PART ONE

ASK BETTER, GET BETTER

A beginner's guide to Claude

Work, study & everyday life in India



100 practical prompts for India

CHANDAN SHARMA

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About the author



Chandan Sharma

Chandan Sharma brings 18 years of professional experience to this book. He works in digital and AI thought leadership and advises organisations on reputation management, helping them understand what new tools can do, what they cannot, and what happens to trust when the difference is ignored.

He is also a writer. Chandan is the author of poetry, novels and self-help books in Hindi and English, and that habit of writing for real readers shapes how he explains technology: plainly, with a little humour, and without the hype.

Ask Better, Get Better brings those two lives together. It is written for anyone who suspects AI could help them, and would like a patient friend to show them how.

“Throughout the book, Claude drafts. You decide.”

Before you begin

Every few months, somebody announces that AI has changed everything.

Then you open the app, type a question, and get an answer that is either surprisingly useful or confidently wrong. Sometimes both, in the same paragraph.

This book lives in the gap between the announcement and the app.

It is written for people who are new to AI and slightly suspicious of it, which is a healthy place to start. You do not need to know anything about coding, machine learning or “prompt engineering”. You need a phone or a computer, an internet connection and a few real tasks you would like help with.

By the end, you should be able to use Claude to write and revise everyday material, understand documents, learn something new, do research without trusting everything, organise your work, support a small business, build a tiny browser tool, and design a simple automation that keeps a human in charge.

That last phrase matters. Throughout the book, Claude drafts. You decide.

How the boxes work

You will meet a few recurring boxes. They are there so you always know what kind of thing you are reading.

Illustrative scenario

A fictional situation with fictional people, used to teach one idea.

- **Sunita Rawat**, 56, secretary of the Gulmohar Residency housing society in Noida. Handles 120 families and one very active WhatsApp group.
- **Vikram Joshi**, 38, who runs Bright Minds, a small tuition centre in Jaipur.

Your first 15 minutes

If you only have a quarter of an hour today, do this:

- **Minutes 0–5.** Open claude.ai in a browser or install the Claude app, and sign up for the free plan (Chapter 2 walks you through it).
- **Minutes 5–10.** Pick one real, low-stakes task: a message you have been avoiding, a letter you do not fully understand, or a decision you keep postponing. Use Reusable prompt P01 from Chapter 2.
- **Minutes 10–15.** Read the answer critically, then send *one* specific follow-up ("shorter", "warmer", "explain point 2 with an example"). Check the facts yourself before you use it.

That is the whole method in miniature. The rest of the book makes it reliable.

How to read this book

Chapters 1 to 3 are the foundation. Read them in order.

After that, jump to whatever you need. Students may want Chapter 5 next; shop owners, Chapter 9; the curious, Chapter 11. Each chapter ends with an exercise. Do at least one, because reading about prompts is like reading about swimming.

The Toolkit at the back collects every reusable prompt, the checklists, sample solutions, and a seven-day practice plan.

CHAPTER 03

Ask better, get better

Here is an uncomfortable truth.

Most “bad AI answers” are good answers to bad questions.

That sounds harsh, so let me soften it. They are good answers to *incomplete* questions. When you ask a colleague for help, they already know your company, your boss, your deadline and the fact that the client hates long emails. Claude knows none of that. Apart from anything its memory feature has picked up from earlier chats (see Chapter 2), it works with what is on the screen.

This chapter is about putting the right things on the screen. It is also, conveniently, the advice Anthropic gives in its own help pages: plan the conversation, be specific, and put the background information up front.[13]

Illustrative scenario

Imagine Meera Iyer, an HR executive at a mid-sized logistics company in Pune. Her manager asks for “a quick note to staff about the new attendance policy”. Meera types exactly that into Claude:

Write a note about the new attendance policy.

Claude produces three smooth paragraphs. They mention “flexible hybrid arrangements”, “core hours” and “our commitment to work–life balance”.

None of this exists at her company.

The actual policy is simple: biometric check-in by 9:45 am, three late marks a month allowed, and a half-day deduction after that. Claude did not invent those details out of mischief. It filled the gaps with the most typical attendance policy it could imagine. Meera gave it a topic. She did not give it the policy.

The fix is not a magic phrase. It is a habit.

The six-part framework

When a task matters, think about six things before you type. You will rarely need all six. A two-line question about the meaning of a word needs none of this. A message going to 300 employees needs most of it.

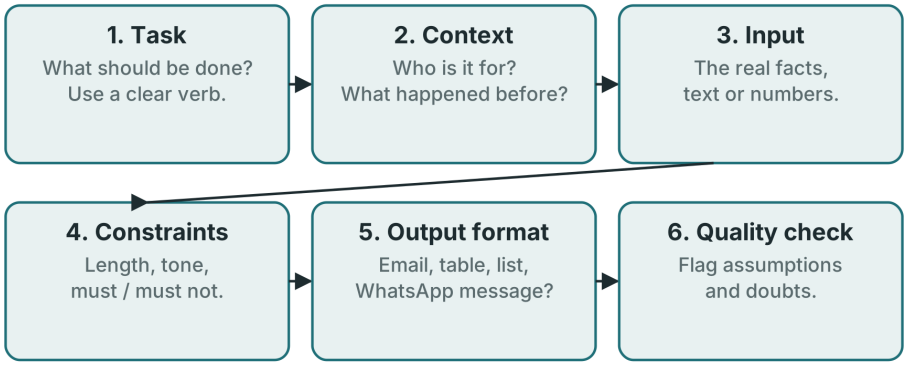


Figure 3. The six-part framework. Use only the parts your task needs.

1. Task. What do you want done? Use a clear verb: *draft, summarise, compare, explain, list, rewrite, check*. “Help me with the attendance thing” is a mood. “Draft a staff notice” is a task.

2. Context. Who is this for, and why does it exist? Who will read it, what do they already know, what happened before? Context is the part beginners skip most often, because it lives in their head and feels obvious.

3. Input. The actual material. The policy text, the customer’s complaint, your rough notes, the numbers. If Claude has to guess the facts, it will guess, and its guesses will sound very confident.

4. Constraints. The rules. Length, tone, language, what to avoid, what must be included, deadlines, budget. “Under 150 words. No jargon. Do not mention salary deductions in the first line.”

5. Output format. What shape should the answer take? An email with a subject line, a table with three columns, five bullet points, a WhatsApp message, a script you can read aloud.

6. Quality check. How will you judge it? Ask Claude to flag its assumptions, list anything it was unsure about, or check its own draft against your rules before it hands it over.

Read that list again and you will notice something. None of it is about AI. It is exactly what a good manager puts in a good brief. If you have ever received a terrible brief from a client (and who hasn't), you already understand why this matters.

The same request, done properly

Let us rebuild Meera's request.

Objective: a staff notice about the attendance policy that is accurate, clear and does not create panic.

What Meera needs to have ready: the policy points, the start date, who to contact with questions.

The weak prompt:

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Write a note about the new attendance policy.
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Why it fails: no facts, no audience, no tone, no length. Claude is forced to invent all four.

Office work and communication

Turn a busy workday into clearer messages, better preparation and decisions people can follow.

I001 · A clear email to your manager

Draft an email to my manager about [issue]. Context: [what happened, impact and action needed]. My recommendation is [proposal], supported by [facts]. Keep it under 150 words in plain Indian business English. Put the request in the first two sentences, add a useful subject line, and separate confirmed facts from open questions. Do not invent approvals, deadlines or commitments.

Before you use it: Check the facts and whether the request is clear enough to answer.

I002 · Follow up without sounding desperate

Write three follow-up messages for [recipient] about [request sent on date]. We have this relationship: [context]. I need [next step] by [date, if real]. Give me a gentle email, a firmer email and a WhatsApp version under 45 words. Avoid guilt, threats and 'just checking in'. Use only the dates and commitments I supply.

Before you use it: Choose a tone that fits the relationship; confirm the deadline.