A Guide to Writing Prompts for Microsoft Copilot

The quality of the response you get from Copilot is directly related to the quality of your prompt. A well-crafted prompt gives Copilot the information it needs to provide a useful, tailored, and accurate response. Think of it as a conversation with a smart assistant; the more details you provide, the better it can help you.

Key Components of a Great Prompt

A great prompt is composed of four key elements. The more of these you include, the more precise Copilot's response will be.

1. Goal: What is the primary task you want Copilot to accomplish?

- Be clear and specific about the outcome you're looking for.

- **Example:** Instead of "Write a blog post," try "Write a 500-word blog post about the benefits of remote work."

2. Context: Why are you asking for this information?

- Provide background details that help Copilot understand the bigger picture.

- **Example:** "This blog post is for an internal company newsletter for employees who are currently transitioning to a hybrid work model."

3. Expectations: What format, tone, and style do you want the response to have?

- Define the specific requirements for the output.

- **Example:** "The tone should be encouraging and professional. It should be structured with an introduction, three main points, and a concluding paragraph."

4. Source: Are there any specific documents, files, or data that Copilot should use?

- Direct Copilot to the resources it needs to reference.

- **Example:** "Please reference the attached PDF, 'Hybrid Work Policy 2024,' to ensure the information is accurate and aligns with company policy."

Putting It All Together: An Example

Bad Prompt: "Write about our new product."

- This is too vague and will likely result in a generic, unhelpful response.

Good Prompt: "I need marketing copy for a social media post promoting our new modular training product. The target audience is young professionals who work in a hybrid environment. Use a friendly and slightly humorous tone. The post should be no more than 200 words and should highlight its customization features and mobile-friendly interface. Please reference the product specs in the design document to get the correct technical details."

Tips for Getting the Best Results

- **Be Specific:** Vague prompts lead to vague answers. Use precise language, dates, quantities, and criteria.

- **Break Down Complex Tasks:** For complicated requests, use a series of prompts. Start with a broad goal, then follow up with more specific questions to refine the response.

- **Iterate and Refine:** The first response may not be perfect. Use follow-up prompts to edit, expand, or adjust Copilot's output. For example, "Make the last paragraph more concise," or "Rewrite this in a more formal tone."

- **Use Positive Instructions:** Tell Copilot what "to do" rather than what "not to do." For example, instead of "Do not mention the price," say "Focus only on the product's features."

- **Keep the Conversation Relevant:** If you're switching to a new topic, start a new chat. This prevents Copilot from getting confused by previous, unrelated context.