

1 AI A DAY · @JJWONG.AI

The Three Prompt Shapes

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Three shapes, written out in full. The words in [brackets] are the slots you fill. Everything else stays as it is — each line is there for a reason, and the reasons are underneath each one.

Before you use them: save them somewhere you'll actually reach

A prompt you have to go looking for is a prompt you won't use. Put all three in a pinned note, or set them up as text shortcuts on your phone, so typing ;decide expands into the whole of Shape 1. The point of shapes over a prompt library is that you use them daily. Make daily easy.

Shape 1— Decide for me

For any "which one should I pick" question. Replaces the ten tabs of listicles.

I need to decide: [the decision, in one line]

My situation:

- Budget: [amount, and whether it's monthly or one-off]
- Who does the work: [me alone / a team of X / a freelancer]
- Already tried or ruled out: [anything, and why]
- Deadline: [when this has to be working]

Options I'm considering: [A], [B], [C]. Add one if I'm missing an obvious one.

For each option: the main reason someone in my situation would pick it, the deal-breaker that would rule it out for me specifically, and what it costs in time as well as money.

Then pick one. Say which you'd choose and why, in three sentences. If the right answer depends on something I haven't told you, ask me that one question instead of hedging.

LINE	WHAT IT PREVENTS
"My situation" block	A generic answer written for nobody in particular
"Already tried or ruled out"	Being recommended the thing you already know doesn't work
"The deal-breaker for me specifically"	A features list instead of a judgement
"Costs in time as well as money"	Picking the cheap tool that eats your weekends
"Then pick one"	"It depends" — which is true, and useless
"Ask me that one question"	Paragraphs of hedging when one fact would settle it

Shape 2 — Teach me at my level

For learning anything new without wading through material written for somebody else.

Explain [topic] to me.

What I already know: [e.g. I run a Shopee store, I live in spreadsheets, I've never written code].

What I'm trying to do with it: [the actual goal — not "understand it"].

How I learn best: [e.g. one concrete example before any theory].

Start with the one idea that matters most for my goal. Skip history and background. Use an example from [my industry]. End with the single next thing I should try — small enough to do today.

If you use a term I might not know, define it in the same sentence.

LINE	WHAT IT PREVENTS
"What I already know"	Being taught what you know, or skipping what you don't
"What I'm trying to do with it"	A textbook chapter when you needed one practical idea
"Skip history and background"	Three paragraphs before anything useful
"An example from my industry"	Examples about restaurants when you sell earbuds
"The single next thing, small enough for today"	Learning that never turns into doing

Shape 3 — Check my thinking

The one I use most. For any plan, decision or argument before you commit to it.

Here's my reasoning:

[paste the plan, decision or argument — the whole thing]

1. Steelman it: what's the strongest version of this argument?
2. Now argue against it as hard as you can. Assume I'm wrong and work out why.
3. Sort your objections into ones I should act on and ones that are only theoretical.
4. Name the single assumption that, if it's false, sinks the whole thing.

Don't be agreeable. I'd rather hear it from you than from the market.

LINE	WHAT IT PREVENTS
Steelman first	Attacking a weaker version of your plan than the one you have
"Argue as hard as you can"	Gentle, useless "you might consider..." feedback
Act-on vs theoretical	A list of forty worries with no priority
"The assumption that sinks it"	Missing the one thing worth testing before you spend money
"Don't be agreeable"	The default. Models lean towards telling you you're right

That last line is the one almost everyone leaves out, and it changes the output more than anything else in the prompt.

Worked example — Shape 1, filled in

This is the scheduling-tool question from the carousel, done properly:

I need to decide: which tool to schedule my Instagram and Threads posts with.

My situation:

- Budget: under RM150 a month
- Who does the work: me alone, about 30 minutes a week
- Already tried or ruled out: posting manually — I keep missing days
- Deadline: posting starts in two weeks

Options I'm considering: Meta Business Suite, Blotato, Later. Add one if I'm missing an obvious one.

For each option: the main reason someone in my situation would pick it, the deal-breaker that would rule it out for me specifically, and what it costs in time as well as money.

Then pick one. Say which you'd choose and why, in three sentences. If the right answer depends on something I haven't told you, ask me that one question instead of hedging.

What a good answer looks like: three short verdicts, each with a real deal-breaker, then a single pick with a reason tied to *your* constraints — or one clarifying question. If you get a feature comparison table and "it depends on your needs", the prompt didn't land. Push back and ask it to pick.

One warning on this example: prices and features change constantly. Anything the answer says about current pricing, check on the vendor's own site before you act on it. That's where these models are most confident and least current.

The one thing to remember

The quality of the answer is capped by how much of your situation you put in. If you wouldn't brief a paid consultant in one line, don't brief the model in one line either.

Questions? Reply to this email — I read them all. More at @jjwong.ai — one AI play for SEA sellers, daily.