

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>"}
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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