

The Jonesi Consultancy | Houston, TX

AI LITERACY · EVERYDAY USE HANDOUT

PROMPT TROUBLESHOOTING GUIDE



Diagnose The Problem. Apply The Fix. Get Better Results.

Name the symptom and add the one missing ingredient.

1 Find Your Symptom

When AI output disappoints, the instinct is to try a different tool. Usually the faster move is to name the symptom and add the one missing ingredient. Find your symptom below.

SYMPTOM	LIKELY CAUSE	HOW TO FIX IT	WHAT TO ADD
TOO VAGUE	Not enough context, unclear goal, or a request that is too broad.	Add background and specifics. State the exact goal. Narrow the scope to one deliverable.	Context and detail
OFF TARGET	Unclear instructions or missing constraints.	Clarify what to include and what to leave out. Use stronger action verbs. Add explicit constraints.	Clear goal and limits
TOO BASIC	No direction on depth, audience, or expertise level.	Specify the audience. Ask for expert level depth. Request reasoning or worked examples.	Audience and depth
MISSING PIECES	Key information was never provided or requested.	List the must-have elements. Ask for a checklist or outline first. Break the task into parts.	Must-haves and structure
HARD TO FOLLOW	No format specified, or too much crammed into one answer.	Request a specific format. Ask for headings, bullets, or numbering. Limit the length or focus.	Format and structure
OUTDATED OR WRONG	Training cutoff, unstated assumptions, or no verification step.	Ask for sources and citations. Specify the timeframe. Verify important facts independently.	Sources and dates
WRONG TONE	No guidance on voice, style, or brand.	Specify the tone: friendly, professional, persuasive. Share brand voice notes or a sample.	Tone and style

2 Diagnostic Flow

Not Sure Where To Start

STEP 1

NAME IT

Which symptom matches?



STEP 2

FIND THE CAUSE

Check the matching cause



STEP 3

APPLY THE FIX

Add or adjust one element



STEP 4

TEST AGAIN

Re-run and compare

3 Five Quick Fixes

- 1 Add context. Who, what, where, why, and any background.
- 2 Be specific. Precise words, defined goal, named deliverable.
- 3 Add constraints. Limits, rules, and what to leave out.
- 4 Choose the format. Tell it how the answer should be structured.
- 5 Iterate. Say what to change rather than starting over.

4 Prompt Quality Checklist

- ☐ Is the objective clear?
- ☐ Did I provide enough context?
- ☐ Is the audience defined?
- ☐ Did I set constraints?
- ☐ Did I include an example where it would help?
- ☐ Did I specify the output format?
- ☐ Did I ask for sources where accuracy matters?

GREAT PROMPTS ARE BUILT, NOT GUESSED

Diagnose, refine, succeed. Most bad output is one missing ingredient away from being useful. Change one thing at a time so you learn what actually moved the result.

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