

# The RTF+C Method Template

---

## Transform Vague Prompts into Precise, Effective Instructions

---

---

### What is the RTF+C Method?

The RTF+C Method is a framework for writing effective AI prompts that get you better, more useful responses. By providing your role, the task, format expectations, and relevant context, you help the AI understand exactly what you need.

---

## The Four Components

---

### R - Role

#### Define who you are in this interaction

Tell the AI who you are and what you're working on. This helps it tailor the response to your level and needs.

#### Example:

“I'm a HCC student in Biology 101 working on a lab report about photosynthesis.”

#### Your Turn:

I'm a \_\_\_\_\_ student in

\_\_\_\_\_ working on

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

---

## T - Task

### State what you need the AI to do

Be clear about what you want to achieve. Are you brainstorming, understanding a concept, or checking your work?

### Example:

*"I need help understanding the difference between the light-dependent and light-independent reactions."*

### Your Turn:

I need help with \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

My specific goal is to \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

---

## F - Format

### Specify how you want the output structured

Specify how you want the information presented: bullet points, a table, step-by-step explanation, or an analogy.

### Example:

*“Explain it using a simple analogy, then give me 3 key differences in a table format.”*

### Your Turn:

Please present the information as:

- Bullet points
- A table
- Step-by-step explanation
- An analogy
- A comparison
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

---

## C - Context

### Provide relevant background and constraints

Tell the AI what NOT to do, or any specific requirements (length, reading level, sources to avoid). Provide any background information that helps frame the task.

### Example:

*“Keep it under 200 words and use language a high school student would understand. Don’t write my conclusion for me.”*

### Your Turn:

Length limit: \_\_\_\_\_

Reading level: \_\_\_\_\_

What NOT to do: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Other requirements:** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Background information: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

---

## Practice Exercise

---

### Before RTF+C (Vague Prompt):

"Explain photosynthesis."

### After RTF+C (Detailed Prompt):

I'm a HCC student in Biology 101 working on a lab report about photosynthesis. I need help understanding the difference between the light-dependent and light-independent reactions. Explain it using a simple analogy, then give me 3 key differences in a table format. Keep it under 200 words and use language a high school student would understand. Don't write my conclusion for me.

---

# Your Practice Prompt

---

Combine all four components into one complete prompt:



A large rectangular box with a light gray border and rounded corners, containing ten horizontal lines for writing a prompt.

---

## Tips for Success

- ✓ **Be specific** - The more detail you provide, the better the response
  - ✓ **Set boundaries** - Tell the AI what you DON'T want
  - ✓ **Iterate** - If the first response isn't perfect, refine your prompt
  - ✓ **Save good prompts** - Keep a collection of prompts that work well
  - ✓ **Check your syllabus** - Make sure AI use is allowed for your assignment
-

# Common Use Cases

---

## For Research:

- **R:** “I’m researching [topic] for my [class] paper”
- **T:** “I need to find credible sources about [specific aspect]”
- **F:** “List 5 sources with brief summaries”
- **C:** “Only peer-reviewed sources from the last 5 years”

## For Writing:

- **R:** “I’m writing a [type] essay about [topic]”
- **T:** “I need help brainstorming thesis statements”
- **F:** “Give me 3 different thesis options”
- **C:** “Don’t write the essay for me, just help me get started”

## For Problem-Solving:

- **R:** “I’m stuck on a [subject] problem about [concept]”
  - **T:** “I need to understand the steps to solve it”
  - **F:** “Walk me through the process step-by-step”
  - **C:** “Don’t give me the answer, help me learn the method”
- 

# Why RTF+C Works

---

**Role** establishes context and helps the AI understand your perspective and knowledge level.

**Task** clarifies your specific goal, preventing generic or irrelevant responses.

**Format** ensures the output is structured in a way that’s useful for your needs.

**Context** provides constraints and background that guide the AI toward more accurate, appropriate responses.

Together, these four elements create prompts that are clear, specific, and effective.

---

**For more AI literacy resources, visit:**

- HCC AI Literacy Hub
  - HCC Library AI Guide: [harford.libguides.com/ai/intro](https://harford.libguides.com/ai/intro)
- 

*Created by Galen Ziegler for Harford Community College Last Updated: January 2026*