

Cheat Sheet: Refine and avoid pitfalls

Iterative refinement = repeat the same prompt while **adjusting one element of START** at a time. This way your prompt gets sharper step by step.

Why it matters

A first prompt is often too vague or too general. By following a **cycle** – *question* → *answer* → *adjust* → *repeat* – you quickly see how much difference one small tweak makes.

👉 Difference from [Step-by-step prompting](#): there you split a task into parts. With **refinement** you keep the same task, but make it sharper each round.

START in focus

S – Situation → background and context

T – Task → what should AI do

A – Attention points → audience, tone & style

R – Role → from which perspective does AI respond

T – Type of output → in what form should the answer come

👉 In refinement you pick **one element of START** and adjust only that.

Cyclical process

1. **Question** – ask a base prompt.
2. **Answer** – review: what is missing or unclear?
3. **Adjust** – change one element (length, audience, tone...).
4. **Repeat** – ask the same task again with the tweak.

Common beginner mistakes

❌ Mistake	✅ Refined version
Too vague: “Tell me about climate.”	“In 100 words, explain the 3 main human causes of climate change.”
Changing everything at once	Always change just one element → otherwise you can’t see what made the difference.

Example: Refining a travel plan

- Begin: *“Plan a trip.”*
- Refined: *“Plan a 5-day trip to Paris for two people, focused on budget-friendly attractions.”*
- Even better: *“Give a detailed 5-day itinerary for Paris, including budget accommodation, must-see sights with ticket prices, and daily meal suggestions under €30.”*

👉 Same task, made more concrete by refining **Situation** and **Type of output**.

✅ Checklist

- **Cycle** – question → answer → adjust → repeat
- **Focus** – change only one element at a time
- **Compare** – place versions side by side
- **Save** – note your best prompt

Try this: Dream job ad

Write a short job ad and refine it in two steps.

👉 Hint: play with audience and style (e.g. serious → playful → fairy-tale).

🎲 Also try

- *“Write a recipe in 10 steps → in 8 steps → in 5 steps.”*
- *“Explain AI in 6 sentences → in 3 sentences → in 1 sentence.”*

Learn & apply

“A good cheat sheet is not a copy, but your own version. The most valuable learning comes from making one yourself!”

👉 **Tip:** Write a first version of your cheat sheet and ask yourself: *Can this be clearer? Shorter? More specific? Then adjust just one thing at a time.*

Discover more

🎧 Podcast – Episode 3: [Think Like a Chef – Crafting the Perfect Prompt](#)

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