Prompt Literacy

Category: Artificial Intelligence in Education

Prompt literacy is the capacity to communicate purposefully with generative AI while understanding how instructions, context, examples and constraints shape a response. It also includes recognising that a well-formed prompt cannot guarantee truth, fairness or suitability because the underlying model remains probabilistic and limited.

It is broader than learning a collection of prompt formulas. A prompt-literate person can plan an interaction, interpret the response critically, refine it for a defined purpose and explain why independent verification is still necessary (White et al., 2023).

Core Capabilities

1. **Purpose:** State the task, intended audience and the form of assistance required.
2. **Context:** Supply relevant information while excluding personal, confidential or restricted data.
3. **Criteria:** Specify scope, format, standards and boundaries for an acceptable response.
4. **Dialogue:** Ask follow-up questions, compare alternatives and revise the prompt in light of results.
5. **Evaluation:** Check evidence, reasoning, bias and fitness for purpose outside the AI conversation.

Examples in Practice

A student seeking practice for an oral examination can provide the module outcomes, ask for one question at a time and request feedback against published criteria. The student should exclude private material, challenge weak explanations and confirm substantive claims in course sources.

Why It Matters

Prompt literacy helps learners move from casual commands to deliberate, transparent interaction. It is nevertheless a component of generative AI literacy, not a substitute for subject knowledge, source evaluation, ethical judgement or responsibility for the resulting work. Different systems, tasks and disciplinary purposes may also require different prompting strategies across academic and professional contexts (Miao et al., 2024).

Further Reading

6. White, J., et al. (2023). A prompt pattern catalog to enhance prompt engineering with ChatGPT. arXiv.
7. Mollick, E. R., & Mollick, L. (2023). Assigning AI: Seven approaches for students, with prompts. Wharton School Research Paper.
8. Miao, F., Shiohira, K., & Lao, N. (2024). AI competency framework for students. UNESCO.

Related Terms: Prompt Engineering for Education | Generative AI Literacy | Information Literacy | Metacognition