

# Prompt Template Formatting Guide

## 1. Why Use Prompt Templates?

- **Consistency:** Reduces errors and output drift across tasks, users, or sessions.
- **Reusability:** Quickly adapt for new tasks or teams.
- **Maintainability:** Easy versioning, sharing, and peer review.
- **Clarity:** Makes intentions and constraints explicit for both LLM and humans.

## 2. Core Template Structure

```
[HEADER / TITLE]
# Short description or title of prompt

[SYSTEM ROLE / INSTRUCTIONS]
System: {persona/role/voice statement}

[CONTEXT / BACKGROUND]
{context}

[USER TASK / INSTRUCTION]
User: {task_instruction}

[EXAMPLES]
# (Optional, for few-shot/fine control)

[CONSTRAINTS / REQUIREMENTS]
# e.g., "Limit output to 150 words. Use Markdown. Reply as a pirate."

[OUTPUT FORMAT / SCHEMA]
# Define explicit output structure (e.g., JSON, bullet list, table)

[DELIMITERS / FENCES]
# Use ``` or """ to clearly enclose large context, code, or expected output
```

## 3. Formatting Conventions Style

- **Block Labels:** Use ALL CAPS or [brackets] for section headers.
- **Placeholders:** {curly\_braces} for variables; use descriptive names.
- **Comments:** # for inline notes; for block annotations.
- **Delimiters:** Enclose multi-line content in triple quotes (" " " or ```).
- **Indentation:** 2–4 spaces for nested JSON/YAML structures.

## 4. Best Practices

- **Modular Blocks:** Isolate context, instruction, and output.
- **Block Size:** Aim for <100 tokens per block.
- **Explicit Constraints:** Use bullet lists for tone, length, format.
- **Avoid Ambiguity:** Clearly define expected output.
- **Versioning:** Tag templates with version or date.

## 5. Common Blocks Schemas

| Block         | Example                                 |
|---------------|---|
| [TITLE]       | Summarize Academic Article              |
| [SYSTEM]      | System: You are a scientific assistant. |
| [CONTEXT]     | ""Article excerpt...""                  |
| [USER TASK]   | User: Write a 3-sentence summary.       |
| [EXAMPLES]    | (Input-output pairs)                    |
| [CONSTRAINTS] | - Markdown list                         |

- 80 words max |

|                 |                      |
|-----------------|----------------------|
| [OUTPUT FORMAT] | {"summary":"<text>"} |
|-----------------|----------------------|

## 6. Annotated Full Example

```
[TEMPLATE_TITLE]
Summarize Legal Text (v1.2, 2025-07-08)

[SYSTEM]
System: You are a legal expert summarizing statutes.

[CONTEXT]
""
This law governs AI sales in the EU...
""

[USER TASK]
User: Provide a plain-English summary.

[EXAMPLES]
User: "Right to be forgotten..."
Assistant: "Allows data erasure requests."

[CONSTRAINTS]
- Max 60 words
- 8th-grade level
- No direct quotes

[OUTPUT FORMAT]
Return only the summary.
```

## 7. Anti-Patterns Fixes

| Problem             | Example                | Fix                              |
|---------------------|------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Ambiguous roles     | "Answer as expert."    | Specify role in [SYSTEM] block   |
| Unlabeled blocks    | No clear sections      | Use [CONTEXT], [USER TASK], etc. |
| Vague placeholders  | `{input}`              | Use `{article_excerpt}`          |
| Missing constraints | No format/length given | Add [CONSTRAINTS] block          |

## 8. Design Checklist

- ☐ Blocks labeled and separated
- ☐ Descriptive placeholders
- ☐ Explicit instructions & constraints
- ☐ Version/comment included
- ☐ Delimiters for long data
- ☐ Examples for nontrivial tasks
- ☐ Automation-compatible structure