NO PREP

The CLEAR Framework

Better Prompts in 5 Steps

Includes: Student reading, case study, differentiated questions, teacher key

Name: Period: Date:

The CLEAR Framework: Better Prompts in 5 Steps

Why Frameworks Help

Most people who use AI tools do not have a system. They type something in, read what comes out, and either use it or give up. They get inconsistent results — sometimes the AI produces something great, and sometimes it produces something useless — and they have no idea why. The difference usually comes down to structure. When you approach prompt writing with a consistent framework, your results become more predictable and more useful. The CLEAR framework is one approach that works well for students and professionals who need practical, actionable outputs from AI. CLEAR stands for Context, Language, Explicit Instructions, Audience, and Result. Each letter represents a question you should answer — either in your head or in the prompt itself — before you hit enter. Not every prompt needs all five elements at full detail,

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C (Context): Establish the Situation

Context is the background information that frames your request. It answers the question: what is the situation? Without context, the AI has to make assumptions, and its assumptions will usually be wrong for your specific needs. Context can include who you are, what task you are working on, what you have already done, and what constraints exist. For example, if you are writing a research paper, the context might be: "I am a high school student writing a five-paragraph essay on the causes of World War I for a history class. I have already written the introduction and need help with the first body paragraph." Notice that this context tells the AI your level, your task, your format, and exactly where you are in the process. All of that information shapes the kind of help the AI can give you. Without it, you might get a college-level analysis when you needed a simple paragraph.

L (Language): Specify the Tone and Style

Language refers to how the output should sound. Should it be formal or casual? Academic or conversational? Direct or gentle? Does it need to avoid jargon, or is technical language appropriate? The default voice of most AI tools is somewhere between formal and neutral, which is useful for some tasks but wrong for many others. If you are writing an email to a friend about a class project, a formal tone will sound stiff and weird. If you are drafting a message to a college admissions officer, a casual tone could hurt your chances. You need to specify language and tone because the AI cannot infer it correctly from context alone. Try phrases like "use a casual, friendly tone," "write in formal academic English," "keep the language simple enough for a 7th grader," or "match the tone of a professional email without being stiff."

E (Explicit Instructions): Say Exactly What You Want

Explicit instructions are the most specific part of your prompt. This is where you tell the AI the exact format, structure, and content of what you need. Do you want a numbered list or bullet points? A table or a paragraph? Exactly three examples or as many as relevant? Should the AI include a conclusion, or just the body? Should it avoid certain words or phrases? Being explicit prevents the AI from making decisions you did not authorize. If you ask for "a summary," the AI will decide how long it is. If you ask for "a three-sentence summary using only the main argument and two supporting points," the AI produces exactly what you specified. The more explicit you are, the less the AI has to improvise — and improvisation is where AI outputs tend to go wrong. Think of explicit instructions as the difference between telling a contractor 'build me something nice' versus giving them blueprints.

A (Audience): Who Is This For?

Audience is one of the most commonly forgotten elements of a prompt, and forgetting it consistently leads to outputs that do not work. The AI's vocabulary, complexity level, assumed background knowledge, and even formatting choices are all affected by who the content is for. An explanation of climate change written for a scientist will be unreadable to a sixth grader. An explanation written for a sixth grader will seem condescending to a scientist. You should always specify your audience, even when it seems obvious. Tell the AI the age group, the level of

background knowledge, the relationship (is this for a teacher, a peer, a customer, a family member?), and any relevant context about what they already know. Phrases like "for a high school student with no prior knowledge of the topic," "for a business professional familiar with marketing concepts," or "for a parent trying to understand what their child is learning" all give the AI the information it needs to calibrate its output correctly.

R (Result): Define the Outcome You Need

Result refers to the final output you are trying to produce. What does success look like? What will you do with the output once you have it? If you are trying to write a resume bullet point, success means a one-line achievement statement starting with a strong verb. If you are trying to understand a concept for a test, success means a clear, memorable explanation you can repeat in your own words. If you are trying to draft a text message, success means something short, natural, and appropriate for the relationship. Defining the result forces you to think clearly about what you actually need before you ask for it. Many people sit down to write a prompt without having thought through what they want the end product to look like. When you define the result first — even just in your head — you write better prompts because you are working backward from a clear goal rather than hoping the AI figures out your needs.

Putting CLEAR Together: A Before and After

Without the framework, a typical student prompt might look like this: "Help me with my presentation on climate change." With the CLEAR framework applied, the same request becomes: "I am a 10th-grade student preparing a five-minute class presentation on the causes and effects of climate change. I need three main talking points that are easy to explain without scientific jargon, with one real-world example for each point. The audience is my classmates who have basic knowledge from one chapter in our textbook. Format it as a bulleted outline I can print and hold during the presentation." That second version gives the AI everything it needs: context (10th grade, five-minute presentation), language (no jargon), explicit instructions (three points, one example each, bulleted outline), audience (classmates with basic knowledge), and result (a printable outline). The output from that prompt will be dramatically more useful than anything the first prompt could produce. The framework does not add much time — once you know it, applying it takes an extra

thirty seconds of thought, and it saves you multiple rounds of frustrating follow-up. It is also worth noting that the CLEAR framework does not have to be applied rigidly in every situation. For simple, low-stakes prompts, a quick mental check of two or three elements is sufficient. Reserve the full five-element approach for prompts that matter — job applications, academic work, professional communications, and anything else where the quality of the output has real consequences. Learning when to apply the full framework and when to simplify it is itself a skill that develops with practice.

Key Information: The CLEAR Framework

CLEAR Element	The Question It Answers
C — Context	What is the situation? Who are you and what are you working on?
L — Language	How should the output sound? What tone and style is appropriate?
E — Explicit Instructions	What exact format, structure, and content do you need?
A — Audience	Who will read or use this? What do they know and need?
R — Result	What does success look like? What will you do with the output?
Default AI voice	Formal-neutral — needs overriding when casual or technical tone is required
Explicit format	Prevents AI from improvising structure decisions you did not authorize
Audience calibration	How AI adjusts vocabulary, complexity, and assumed background knowledge

Case Study: Priya's Presentation Problem

Priya has a 10-minute presentation on financial literacy due in two days. She needs to explain how credit card interest works to her personal finance class. She tries AI to help build her outline and types: 'Explain credit card interest.' The AI gives her four dense paragraphs full of terms like 'annual percentage rate compounding methodology' and 'revolving balance amortization schedules.' It's accurate, but it reads like a finance textbook — nothing she could actually say out loud to her classmates. Her friend suggests she use the CLEAR framework. Priya rewrites her prompt: 'I am a high school student preparing a 10-minute class presentation on how credit card interest works for a personal finance class. My audience is other high school students with no financial background. I need a five-point outline with simple language, one real-world example showing how a $500 balance grows over six months, and no financial jargon. Format it as a numbered outline.' The AI's response is clear, relatable, and something she can actually present. She finishes her outline in 20 minutes.

1. Identify at least three specific CLEAR framework elements Priya included in her revised prompt and explain how each one improved the output.

2. What does Priya's experience suggest about who is responsible for the quality of AI output — the AI or the user? Use evidence from both the case study and the reading to support your answer.

Multiple Choice

1. In the CLEAR framework, the "L" stands for Language. What does specifying language in a prompt accomplish?

a) It tells the AI whether to translate the output into another language

b) It directs the AI to use a specific tone and style in its output

c) It limits the AI to outputting only formal academic English

d) It tells the AI which programming language to use

2. According to the reading, what is the most commonly forgotten element of a prompt?

a) Explicit instructions

b) Context

c) Audience

d) Result

3. What does the reading mean when it says defining the Result "forces you to think clearly about what you actually need before you ask for it"?

a) It means you should always write out your prompt in a document before pasting it into the AI tool

b) It means the result section should always be the longest part of your prompt

c) It means you should test multiple prompts and choose the best result

d) It means working backward from your goal produces better prompts than hoping AI figures it out

Matching

Write the letter of the correct definition on the line next to each term.

Term	Definition
1. ___ Context	A) Precise specifications for format, structure, and content of the AI's output
2. ___ Explicit instructions	B) How AI adjusts vocabulary and complexity based on who the content is for
3. ___ Audience	C) The final outcome you are trying to produce — what success looks like
4. ___ Result	D) Background information that frames who you are and what situation you are in
5. ___ Calibration	E) The person or group who will read or use the AI's output

Fill-in-the-Blank

1. CLEAR stands for Context, Language, Explicit Instructions, _____, and Result.

2. Without specifying _____, the AI will decide for itself how long or structured the output should be.

3. The default voice of most AI tools is somewhere between formal and _____, which is often wrong for casual or personal tasks.

Short Answer

Answer each question in 2-4 complete sentences.

1. Choose two elements of the CLEAR framework and explain why each one prevents a specific type of AI output problem.

2. The reading compares giving explicit instructions to giving a contractor blueprints instead of saying 'build me something nice.' What does this comparison reveal about how AI actually works?

3. Why does knowing your intended audience before you prompt the AI matter more than it might seem? Give a specific example to support your explanation.