

How to Brief AI Like a Strategist

Clear briefs. Better decisions. A cheat sheet for leaders who want sharper outputs without becoming prompt hobbyists.

01 THE IDEA

AI does not need clever wording.

It needs a clear brief:

Outcome · Audience · Constraints

... And what “good” looks like.

02 BEFORE YOU TYPE ANYTHING

Answer P · A · S · T

P · Purpose

The job you want done. Not the subject. The output. “AI in customer service” is a topic. “A yes/no decision on piloting an AI support assistant this quarter” is a purpose.

A · Audience

Who this is for.
The person who will read it, use it, or kill it.
Name them.
Write for that person, not for “everyone.”

S · Scope

What to cover. What to leave out. What facts the model may use.
Without scope, the model fills the gaps with guesses.

T · Tone

Tone is how it should sound when your audience reads it.
Formal or blunt. Short or detailed. British English.

IF YOU CANNOT DEFINE PAST, YOU ARE STILL CLARIFYING THE WORK.
DO NOT BRIEF THE MODEL YET.

03

THE BRIEFING TEMPLATE

Copy and reuse

Fill every bracket. If a line is blank, the brief is incomplete.

Role:

Act as a [specific expert] advising [who].

Objective:

Produce [exact deliverable] so that [named person] can [decision or action].

Context:

- Organisation / situation: [...]
- What we already know: [...]
- What must not be assumed: [...]

Constraints:

- Include: [...]
- Exclude: [...]
- Length / format: [...]
- Tone: [...]
- Language: British English

Definition of done:

- Must contain: [...]
- Must avoid: [...]
- Success looks like: [...]

Sources / inputs (if any):

- [paste facts, notes, or write: use only what I provide]

USE YOUR INPUT FROM 'PAST' TO FEED THIS TEMPLATE.

PURPOSE → OBJECTIVE. AUDIENCE → ROLE / WHO.

SCOPE → CONSTRAINTS. TONE → TONE.

What changes the quality

1

Name the decision

Weak: Tell me about AI for customer service.

Strong: Recommend whether we pilot an AI assistant for Tier-1 support this quarter. Yes/no, plus three risks.

2

Force structure

Ask for headings, a table, or a fixed outline.

Vague asks produce essay sludge.

3

Separate inventing from analysing

Paste the facts. Say: Use only the information below. If something is missing, list questions. **Do not invent** numbers.

4

Demand options, not one answer

Give three options with trade-offs, then your recommendation.

5

Add a review pass

After the first draft: Challenge this as a sceptical CFO.
What is weak, missing, or overclaimed?

A prompt pattern is a **reusable brief** for a recurring job.

Same structure every time. Swap the brackets. **Do not reinvent** the ask.

Strategy memo (When you need a decision on one page.)

“Draft a one-page memo for [audience]. Situation, complication, question, recommendation, risks, next step. Max 400 words.”

Process redesign (When you need to see where AI helps, and where humans stay accountable.)

“Map the current workflow for [process] in steps. Mark where judgement is required. Propose where AI assists vs where a human must remain accountable.”

Risk scan (When you need failure modes before you commit.)

“List failure modes for [use case]. For each: likelihood (H/M/L), impact (H/M/L), early warning, owner role.”

Meeting prep (When you need to walk in sharp, not with a wall of notes.)

“I have a 30-minute meeting with [role] about [topic]. Give: 5 questions I should ask, 3 traps to avoid, 1 crisp opening line.”

Output quality check (When a draft looks polished BUT you don't trust it yet.)

“Score the draft below 1–5 on clarity, evidence, actionability, and risk honesty. Then rewrite only what fails.”

*Pick the pattern that matches the job. Fill the brackets using PAST.

Your briefing is broken if...

- ✗ You ask for “ideas” with no decision attached
- ✗ You accept the first polished answer without a challenge pass
- ✗ The model invents metrics and you keep them
- ✗ Nobody is named as the human accountable for the result
- ✗ The output could belong to any company in any industry

PRACTISE THIS WEEK

Use the sheet on real work for five days. Small reps beat one perfect prompt.

1

Fix one bad ask

Open your last vague ChatGPT /Claude prompt. Rewrite it using PAST before you send anything new.

2

Brief a real memo

Pick a real piece of work. Fill the briefing template. Paste your real facts into Sources. Generate the draft.

3

Stress-test the draft

On that same draft, ask: “Challenge this as a sceptical CFO. What is weak, missing, or overclaimed?” Fix what it finds.

4

Save a reusable brief

Take 1 task you do often. Save a filled template you can reuse next time (same Role, Objective, Constraints; swap only the new facts).

5

Pressure-test with a person

Send that template to one colleague. Ask: “What is unclear?” Edit those lines.

Use it. Then tell me where it failed.

This sheet is a starting brief, not a finished one.

It gets useful the moment you run it against real work.

1. Where did the brief break on a real task?
2. Which upgrade helped most: decision, structure, evidence, options, or the challenge pass?
3. Where did you have to improvise?

Email

hello@phrenosai.com

Subject: Brief AI feedback

Your reply does not get filed. It gets read, argued with, and ends up in the next brief.

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