

PROMPT ENGINEERING · 8 min read · September 25, 2026 · By Kelly Stratton

The Claude Master Prompt: Make Claude Rewrite Your Prompts Before It Answers

One paste makes Claude turn your rough request into the prompt it would want to receive, ask for the details you forgot, and wait for your go. The master prompt, how to answer its questions in thirty seconds, three worked examples, the version that runs on its own in a Project, and the fix for when it skips ahead.

You've seen the prompt formulas. Role, task, context, format, examples, tone. They work, and almost nobody remembers them at 9pm when they need an email written. Here's the shortcut I use instead: I don't write good prompts anymore. I write rough ones, and I make Claude turn them into good ones before it does anything. It's one paste, it takes thirty seconds, and the result is better every single time, because Claude knows what a complete prompt looks like far better than any formula does. This guide is that paste, how to use it, three worked examples, and what to do when it misbehaves.

IN A NUTSHELL

Type your request the way you'd say it out loud. Then, before Claude does anything, ask it to rewrite that request as the prompt it would want to receive, with questions in brackets for anything it doesn't know. Answer the brackets in a line each, say go, and send. Claude writes the prompt. You write the answers. The full master prompt is in Part 2.

WHAT THE MASTER PROMPT IS

The master prompt is a short paste that tells Claude to stop, rewrite your rough request as a complete prompt (who it's for, what done looks like, length, format, tone, what to leave out), put a question in brackets wherever it would otherwise guess, and wait for your go. You answer the brackets, and Claude runs the prompt it wrote.

WHAT YOU NEED

Claude, on any plan, including free. It works in ChatGPT and Gemini too, word for word. Nothing to install and nothing to memorize; the paste does the remembering.

PART 1 Why Does Claude Write Better Prompts Than You?

Not because it's smarter than you. Because it knows exactly what it needs. Every weak answer you've ever gotten came from a detail that wasn't in the prompt: who the thing was for, how long it should be, what to leave out, what tone. You didn't include those because you didn't think of them. Claude thinks of them every time, because they're the things it reaches for first when it starts writing.

So instead of you guessing what to include, you flip it. You hand Claude the rough version and ask: if you were asking another AI to do this, how would you write the prompt? It writes the prompt it wishes it had gotten. It adds the audience, the length, the format. And where it doesn't know something, the master prompt tells it to ask instead of guess. That last part is the whole trick. Guessing is where answers go wrong. Questions in brackets take the guessing out.

PART 2 The Master Prompt

Paste this at the top of a new chat, put your rough request where it says, and send.

PROMPT

Before you do anything, rewrite my request as the prompt you would want to receive. Read what I typed below. Then write the version you would use if you were asking another AI to do this. Include: who the result is for, the goal and what done looks like, the length and format, the tone, what to leave out, and any facts you need from me. Where a detail is missing, put a question in brackets instead of guessing. Show me only the rewritten prompt. Do not do the task yet. Wait for me to answer the questions and say go.

My request: [paste it here]

The quick version from the video. When you don't want the full paste, type your request as usual and add this one line at the end:

PROMPT

If you were asking another AI to do this, how would you write the prompt? Show me the version you'd use.

The full paste is better because of two things the short line doesn't say: put questions in brackets instead of guessing, and don't do the task yet. Use the short one when you're in a hurry. Use the full one when it matters.

Make it automatic. In Claude, open a Project (they're on the free plan too), click Set project instructions, and paste this version, which drops the "My request" line and tells Claude to treat every message as the request:

PROMPT

Before you do anything with any message I send, rewrite it as the prompt you would want to receive. Write the version you would use if you were asking another AI to do this. Include: who the result is for, the goal and what done looks like, the length and format, the tone, what to leave out, and any facts you need from me. Where a detail is missing, put a question in brackets instead of guessing. Show me only the rewritten prompt. Do not do the task yet. Wait for me to answer the questions and say go.

Every chat in that project now starts by rewriting whatever you type. In ChatGPT, paste the same text into Customize ChatGPT under custom instructions, or into a Project's instructions. In Gemini, make a Gem with it. After that you just type rough requests.

PART 3 How to Answer the Brackets in Thirty Seconds

Claude hands back a prompt with a few [bracketed questions] in it. This is the part people overthink. Don't.

- **One line per bracket.** "For my landlord." "Short, five sentences." "Firm but polite." That's plenty.
- **"Skip" is an answer.** If a bracket asks for something you don't care about, type skip and Claude uses a sensible default.
- **Answer in a list, not by editing the prompt.** Type "1. my landlord 2. five sentences 3. firm, polite" and then the word go. Claude fills in its own prompt and runs it.
- **Say go.** That's the trigger the master prompt is waiting for. Until you say it, Claude keeps holding.

The whole exchange is: your rough request, Claude's prompt with three or four brackets, your one-line answers, go, the result. Under a minute, and the result reads like you thought about it for ten.

Keep what it writes. The prompt Claude hands back is a finished, reusable prompt. Copy it into a note before you say go. The third time you ask for the same kind of thing (a client email, a caption, a weekly plan), you already have a prompt with brackets in it, and you're only filling in the blanks. That's a prompt library that builds itself from your own requests, in your own words.

PART 4 Three Worked Examples

Each one is the rough request you'd actually type, then the kind of prompt Claude hands back. The brackets are Claude's questions, and they're the point.

1. The email you've been putting off

Rough request:

PROMPT

write an email to my landlord about the leak under the sink, it's been two weeks

What comes back looks like this:

● Claude



Write a short email from a tenant to their landlord about a leak under the kitchen sink that was first reported two weeks ago and hasn't been fixed. Audience: the landlord, [first name or "Mr./Ms. Last name"?]. Goal: get a repair scheduled this week and create a written record. Length: five to seven sentences. Tone: polite, firm, not angry. Include: the date it was first reported [what date?], how it was reported [text, call, email?], that it's getting worse [is it? any damage to the cabinet or floor?], and a request for a specific repair date. Leave out: threats, legal language, and apologies. End with a clear ask and a thank-you.

You answer: "1. Mr. Alvarez 2. August 30 3. by text 4. yes, the cabinet floor is soft now. go." And you get the email you'd have spent twenty minutes writing.

2. The post that has to sound like you

Rough request:

PROMPT

write an instagram caption about my new fall grooming special

What comes back looks like this:

● Claude



Write an Instagram caption for a small business announcing a fall grooming special. Audience: local dog owners who already follow the account. Goal: get them to book. Length: three short lines plus a call to action, under 60 words. Tone: warm and a little playful, like the owner talking, not an ad. Include: the offer [what is it exactly, and through what date?], the business name [name?], how to book [link in bio, DM, phone?]. Leave out: hashtags in the body (I'll add three at the end), exclamation points on every line, and the word "unleash." Paste one previous caption you liked so I can match the voice [paste?].

Notice the last bracket. It asked for a sample of your voice. You'd never think to include that. Claude always does.

3. The thing you don't know how to ask for

Rough request:

PROMPT

help me figure out if I should switch my daughter's school

What comes back looks like this:

● Claude

- * Act as a thinking partner, not an advisor, for a parent deciding whether to move their daughter to a different school. Goal: help me see the decision clearly, not make it for me. Format: first, four questions back to me, one at a time, about what's driving this [what's the main problem at the current school?], what the alternative is [a specific school, or still looking?], her age and how she feels about it [age? has she said anything?], and what a good outcome looks like a year from now. Then, once I've answered, a one-page summary: what I said matters most, the trade-offs in plain terms, and the two or three things I'd want to find out before deciding. Tone: calm, direct, no reassurance for its own sake. Leave out: generic advice about "every child is different."

That's a better conversation than "help me figure out" would ever have started. Same you, same Claude, better prompt.

PART 5 The Tell

What Claude did, and what to change

It did the task instead of rewriting the prompt

The "do not do the task yet" line got lost, or you used the short version. Paste the full master prompt again with your request under it. If it still runs ahead, add "show me only the prompt" at the end.

The rewritten prompt is three paragraphs long

Reply "half the length, keep the brackets." A long prompt isn't a better prompt.

It asked eight questions

Reply "assume sensible defaults, ask me only the three that matter most." Then answer those three.

It guessed instead of asking

Reply "you guessed the audience and the length, ask me instead." It replaces the guesses with brackets.

You answered the brackets and nothing happened

You didn't say go. Type it.

PART 6 What This Doesn't Do

It doesn't know your facts. The brackets are Claude admitting that. The dates, the names, the price, the thing that happened: those come from you, and the answers are only as good as what you type into the brackets.

It doesn't replace your judgment. Example three is a thinking partner on purpose. Claude can lay out a decision clearly. Making it is still yours.

It works best with a real task. "Make me money" is a wish. "Give me three ways to add \$500 a month to my grooming business" is a task, and Claude turns a task into a prompt worth running. When you're not sure what to ask for, use example three: ask Claude to be a thinking partner and let its questions find the task.

DO THIS FIRST

Open a new chat, paste the master prompt, and put the last thing you asked Claude for under it, the one where the answer was fine but not great. Look at the brackets. Every one of them is a detail you didn't give it last time. Answer them, say go, and compare. Then put the master prompt in a Project so you never paste it again.

Straight answers

How do I write a better Claude prompt?

Don't. Type your request the way you'd say it, then ask Claude to rewrite it as the prompt it would want to receive, with the audience, the length, the format, the tone, what to leave out, and a bracketed question for anything it doesn't know. Answer the brackets, say go, and send. Claude writes the prompt. You write the answers.

Can Claude write prompts for me?

Yes, and it's better at it than most people are. Paste the master prompt from this guide at the top of a chat, put your rough request under it, and Claude hands back a complete prompt with questions in brackets instead of guesses. Fill in the brackets and say go. It works in ChatGPT and Gemini the same way.

What is the best prompt for Claude?

The one Claude writes for itself. A good prompt names who the result is for, what done looks like, the length and format, the tone, and what to leave out. Claude knows that list better than any formula, so ask it to build the prompt from your rough request first, then run the prompt it gives you.

How do I get better answers from Claude?

Give it the details it would otherwise guess. The master prompt forces that: instead of guessing your audience or length, Claude asks in brackets, you answer in a line each, and the final prompt has everything it needs. Most weak answers come from a missing detail, not a weak model.

Does this prompt trick work in ChatGPT?

Yes. Paste the same master prompt into ChatGPT or Gemini and it does the same thing: rewrites your request, asks for what's missing in brackets, and waits. The wording was written for Claude, but there's nothing Claude-only in it.

Why does Claude do the task instead of rewriting my prompt?

Usually because the request was pasted without the master prompt, or the "do not do the task yet" line got cut. Paste the whole master prompt again, put your request under it, and it will stop at the rewritten prompt. If it still runs ahead, add "show me only the prompt" at the end.

How do I make Claude do this every time without pasting?

Put the project version of the master prompt (the one that treats every message as the request) in a Claude Project's instructions, and every chat in that project starts by rewriting what you type. Projects are on the free plan. In ChatGPT, put it in Customize ChatGPT or a Project's instructions. In Gemini, make a Gem with it.

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