

Cheat Sheet: Few-shot vs. Role Prompting

- ⚡ Few-shot = Provide examples → AI copies style & structure
- ⚡ Role Prompting = Assign a role or persona → AI adopts perspective & attitude

Why this matters

Few-shot and role prompting are often confused: both guide the AI, but at a different level.

- **Few-shot** = **mimic a pattern** (form, tone, structure).
- **Role prompting** = **put on a lens** (context, attitude, viewpoint).

What is Few-shot and what is Role Prompting?

- **Few-shot prompting** (*in-context learning*): Giving examples inside the prompt so the AI follows the pattern.
- **Role prompting** (*persona prompting*): Assigning a role or persona that shapes tone and perspective.

Working out each technique

Few-shot Prompting

- **Definition:** The AI learns within the prompt from a few examples and imitates style or structure.
- **Strength:** Consistency in tone, genre or format.
- **Example prompt + answer:**

Prompt:

- Example 1: Haiku about coffee: *Dark morning sky / the first sip warms me inside / daylight unfolds slow.*

- Example 2: Haiku about tea: *Steam curls at the glass / silence in a porcelain cup / breathing slows gently.*

Now: write a haiku about wine.

Answer: *Deep ruby red glass / stories flowing through the night / evening slows its pace.*



Role Prompting

- **Definition:** Asking the AI to respond from a role or persona.
- **Strength:** Directs perspective, tone and attitude.
- **Example prompt + answer:**
Prompt: “Explain Pythagoras as a stand-up comedian.”
Answer: “You know what’s funny? Every triangle’s got a secret. Two short sides whisper together: ‘psst, we make the long side!’”

Comparison Table

Aspect	Few-shot Prompting	Role Prompting
Structure	Mimic examples	Adopt persona and context
Process	Observe → copy pattern	Think and speak from role
Flexibility	Strong for form & style (also tone indirectly)	Strong for tone & perspective
Application	Genres, formats, writing style	Education, advice, creative scenarios
Error handling	Can replicate faulty patterns	May take role too literally / exaggerate
Risk if confused	Mistaking role = example	Mistaking example = role

✓ Handy rules of thumb

- Use **Few-shot** to guide **form and style**.
- Use **Role prompting** to guide **tone and perspective**.
- Combine both for stronger results (e.g. role = “journalist” + 2 sample articles).

Try this

Ask the AI:

1. “Write a LinkedIn post about AI using 2 example posts as a guide.” (Few-shot)
2. “Write the same post as if you are a sceptical journalist.” (Role Prompting)
3. Combine: “As a journalist, write a post in the style of the examples.”

👉 Compare how style (few-shot) and tone (role) complement or clash.

Learn & apply yourself

“Few-shot steers **what** the AI writes; Role prompting steers **how** the AI says it.”

👉 Test both separately and together, and note the difference.

Discover more

Cheat Sheet: [Shot Prompting – guide AI with examples \(PDF\)](#)

Cheat Sheet: [Give AI a Role \(PDF\)](#)

More cheat sheets on prompting: symbio6.nl/en/sheets