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