

01 · INTENT

What is this for?

The outcome and the audience — not the task, the point of it.

02 · INPUTS

What must it know?

The data, context, and examples. Paste it or point to it.

03 · CONSTRAINTS

What is good?

Format, tone, facts that must hold, lines it must not cross.

04 · PROCESS

How should it work?

The steps to take, and where to stop and check with you.

05 · THE VERDICT

How will you judge it — and own it?

The test the output has to pass before your name goes on it. This field stays human.

TEMPLATE · NO. 04

The Direction Brief

Direct, don't do. A one-page brief for putting a machine on real work — so you own the outcome instead of rescuing a draft.

USE	PAGES	INCLUDES
Per task	8	2 blank briefs

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THE PRINCIPLE

Most bad AI output is a briefing problem.

A machine cannot read your intent. It reads your words. The gap between what you meant and what you typed is exactly the gap between the output you wanted and the one you got.

“Prompting” frames the skill as wording — a clever sentence that unlocks a good answer. That is the wrong model. The skill is **briefing**: knowing what you want, supplying what the work needs, and stating how you will judge it. A good brief makes a mediocre prompt unnecessary.

Direct, don't do.

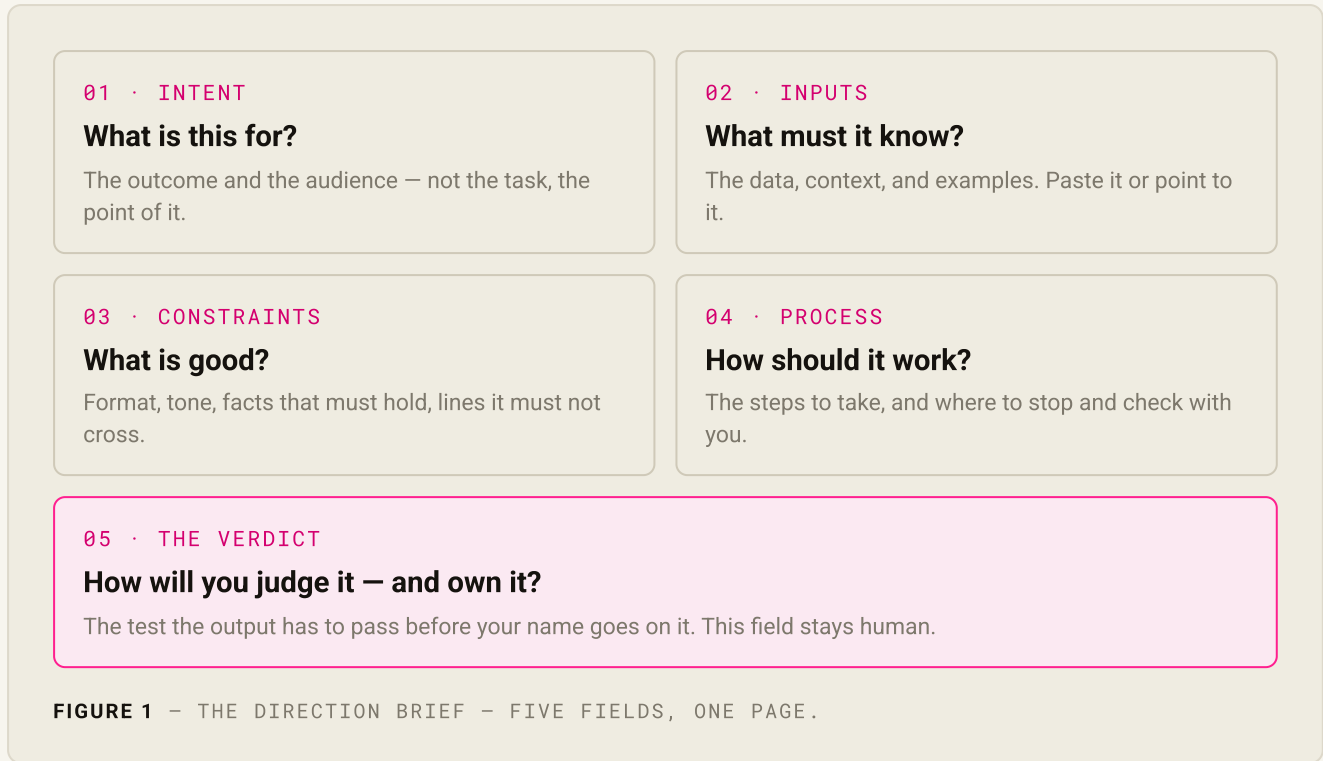
THE WHOLE PEDAGOGY IN THREE WORDS

THE THIRTY-SECOND RULE

If a task is worth more than thirty seconds of the machine's time, it is worth thirty seconds of your briefing. The brief almost always saves more than it costs.

THE FRAME

Five fields. Fill them before you prompt.



Each field answers a question the machine cannot answer for you. The first four point the work; the fifth keeps you accountable for it. Skip the fifth and you have a draft you have to rescue. Keep it, and you have an outcome you can own.

WORKED EXAMPLE

A good brief, in full.

DIRECTION BRIEF

RE-ENGAGEMENT EMAIL

Intent. Win back trial users who signed up but never returned. Audience: busy ops managers who forgot we exist. One outcome – a reply or a re-login.

Inputs. The three features they never tried; two customer quotes; our plain, direct brand voice; the last email that worked (attached).

Constraints. Under 120 words. No hype, no exclamation marks. One clear call to action. Must not imply they did anything wrong.

Process. Draft three angles – time-saved, peer-proof, curiosity. Show all three before writing a final.

The verdict. I ship it only if I would open it myself, and if a stranger could tell what to do in five seconds.

WHAT MADE IT GOOD

Notice how little is about wording. The brief supplies *judgment* – the audience, the voice, the bar – and the machine handles the prose. That division is the entire point.

TEMPLATE · PRINT ME

The Direction Brief.

INTENT – WHAT IS THIS FOR, AND FOR WHOM?

01

The outcome and the audience. The point of the task, not the task.

INPUTS – WHAT MUST IT KNOW?

02

Data, context, examples, source material.

CONSTRAINTS – WHAT IS GOOD, AND WHAT MUST IT AVOID?

03

Format, length, tone, facts that must hold, lines not to cross.

PROCESS – HOW SHOULD IT WORK THE PROBLEM?

04

The steps, and where to stop and check with you.

THE VERDICT – HOW WILL I JUDGE IT, AND OWN IT?

05

The test it must pass before my name goes on it.

TEMPLATE · A SPARE

The Direction Brief.

INTENT – WHAT IS THIS FOR, AND FOR WHOM? 01

INPUTS – WHAT MUST IT KNOW? 02

CONSTRAINTS – WHAT IS GOOD, AND WHAT MUST IT AVOID? 03

PROCESS – HOW SHOULD IT WORK THE PROBLEM? 04

THE VERDICT – HOW WILL I JUDGE IT, AND OWN IT? 05

TROUBLESHOOTING

Why briefs go wrong.

When the output still misses, it is almost always one of these. Check the brief before you blame the model.

- **No intent.** You named the task but not its purpose. The machine optimised for the wrong thing, perfectly.
- **Starved of data.** You asked for judgment the machine had no inputs to make. Feed it, or do that part yourself.
- **Soft constraints.** “Make it good” is not a constraint. Good by what measure, in what format, avoiding what?
- **No verdict.** You accepted the first draft because you never decided what would make you reject it.

NEXT IN THE LIBRARY

Find the work worth briefing with **The P/HX Audit**. Both are free at blankcollar.university/resources.