write you a cold email. If you tell them "I'm trying to book 10 discovery calls with agency owners this month, and cold email is the channel I'm testing," they write you a completely different email. Same task. Different outcome. Way better output.

What an outcome actually sounds like

Not an outcome	An outcome
"Write a social post."	"I want this post to get people to click the link in my bio and join my email list."
"Help me with my resume."	"I'm trying to land interviews for senior product manager roles at Series B startups."
"Summarize this report."	"I need to walk into a board meeting tomorrow and defend our Q3 numbers in under 5 minutes."
"Give me some marketing ideas."	"I want to add 1,000 paying customers in 90 days without increasing ad spend."

Notice the pattern. An outcome has a destination in it. Often a number. Often a deadline. Always a reason.

THE OUTCOME OPENER (use this shape)

Structure

Here's what I'm ultimately trying to achieve:
[the real goal, with a number and a
deadline if you have one].

Success looks like: [what you'd see if
this worked].

Filled in

Here's what I'm ultimately trying to achieve:
I want to sign 5 new coaching clients at
\$2k/month by the end of the quarter.

Success looks like: 5 signed contracts and
a repeatable process I can run again.

TIP

If you can't state the outcome in one sentence, you don't know what you want yet. That's not a Claude problem, that's a you problem, and it's worth 30 seconds of thinking before you type anything.

2

Give It the Task

Be specific. Specificity is the entire game.

The outcome is the destination. The task is the next step. And the more specific you are, the less room there is for Claude to guess wrong.

"Find me 50 leads that are ideal customers for my business" beats "help me get customers" every single time. One is a job. The other is a wish.

The specificity ladder

Level	Prompt	What you get
Wish	"Help me get customers."	A list of generic marketing advice.
Task	"Find me some leads."	A vague explanation of how to find leads.
Specific task	"Find me 50 leads that are ideal customers for my business."	An actual list, though it may be off target.
Specific + bounded	"Find me 50 e-commerce founders doing \$1M-\$10M in revenue who post on LinkedIn about ops problems. One row each."	A usable list you can work from today.

Four things that make a task specific

- **A number.** 50 leads. 10 headlines. 3 options. Numbers force it to commit.
- **A boundary.** Who's in, who's out. What's off limits. What you've already tried and don't want repeated.
- **A verb that means something.** "Write," "rank," "rewrite," "compare," "find," "score." Not "help with," not "look at."
- **A finish line.** What makes this task done? Say it out loud.

TASK BLOCK (drop this in after the outcome)

Task:

[Verb] [number] [thing] that [criteria].

Do not include [what you don't want].

I've already tried [X], so skip that.

This is done when [finish line].

HEADS UP

Asking for too many things in one prompt is the flip side of this mistake. "Write my landing page, my email sequence, and my ad copy" gets you three mediocre things. Do one task at a time and use follow-ups.

3

Give It Context

This is the one everyone skips. It's the one that matters most.

Everyone reads the first two steps and nods along. Then they skip this one, because it takes effort. And this is the step that makes the difference between an answer that sounds like the internet and an answer that sounds like it came from someone who works at your company.

Claude cannot read your mind, your CRM, your brand guidelines, or the conversation you had with your co-founder last Tuesday. Everything it knows about your situation is what you gave it. So give it a lot.

What to actually give it

Type of context	What to upload or paste	Why it changes the answer
Who you are	Your bio, your business, your role, your customers	Stops it writing for a generic person
Brand voice	3-5 pieces of your best writing, or a voice doc	It matches your rhythm instead of sounding like AI
The raw material	Docs, transcripts, spreadsheets, screenshots, PDFs	It works from your facts, not its guesses
What's been tried	Past campaigns, drafts you rejected, what flopped	Stops it handing you the thing you already know failed
Constraints	Budget, timeline, tools you have, rules you can't break	The answer is actually executable
The audience	Who reads this, what they care about, what they hate	Tone and angle land instead of missing

THE 3-FILE RULE

Before any serious task, ask yourself: what are the three files that would help a brand new employee do this job well on day one? Upload those. That's it. That's the whole technique.

Where to put context so you only do it once

Pasting the same background into every new chat gets old fast. Claude has three places to store it permanently, and using them properly is the single biggest upgrade to your setup.

STEP 1: Projects (for context that belongs to one body of work)

A Project is a folder with a memory. You upload files once and every chat inside that Project can see them. Make one per client, per product, per book, per anything you'll come back to. Put your brand guidelines, your customer research, your past work, and a short "how I like things done" note in there.

PROJECT INSTRUCTIONS (paste into the Project's custom instructions)

You are working with me on [project].

Background

My business: [one paragraph].

My customers: [who they are, what they want].

How I like things done

- Be direct. Cut filler.
- If an idea is bad, say so.
- Never write in em dashes.
- Default to [format I usually want].

Always check

The files in this project before answering.

STEP 2: Styles (for how it should sound)

A Style is a saved voice. You can build one by giving Claude samples of your writing and telling it to match. Once it's saved, you pick it from the dropdown and every response comes out in your voice. Set one up for your personal writing and one for anything client facing.

STEP 3: Memory (for facts about you that never change)

Anything true about you across every conversation goes here. Your role, your business, your tools, your preferences. Say "remember this" and it sticks.

TIP

Fastest way to set this up: upload a few of your documents and say "Read these and write me a one-page context brief about my business that I can paste into future chats." Then paste that brief into your Project instructions. Ten minutes of work, permanent payoff.

Bad context vs. good context

Same task. Watch what changes.

WITHOUT CONTEXT

Write me a cold email to potential clients.

WITH CONTEXT

Outcome: book 10 discovery calls this month.

Task: write one cold email I can send to e-commerce founders.

Context

I run a 3-person agency doing email marketing for DTC brands. Average client pays \$4k/month.

My best case study: took Brand X from \$12k to \$61k/month in email revenue in 90 days.

My prospects get 20 agency pitches a week and delete all of them. They care about revenue per subscriber, not 'engagement'.

I've attached 3 emails that got replies before, match that tone. Short sentences, no jargon, no 'I hope this email finds you well'.

Format

Under 120 words. Subject line + body.

Give me 3 versions with different angles.

The second one takes 90 seconds to write. It's the difference between deleting the output and sending it.

4

Give It the Format

Tell it exactly how you want the answer delivered.

You'd be amazed how many people get a wall of text back, sigh, and then manually turn it into a table. Just ask for the table.

Format is the cheapest of the four pillars. It's usually one sentence at the end of your prompt, and it saves you all the cleanup work on the other side.

Format is more than file type

Dimension	Ask for it like this
Structure	"Give me a table with 4 columns: name, why they fit, contact, priority."
Length	"Under 200 words." / "One page max." / "Three bullets each."
Reading level	"Explain it like I'm in seventh grade." / "Write it for a CFO."
Deliverable	"Build this as a spreadsheet." / "Give it to me as a document I can download."
Tone	"Casual, like a text to a friend." / "Formal, this goes to a board."
Order	"Rank them best to worst and tell me why the top one won."
What to leave out	"No intro, no summary at the end, just the list."

FORMAT LINE (the last line of every prompt)

```
Format: [structure], [length],  
[reading level], [what to leave out].
```

Examples

```
Format: a table, 10 rows, plain English,  
no intro paragraph.
```

```
Format: 5 bullets, under 100 words total,  
explain it like I'm in seventh grade.
```

```
Format: build it as a spreadsheet I can  
download. One tab. No commentary.
```

TIP

"Explain it like I'm in seventh grade" is the most underrated line in prompting. It's not dumbing it down. It forces the model to strip out jargon and hedging, which is where bad answers hide.

Putting All Four Together

Here's the master shape. Every good prompt you ever write is some version of this.

THE MASTER PROMPT SHAPE

1. Outcome

What I'm ultimately trying to achieve:
[goal, number, deadline].

2. Task

Right now I need you to: [specific verb +
number + criteria].

3. Context

About me/my business: [short paragraph].
What I've tried: [past attempts].
Constraints: [budget, tools, rules].
I've attached: [files].

4. Format

Give it to me as: [structure, length,
reading level, what to skip].

TIP

You can label the parts like this or write it as normal sentences. Claude does not care about the labels. It cares that the four pieces of information are in there. The labels are just for you, and they do make it easier to spot which one you forgot.

Notice you can label the parts or not. Claude does not care about the labels. It cares that the information is there. Here are three real ones.

Worked example: the lead list

FULL PROMPT

Outcome

Book 15 sales calls in the next 30 days for my bookkeeping service.

Task

Find me 50 companies that fit my ideal customer profile and rank them by how likely they are to need me right now.

Context

I do bookkeeping for construction contractors in Texas doing \$2M-\$20M in revenue. They come to me when they're growing fast and their books are a mess. Attached: my client list and pitch deck. Skip anyone already using a big 4 firm.

Format

A table: company, city, est. revenue, why they fit, the signal they need help now, priority score 1-10. Sort by score. No intro.

Why this one works

- **Outcome:** 15 calls in 30 days. Now it knows to prioritize urgency over volume.
- **Task:** 50 companies, ranked. A number and a verb, so it produces a list instead of a lecture.
- **Context:** the niche, the revenue band, the buying trigger, plus real files.
- **Format:** named columns and a sort order, so it lands ready to work from.

Worked example: the explainer

FULL PROMPT

Outcome

I have to present our new pricing model to the sales team on Monday and get them bought in, not confused.

Task

Turn the attached pricing doc into a 5-minute talk track I can deliver from memory.

Context

The sales team hates change. Last time we changed pricing, three reps quit. Their main fear is that higher prices mean they miss quota. The new model actually raises their commission on every deal over \$50k.

Format

Spoken language, not slides. Under 700 words. Lead with what's in it for them. Explain it like I'm in seventh grade. End with the three objections they'll raise and my answers.

Why this one works

- **Outcome:** buy-in, not comprehension. Completely changes the angle it writes from.
- **Task:** a talk track from memory, not a summary. Different deliverable entirely.
- **Context:** three reps quit last time. That one sentence reshapes the whole thing.
- **Format:** spoken language, word count, reading level, and the objections handled up front.

Worked example: the rewrite

FULL PROMPT

Outcome

I want this landing page to convert cold traffic from Instagram into email signups. Currently at 4%, I want 10%.

Task

Rewrite the headline, subhead, and the 3 benefit bullets. Give me 3 versions of each.

Context

Audience: people who follow me for AI tips and have never bought anything from me. They're skeptical of anything that smells like a course. The freebie is a real guide, not a teaser. Attached: current page + my 5 best-performing captions for voice.

Format

Just the copy. Label each version. No explanation unless I ask. Under 30 words per headline.

Why this one works

- **Outcome:** a number to beat (4% to 10%), so it optimizes for conversion, not for pretty writing.
- **Task:** exactly which elements, and exactly how many versions.
- **Context:** the skepticism is the whole problem, and it now knows about it.
- **Format:** "just the copy, no explanation" saves you scrolling past three paragraphs of preamble.

The Follow-Up Loop

Your first prompt is a draft, not a contract. The people who get the best results from Claude are not the ones who write one perfect prompt. They're the ones who push back.

When the answer is weak, don't start a new chat and try again with slightly different words. Diagnose which of the four pillars was missing and patch that one.

What went wrong	Which pillar failed	What to say next
The answer is generic and could apply to anyone	Context	"You don't know enough about my situation yet. Ask me 5 questions that would let you give a much better answer."
It gave advice instead of doing the work	Task	"Don't tell me how. Just do it. Produce the actual deliverable."
It's technically correct but doesn't help me win	Outcome	"Remember the goal is [X]. Redo this optimizing for that, not for completeness."
It's a wall of text	Format	"Same content. Give it to me as a table with 4 columns and no intro."
It's too safe and hedged	Task	"Pick one and defend it. No 'it depends'. Tell me what you'd actually do."

The three follow-ups worth memorizing

1. THE INTERVIEW (fixes missing context fast)

Before you answer, ask me 5 questions that would let you give me a much better answer. Then wait for my replies.

2. THE CRITIQUE (makes the second draft much better)

Now critique what you just wrote. What's the weakest part and why? Then rewrite only that part.

3. THE STAKES (kills the hedging)

Assume this has to work or I lose the client. What would you change? Be blunt.

TIP

The interview prompt is the single fastest way to fix a bad answer. Claude usually knows exactly what it's missing. It just won't tell you unless you ask.

Common Mistakes

These are the ones I see constantly. Each one is cheap to fix.

1. Treating it like a search engine

One line in, one line out. Claude is not Google. It's closer to a very fast, very well read employee who happens to know nothing about your business. Brief it like one.

2. Skipping context because it takes effort

This is the big one. People will spend 40 minutes fixing a bad output rather than 3 minutes uploading the files that would have prevented it.

3. Cramming five tasks into one prompt

Write my page, my emails, my ads, my captions, and my bio. You get five mediocre things. One task per prompt, then follow up.

4. Never telling it the format

If you find yourself reformatting the output by hand, you forgot pillar four. It costs one sentence.

5. Starting over instead of pushing back

A new chat throws away everything it just learned about your situation. Stay in the thread and correct it. Only start fresh when the conversation has gotten so long it's clearly losing the plot.

6. Being polite instead of clear

"Could you maybe help me look at some ideas for possibly improving my marketing?" is four hedges in one sentence. Say what you want. It's not going to be offended.

7. Accepting the first answer

The first draft is almost never the best one available. One "critique this and rewrite the weakest part" gets you most of the way there.

HEADS UP

One more: don't paste in sensitive data you wouldn't want stored. Client financials, passwords, private medical info. Redact before you upload. Context is powerful but use your judgment.

12 Copy-Paste Templates

Every one of these is built on the four pillars. Fill in the brackets and go.

Business and sales

1. FIND CUSTOMERS

Outcome: [X] new customers in [timeframe].
Task: find me [number] companies that match my ideal customer profile and rank them.
Context: I sell [what] to [who]. They buy when [trigger]. My best client is [example]. Skip [who to exclude].
Format: table (company, why they fit, buying signal, priority 1-10). Sort by priority.

2. COLD OUTREACH

Outcome: book [number] calls this month.
Task: write [3] versions of a cold email.
Context: I do [service] for [audience]. Proof: [best result you've gotten someone]. They get pitched constantly and delete everything.
Attached: 3 emails that got replies. Match that tone.
Format: under 120 words. Subject + body.

3. PRICING DECISION

Outcome: raise revenue without losing my best clients.
Task: give me 3 pricing options and pick one.
Context: current pricing [X]. Costs [Y]. Competitors charge [Z]. My clients stay because [reason].
Format: table comparing the 3, then one paragraph on which you'd pick and why. No 'it depends'.

Writing and content

4. WRITE IN MY VOICE

Task: read the attached [5] pieces of my writing and write me a style guide that describes exactly how I write. Sentence length, punctuation habits, words I use, words I never use.

Format: one page. Then save it as a Style so I can use it in every chat.

5. TURN A DOC INTO A POST

Outcome: get people to click through to my email list.

Task: turn the attached [doc] into [3] social posts.

Context: my audience is [who]. They care about [what]. Attached: my 5 best performing posts, match that voice.

Format: under 150 words each. Hook in the first line. No hashtags.

6. EDIT MY WRITING

Task: edit the attached draft. Cut anything that doesn't earn its place.

Context: it's for [audience] and the goal is [outcome]. It's currently too [long/soft/vague].

Format: give me the edited version first, then a short list of what you cut and why.

7. EXPLAIN IT SIMPLY

Task: explain [topic] to me.

Context: I know nothing about it and I have to [use it / present it / decide on it] by [when].

Format: explain it like I'm in seventh grade.

Under 300 words. One analogy. Then tell me the one thing most people get wrong about it.

Research and analysis

8. ANALYZE MY DATA

Outcome: figure out why [metric] dropped.

Task: analyze the attached spreadsheet and tell me the 3 most likely causes.

Context: [what changed recently]. [What I already ruled out].

Format: rank the 3 by likelihood. For each, give me the evidence in the data and the one thing I should check to confirm it.

9. COMPARE OPTIONS

Outcome: [what the decision is for].

Task: compare [option A], [B], and [C] and recommend one.

Context: my constraints are [budget, time, team]. What matters most to me is [priority].

Format: comparison table, then a clear recommendation with the strongest argument against it and why you'd still pick it.

10. SUMMARIZE FOR A MEETING

Outcome: walk into [meeting] and be the most prepared person in the room.

Task: summarize the attached [report/transcript].

Context: the people in the room care about [what]. The likely pushback is [what].

Format: 5 bullets max, then the 3 questions I'm most likely to get asked and my answers.

Setup

11. BUILD MY CONTEXT BRIEF (do this once)

Task: read everything I've attached and write a one-page context brief about me and my business that I can paste into any future chat.

Format: cover who I am, what I sell, who I sell to, how I like to work, and my current goals. Plain English. Under 400 words.

12. THE UNSTICKER

I'm stuck on [problem].

Before you answer, ask me 5 questions that would let you give a much better answer.

Then wait for my replies.

TIP

Template 12 is the one to reach for when you're stuck and can't even write a good prompt. Let Claude interview you. It knows what it's missing.

The One-Page Cheat Sheet

Keep this open. That's the whole guide in one page.

Pillar	The question to ask yourself	One line that does it
1. OUTCOME	Where am I actually trying to end up?	"What I'm ultimately trying to achieve is [goal] by [when]."
2. TASK	What's the one specific thing I need right now?	"Right now I need you to [verb] [number] [thing] that [criteria]."
3. CONTEXT	What would a new employee need to know to do this well?	"Here's my situation: [...]. I've attached [files]. I've already tried [X]."
4. FORMAT	How do I want to receive this?	"Give it to me as [structure], [length], [reading level], no [what to skip]."

When the answer is bad

Symptom	Fix
Generic	You skipped context. Upload files or run the interview prompt.
Advice, not work	You were vague. Add a number and a verb.
Correct but useless	You never told it the outcome.
Wrong shape	You never told it the format.
Hedged and safe	"Pick one and defend it. No 'it depends'."

DO THIS RIGHT NOW

Open Claude. Create a Project for the thing you work on most. Upload the three files a new employee would need. Paste in a short "how I like things done" note. That's ten minutes, and every prompt you write from now on starts from a better place than the one before it.

THE WHOLE FRAMEWORK

Outcome. Task. Context. Format. If your answer is bad, one of those four is missing. Go find out which one.

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Bad prompt, mid answer. Give it all four and watch what happens.