

Better Prompts vs. Shortcut Prompts

AI Literacy Starter Kit | Student Activity | Students

Purpose: AI can help you learn, but only if you use it the right way. In this activity, you will compare prompts that avoid thinking with prompts that support learning.

Standards summary: This resource may support Tennessee Computer Science Foundations standards when used as part of AI literacy, computer science, programming, digital ethics, or cybersecurity instruction. Detailed standards connection appears at the end of this document.

Grade Level	8-12
Estimated Time	30-45 minutes
Purpose	Students learn to rewrite shortcut-style AI prompts into learning-focused prompts.

Student Directions

AI can help you learn, but only if you use it the right way. In this activity, you will compare prompts that avoid thinking with prompts that support learning.

Part 1: Sort the Prompts

Mark each prompt as L = Learning Support, S = Shortcut, or U = Unsure.

Prompt	L / S / U	Why?
Write my essay about social media and teenagers.		
Help me brainstorm three possible arguments about social media and teenagers.		
Solve this math problem and give me only the answer.		
Explain the first step in this problem and give me a similar one to try.		
Rewrite my paragraph so it sounds more professional, but keep my meaning and voice.		
Do my Python assignment for me.		
Explain what this Python error means and what I should check first.		
Summarize this chapter so I do not have to read it.		

Prompt	L / S / U	Why?
Give me three questions I should answer while reading this chapter.		

Part 2: Rewrite the Prompt

Shortcut Prompt	Write my history paragraph about the American Revolution.
Better Prompt	Help me understand the causes of the American Revolution and organize my own ideas into an outline.

Shortcut prompt 1: _____

Better learning prompt 1: _____

Shortcut prompt 2: _____

Better learning prompt 2: _____

Shortcut prompt 3: _____

Better learning prompt 3: _____

Part 3: Reflection

Did the prompt help me learn?

Did the prompt keep me responsible for the work?

Would I be able to explain the result?

What should I verify?

Would my teacher consider this acceptable?

Detailed Tennessee Standards Connection

This activity directly supports standards when students evaluate AI use, revise prompts, verify outputs, and explain why a prompt supports or weakens learning.

Standards source: Tennessee Department of Education, Computer Science Foundations (C10H11), May 2023. Confirm final alignment against local district pacing, approved course placement, and teacher directions.

This resource may support the following Tennessee standards when used as part of AI literacy, digital ethics, computer science, or cybersecurity instruction:

- CSF 13.1 - Social, Legal, and Ethical Issues: Students identify responsibilities related to ethical technology use, academic integrity, copyright, privacy, and appropriate AI use.
- CSF 8.1 - Emerging Technologies: Students examine how emerging technologies influence society, school, work, and future readiness, using evidence and reflection.
- CSF 9.2 - Troubleshooting Process: Students use a structured process to identify a need, test or improve a response, verify the result, and document what they learned.

Cautious guidance: Alignment depends on local district pacing, approved course placement, teacher directions, and how the resource is used as part of instruction.