

The Jonesi Consultancy | Houston, TX

AI LITERACY · EVERYDAY USE HANDOUT

FORMAT CONTROL CHEAT SHEET



Tell AI How You Want It. Get Exactly What You Need.

Most disappointing AI output is not a quality problem. It is a format problem.

Most disappointing AI output is not a quality problem. It is a format problem. Name the shape you want and the same model produces something you can use immediately.

1 Table

WHAT TO ASK FOR

- › "Create a table comparing the features, pros, and cons of options A, B, and C."
- › "Put this in a four column table with headers: Task, Owner, Deadline, Status."

BEST USED FOR

Comparisons, data summaries, feature analysis, project tracking

2 Checklist

WHAT TO ASK FOR

- › "Create a checklist of steps for onboarding a new employee."
- › "List the campaign tasks I can check off."

BEST USED FOR

Task management, repeatable processes, procedures, preparation

3 Outline

WHAT TO ASK FOR

- › "Create an outline for a blog post on time management."
- › "Outline a sales presentation with key points and subpoints."

BEST USED FOR

Planning, content creation, presentation structure, ideation

4 Report

WHAT TO ASK FOR

- › "Write a short market analysis of the electric vehicle industry."
- › "Create a quarterly business review with insights and recommendations."

BEST USED FOR

Business analysis, research, executive summaries, recommendations

5 Spreadsheet

WHAT TO ASK FOR

- › "Provide this data in CSV format."
- › "Create a spreadsheet with columns for Product, Price, Units Sold, and Revenue."

BEST USED FOR

Data analysis, importing into Excel or Sheets, financial modeling

6 Summary

WHAT TO ASK FOR

- › "Summarize this article in five key takeaways."
- › "Give me a three sentence executive summary."

BEST USED FOR

Quick understanding, executive briefings, key insights

7 Presentation

WHAT TO ASK FOR

- › "Create a six slide outline on cybersecurity best practices."
- › "Provide slide titles, bullets, and speaker notes."

BEST USED FOR

Presentations, training sessions, webinars, sales decks

8 Structured Data

WHAT TO ASK FOR

- › "Return the result in JSON with fields: name, role, email, department."
- › "Give me the output in YAML."

BEST USED FOR

Applications, automation, integrations, data pipelines

9 Phrases That Work

Steal These

POWERFUL PHRASING

- › "Format the output as a..."
- › "Provide the result in..."
- › "Return as a table with these columns..."
- › "Organize the information into..."
- › "List the steps as a checklist..."

FORMAT CONTROL TIPS

- › Be specific about the format before you send.
- › Name the column headers, sections, or fields you expect.
- › Specify length and level of detail.
- › Ask for an example if the shape is unusual.
- › If it comes back wrong, say what to change rather than starting over.

GREAT PROMPT PLUS CLEAR FORMAT EQUALS BETTER RESULTS

The tighter you control the format, the easier the output is to use, share, and act on. Say the shape out loud. The model cannot guess your template.

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