

# **The Art of Prompting**

*The only wrong prompt is the one you don't write*

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*Rob van Lanen, Professional Scrum Trainer*

## Introduction

Prompt engineering is the process of structuring or crafting an instruction in order to produce better outputs from a generative artificial intelligence model ([Wikipedia](#)). It is often framed as something you either understand or don't. Some people hesitate to start prompting because they believe they need to get it right the first time. That belief gets in the way of learning. What most people need is not a perfect prompt, but a clear way to begin - a structure that invites experimentation instead of perfection. Something simple enough to remember, yet strong enough to guide better results. This article shares practical ways to get started with prompting, drawn from hands-on work and intended for direct application.

### A for Assignment (the WHAT)

The assignment describes **what you are asking for**. It defines the nature of the output, not the wording of the instruction. An assignment can be an overview, an explanation, a comparison, a recommendation, or a written piece. It answers the question: What kind of output do I want to receive? By being explicit about the assignment, you set expectations. You are not telling the system how to think or what conclusion to reach. You are simply clarifying the scope of the task.

*Example:*

**Assignment:** An overview of common reasons employees leave an organization.

⇒ Assignment gives **direction** to the prompt.

### R for Reason (the WHY)

Reason explains **why the request matters**. It captures the intended value or outcome of the output once it is used. This might be about enabling a decision, creating shared understanding, identifying risks, or prioritizing action. Reason helps the system understand what deserves emphasis and what can be left out. Without a clear reason, outputs tend to be generic. With a reason, relevance improves.

*Example:*

**Reason:** HR and management can identify which retention issues require attention.

⇒ Reason gives **relevance** to the prompt.

## T for Template (the HOW)

Template defines **how the output should be delivered**. It describes the structure and constraints that shape the result, without prescribing its content. A template can include sections, ordering, length, tone, or format. It does not tell the system what to say, only how to organize and present it. The template reduces ambiguity and makes output more consistent and usable.

*Example:*

**Template:** Describe the reasons in plain English, grouped into themes, on one page.

⇒ Template gives **usability** to the prompt.

## When one part is missing

ART works because each part plays a distinct role. Leaving one out usually leads to a predictable problem. If you have a reason and a template, but no clear assignment, the output may deliver something other than what you needed. If you have an assignment and a template, but no clear reason, the output may be too generic and lack relevance. With a reason, relevance improves. If you have an assignment and a reason, but no template, the output can be insightful but inconsistent. It often arrives in a form that is harder to use, compare, or apply in practice.

*Example ART:*

**Assignment:** An overview of common reasons employees leave an organization.

**Reason:** HR and management can identify which retention issues require attention.

**Template:** Describe the reasons in plain English, grouped into themes, on one page.

⇒ Assignment gives direction, Reason gives relevance, Template gives usability.

## First conclusions

The art of prompting does not live in the perfect prompt. Prompting is a verb, not a noun. ART exists to get you moving. It helps you take the first step and begin developing the skill. But more important than the art of prompting is that you START prompting. There is no mastery without motion. You don't refine prompts by thinking about them. You refine them by using them. Every prompt you write teaches you something; every iteration sharpens your intuition. ART removes the hesitance with beginning. It gives you a simple entry point, a shared language, and a solid foundation. Start first. Refine later. ART is how you begin.

⇒ ART helps you START.

## When ART is no longer enough

ART is designed to get useful output fast. Most of the time, it is all you need to get a good result. When the stakes are higher (an important audience, an impactful decision, or something you will reuse), a "good result" is not sufficient. The model may still produce something correct and well-structured, but it can miss the point by guessing the context and defaulting to a neutral voice. In those cases, you don't need to abandon the ART framework. You simply upgrade your current ART prompt with two elements: Situation and Talent. Lead your ART-based prompt with the S and the T for more advanced prompts. This will generate a head START.

## S for Situation (the CONTEXT)

Situation describes **the context in which the request exists**. It provides the background information, reference details, and situational facts that help understand the context before producing an answer. Situation can include the audience, the setting, what has already happened, relevant data points, constraints, and any assumptions that should be treated as true. It answers the question: What does the AI need to know about the situation to produce an accurate, aligned output? The situation prevents the model from filling in the gaps with assumptions.

*Example:*

**Situation:** Increase in resignations over the last 6 months, HR needs input for retention.

⇒ Situation gives **grounding** to the prompt.

## T for Talent (the ROLE)

Talent describes the expertise lens you want to apply. It defines the role, domain, or professional perspective the system should use to make decisions about tone, depth, methods, and what “good” looks like. Talent can be a job role, a discipline, or a level of seniority, such as a senior copywriter, an HR business partner, or a data scientist. It answers the question: what kind of expert should generate this, and what standards should it follow? Talent prevents the model from answering as a generalist.

*Example:*

**Talent:** Act as an HR Partner experienced in retention strategy for organizations.

⇒ Talent gives **expertise** to the prompt.

## The full START framework

ART is a practical entry point: it gets you from hesitation to action. It gives your prompt direction (Assignment), relevance (Reason), and usability (Template). And when you want more advanced prompts, add Situation and Talent to ART. These are the missing ingredients that make your prompts more grounded (Situation) and expert-level (Talent).

**S for Situation:** the context in which the request exists

**T for Talent:** the expertise lens you want to apply

**A for Assignment:** what you are asking for

**R for Reason:** why the request matters

**T for Template:** how the output should be delivered

*Example START:*

**Situation:** Increase in resignations over the last 6 months, HR needs input for retention.

**Talent:** Act as an HR Partner experienced in retention strategy for organizations.

**Assignment:** An overview of common reasons employees leave an organization.

**Reason:** HR and management can identify which retention issues require attention.

**Template:** Describe the reasons in plain English, grouped into themes, one page.

⇒ Begin with ART. Need more: Lead with Situation and Talent to upgrade to START.

## Concluding thoughts

Altogether, START will make your prompts more targeted without making them overcomplicated. Begin with ART. Upgrade to START when you need sharper alignment. I am curious to hear your perspective and reflections on the structure. Simply copy the Prompt Card template below and paste it in your next prompt to start using the framework.

*Prompt Card Template:*

**Situation:** Context is [background information].

**Talent:** Apply the [role/expertise lens].

**Assignment:** Produce [deliverable] on [topic/scope].

**Reason:** This matters because [why], and success looks like [criteria].

**Template:** Output as [format/structure], in [length], with [tone]; avoid [must-avoid].

Prompting is a skill you build through doing. Start small, learn fast, and improve with every iteration. ART first. START for advanced prompts.

And keep in mind:

*The only wrong prompt is the one you don't write.*

## About Scrum.org

Scrum.org, the Home of Scrum, was founded by Scrum co-creator Ken Schwaber as a mission-based organization to help people and teams solve complex problems. We do this by enabling people to apply Professional Scrum through training courses, certifications and ongoing learning all based on a common competency model.

