

AS-45 • AI Smart • Prompt Tennis

The Creative Refinement Arc

Great creative prompts are rarely born perfect. You start decent, then refine: add context, add a creative constraint, add tone and style.

Start Prompt Tennis

YOUR CURRENT LEVEL

0 XP

Level 1: One-Shot Writer

Start with decent prompt

Add context

Add creative constraint

Add tone/style

Compare improvement

Make your own arc

Jump to refinement arc

Lab Partner rule

AI can write a basic story from a basic prompt. But basic usually feels flat. The skill is not only asking once. The skill is **iteration** — improving the prompt step by step.

The creative arc: **Decent prompt** → **context** → **creative constraint** → **tone/style**.

1 **Start with a decent creative prompt**

This is not terrible. It just has no sharp edges yet.

Our lab example starts here: “**Write a story about a student who uses AI.**”

My story idea

Example: a student who uses AI

Context: where and what problem?

Example: in a noisy school computer lab, before a debate competition

Creative constraint

Example: the AI gives one answer that sounds helpful but makes the problem worse

Tone / style

Example: funny but tense, with short punchy sentences

DECENT STARTING PROMPT

Write a story about a student who uses AI.

Copy starting prompt

THOUGHT BULB

A decent prompt gives AI a topic. A refined prompt gives AI a situation, pressure, rules, and voice.

☐

I started with a simple creative writing prompt.

2 Walk the Refinement Arc

Each move gives the story more shape.

Start: decent creative prompt

Write a story about a student who uses AI.

Result: AI knows the topic, but the story may be generic.

Move 1: add context

Set it in a noisy school computer lab, before a debate competition.

Result: the story now has a place, moment, and pressure.

Move 2: add a creative constraint

The AI gives one answer that sounds helpful but makes the problem worse.

Result: the story gets tension. Something can go wrong.

Move 3: add tone and style

Make it funny but tense, with short punchy sentences.

Result: the story starts to sound distinct.

FULL REFINEMENT ARC PROMPT

Write a story about a student who uses AI.

Context: Set it in a noisy school computer lab, before a debate competition.

Creative constraint: the AI gives one answer that sounds helpful but makes the problem worse.

Tone/style: funny but tense, with short punchy sentences.

Keep it under 500 words. Give it a strong opening and a small ending twist.

Copy full refined prompt

☐

I added context: place, moment, and problem.

☐ I added a creative constraint that creates tension.

☐ I added tone and style so the writing has a voice.

3 **Watch the Prompt Tennis rally**

Same idea. Better prompt. Better story shape.

Your prompt shots

Shot 1: Write a story about a student who uses AI.

Shot 2: Add setting and problem.

Shot 3: Add a rule that creates tension.

Story improvement

Return 1: Basic plot.

Return 2: Clearer scene.

Return 3: More conflict.

Shot 4: Add tone and style.

Return 4: More voice.

LAB PARTNER NOTE

The point is not “let AI write everything.” The point is to learn how writers shape ideas: situation, tension, voice, then human editing.

☐ I compared how each prompt move improves the story.

4 See what each refinement adds

This is the pattern you can copy for any creative writing task.

1

Context

2

Creative constraint

3

Tone / style

Who is there? Where are they?
What is happening right now?

Without context, the story floats.

What rule, problem, secret, limit, or twist makes the story harder?

Without constraint, the story drifts.

Should it feel funny, tense, quiet, sharp, warm, spooky, simple, or poetic?

Without style, the story sounds plain.

Prompt version	What it adds	Likely result
Write a story about a student who uses AI.	Topic only	Readable, but generic.
Add context	Setting, moment, stakes	More specific and easier to picture.
Add creative constraint	Pressure, rule, problem, twist	More tension and plot movement.
Add tone/style	Voice and feel	More memorable and less flat.

CAUTION BOARD

AI gives you a draft. You still decide what stays, what changes, and what sounds like you. Use AI to explore options, then edit the final piece yourself.

5 Make your own Refinement Arc

Use this for stories, poems, scenes, comics, scripts, or captions.

For a story

Add setting, character problem, twist, and tone.

For a poem

Add mood, image rule, line limit, and sound style.

For a comic

Add number of panels, visual style, conflict, and ending beat.

For a speech

Add audience, purpose, time limit, and tone.

REUSABLE CREATIVE PROMPT TEMPLATE

Create [creative format] about [idea].

Context: [where/when/who/problem]

Creative constraint: [rule, limit, twist, or pressure]

Tone/style: [how it should feel and sound]

Keep it [length]. After the draft, suggest 3 things I could edit to make it more mine.

Copy reusable template

☐ I made my own creative refinement arc.

6 **Optional: make your Prompt Tennis card**

A small reminder of the creative arc.

CARD COPY

Title: Prompt Tennis

Move: The Refinement Arc for creative writing.

Start: A decent creative prompt.

Arc: Add context → add creative constraint → add tone/style.

Closer: Iteration is where skill lives.

☐ I made, sketched, or saved the Prompt Tennis card.

Final 5-minute move

Take one creative prompt you would normally ask AI. Improve it with one context line, one creative constraint, and one tone/style line.

My refined creative prompt

Example: Write a story about... Context:... Creative constraint:... Tone/style:...

☐ I added context, not just topic.

☐ I added a creative constraint that creates tension or shape.

☐ I added tone/style and will edit the final draft myself.

NOTEBOOK LINE

Write this down: “**Better creative prompts are built in rounds.**”

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