Prompting 101 - Episode 2: The Anatomy of a Perfect Prompt

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Welcome back to Prompting One O One. This is Episode 2, The Anatomy of a Perfect Prompt. If you completed the homework from Episode 1, you've already started practicing the Four W's Framework: What, Who, Why, and Way. You're beginning to see how structure and specificity improve your AI results.

Today, we're taking your skills further. We're going to dissect what makes a prompt truly excellent. By the end of this episode, you'll understand the CRAFT framework, a five-element system that will help you write professional-level prompts every single time.

Before we dive in, let's do a quick review. In Episode 1, we learned that a prompt is your instruction to an AI, and that clarity and specificity are essential. We introduced the Four W's: What you want the AI to create, Who the AI should be and who the audience is, Why you're creating this content, and the Way it should be formatted or presented.

The Four W's give you a solid foundation. The CRAFT framework we're covering today builds on that foundation to give you even more precision and power.

So, what is CRAFT? CRAFT is an acronym that stands for Context, Role, Action, Format, and Tone. These five elements work together to create a comprehensive, effective prompt. Let's break down each element in detail.

First, C for Context. Context is the background information the AI needs to understand your request fully. Think of context as setting the stage. What's the situation? What problem are you trying to solve? What constraints or requirements exist?

For example, if you're asking the AI to help you write a product description, the context might include: what the product is, who typically buys it, what makes it unique, and what platform the description will appear on.

Good context helps the AI make informed decisions about what information to include and how to present it.

Here's an example of adding context. Instead of saying "Write a product description for shoes," you'd say "I'm launching a new line of eco-friendly running shoes made from recycled materials. Our target customers are environmentally conscious athletes aged 25 to 40. The description will appear on our Shopify store."

See how that context immediately shapes what kind of description would be appropriate?

Second, R for Role. Role defines who the AI should act as or embody. Should it be an expert consultant, a friendly teacher, a creative writer, a technical specialist? Defining the role helps the AI adopt the right perspective, knowledge level, and voice.

For instance, "You are an experienced e-commerce copywriter who specializes in sustainable products." This role definition tells the AI to draw on knowledge of persuasive product copy and environmental messaging.

The role you assign can dramatically change the output. A financial advisor will approach a topic differently than a creative storyteller, even if they're discussing the same subject.

Third, A for Action. Action is what you want the AI to do. This should be a clear, specific verb. Write, create, analyze, summarize, generate, explain, compare, list. The action verb tells the AI exactly what task to perform.

Be as specific as possible with your action. Don't just say "help me with marketing." Instead, say "Create a 7-day social media content calendar" or "Write three headline variations for a Facebook ad" or "Analyze these customer reviews and identify the top 5 recurring complaints."

Specific actions lead to specific, useful results.

Fourth, F for Format. Format specifies how you want the information structured or presented. Should it be a bulleted list, a table, a step-by-step guide, a narrative paragraph, a script, or something else?

Format also includes length specifications. Do you want 100 words or 500 words? Three options or ten? One page or five pages?

Being clear about format saves you time because you won't have to reformat the AI's response yourself. For example, "Present this as a comparison table with three columns: Feature, Basic Plan, and Premium Plan" gives the AI exact formatting instructions.

Fifth, T for Tone. Tone defines the style and voice of the output. Should it be formal or casual? Professional or friendly? Humorous or serious? Enthusiastic or measured?

Tone is especially important when the content will be customer-facing or represent your brand. For instance, "Use a warm, conversational tone as if you're talking to a friend" creates a very different result than "Use a formal, academic tone appropriate for a research paper."

Now that we've covered all five elements, let me show you how they work together in a complete prompt.

Let's say you need help creating an email newsletter. Here's a weak prompt: "Write a newsletter."

That gives the AI almost nothing to work with. Now, let's apply the CRAFT framework.

Context: "I run a small online bookstore specializing in mystery and thriller novels. I send a monthly newsletter to 2,000 subscribers who are avid readers."

Role: "You are an email marketing specialist with expertise in the book industry."

Action: "Create the content for this month's newsletter."

Format: "The newsletter should include: a friendly opening paragraph, three book recommendations with 50-word descriptions each, one featured author spotlight of 100 words, and a closing call-to-action encouraging readers to visit the website. Total length should be 400 to 500 words."

Tone: "Use an enthusiastic but not overly salesy tone. Write as a fellow book lover sharing exciting discoveries."

Now, putting it all together:

"I run a small online bookstore specializing in mystery and thriller novels. I send a monthly newsletter to 2,000 subscribers who are avid readers. You are an email marketing specialist with expertise in the book industry. Create the content for this month's newsletter. The newsletter should include: a friendly opening paragraph, three book recommendations with 50-word descriptions each, one featured author spotlight of 100 words, and a closing call-to-action encouraging readers to visit the website. Total length should be 400 to 500 words. Use an enthusiastic but not overly salesy tone. Write as a fellow book lover sharing exciting discoveries."

That's a complete, professional prompt. The AI now has everything it needs to create exactly what you're looking for.

Let's do another example. Imagine you need to create training material for new employees.

Weak prompt: "Explain customer service."

Now, using CRAFT:

Context: "Our company is a software-as-a-service startup that provides project management tools to small businesses. We're hiring our first customer support team members who will handle email and chat inquiries."

Role: "You are a customer service training expert with 15 years of experience in the tech industry."

Action: "Create a training guide that teaches new support team members how to handle difficult customer conversations."

Format: "Structure this as a guide with: an introduction, five common difficult scenarios with example dialogues showing both poor and excellent responses, and a summary checklist of best practices. Length should be 800 to 1,000 words."

Tone: "Use a supportive, teaching tone that builds confidence. Make it practical and easy to reference during actual customer interactions."

Combining these: "Our company is a software-as-a-service startup that provides project management tools to small businesses. We're hiring our first customer support team members who will handle email and chat inquiries. You are a customer service training expert with 15 years of experience in the tech industry. Create a training guide that teaches new support team members how to handle difficult customer conversations. Structure this as a guide with: an introduction, five common difficult scenarios with example dialogues showing both poor and excellent responses, and a summary checklist of best practices. Length should be 800 to 1,000 words. Use a supportive, teaching tone that builds confidence. Make it practical and easy to reference during actual customer interactions."

Again, this gives the AI complete clarity about what you need.

Now, you might be thinking: "Do I really need to include all five elements every single time?" The honest answer is: not always, but usually.

For simple, straightforward requests, you might be able to skip one or two elements. But for anything important, anything that will be shared with others or represent you or your business, using all five elements of CRAFT will consistently give you better results.

Think of CRAFT as your quality control checklist. Before you send a prompt, quickly run through: Do I have Context? Role? Action? Format? Tone? If you're missing any element, your results might be incomplete or off-target.

Let me share a few practical tips for applying the CRAFT framework effectively.

Tip one: Write your CRAFT elements in order. Start with Context to set the stage, then Role, then Action, then Format, then Tone. This logical flow helps the AI process your request more effectively.

Tip two: Be concise within each element. You don't need paragraphs of context. Two or three sentences covering the essential background is usually enough. The goal is clarity, not length.

Tip three: Use specific numbers and constraints. Instead of "a short description," say "a 75-word description." Instead of "several examples," say "exactly five examples." Specificity eliminates ambiguity.

Tip four: Test different roles. You'll often be surprised how much the role definition changes the output. Try "you are a senior consultant" versus "you are a friendly teacher" for the same task and compare the results.

Tip five: Keep a template. Create a basic CRAFT template that you can copy and fill in each time you need a new prompt. This makes the process faster and ensures you don't forget any elements.

Your template might look like this:

Context: [Background information and situation]

Role: You are [specific role or expertise]

Action: [Specific verb and task]

Format: [Structure, length, and presentation requirements]

Tone: [Style and voice]

Before we wrap up Episode 2, let's talk about a common mistake beginners make. They try to cram everything into one long, run-on sentence. Don't do that. It's perfectly fine to write your prompt in multiple sentences or even short paragraphs, organized by the CRAFT elements.

Clarity matters more than brevity. A well-structured 100-word prompt will outperform a vague 20-word prompt every time.

Let's recap what we covered today. The CRAFT framework consists of five essential elements: Context provides background information, Role defines who the AI should be, Action specifies what task to perform, Format determines how the information should be structured, and Tone sets the style and voice.

Using all five elements together creates comprehensive, professional prompts that consistently deliver high-quality results.

Your homework before Episode 3 is to practice CRAFT. Take three different tasks you need to complete this week. For each one, write a complete prompt using all five CRAFT elements: Context, Role, Action, Format, and Tone.

Compare the results you get from your CRAFT prompts to what you might have gotten from a simple, vague request. Document what works well and what you might adjust next time.

In Episode 3, we're going to cover Common Mistakes and How to Fix Them. We'll look at the ten most frequent errors beginners make when writing prompts, and I'll show you exactly how to avoid or correct each one.

Thank you for joining me for Episode 2. You're building real skills that will serve you for years to come. I'll see you in the next episode. Keep practicing, stay curious, and remember: great prompts are built, not born.