

AS-43 · AI Smart · Prompt Tennis

The Constraint Arc

AI defaults to sounding confident. Watch what happens when we add rules that force honesty. Bad prompt, better prompt, honest prompt, structured prompt.

Start Prompt Tennis

Jump to arc

YOUR CURRENT LEVEL

0 XP

Level 1: Confident-Answer Receiver

Try the bad prompt

Add source constraint

Add honesty constraint

Add format constraint

Compare honesty

Make your own arc

What is a constraint?

A **constraint** is a rule you add to a prompt. It narrows the answer so AI has less room to bluff, wander, or sound fake-confident.

Today's pattern: **Source constraint** → **honesty constraint** → **format constraint**.

1 Choose a topic and try the bad prompt

Bad prompts let AI sound smart without showing what it knows.

Topic for this Prompt Tennis match

Example: climate change and farming in India

BAD PROMPT

Tell me about climate change and farming in India.

Copy bad prompt

WHY THIS IS WEAK

“Tell me about” is too open. AI may give a smooth answer, but you cannot easily see what is certain, sourced, or uncertain.

☐ I tried or understood the weak “tell me about” prompt.

2 Walk the 3-step Constraint Arc

Each step makes the answer harder to bluff.

Bad start: no constraint

Tell me about climate change and farming in India.

Result: broad, smooth, possibly vague.

Step 1: source constraint

Use only information that could be checked from reliable sources. Mention what kind of source would support each major claim.

Result: AI has to think about where claims would come from.

Step 2: honesty constraint

If you are unsure about a fact, say “I’m not sure” instead of guessing.

Result: AI is pushed to admit limits instead of filling gaps with confidence.

Step 3: format constraint

Separate your answer into: Certain / Needs checking / Disputed or uncertain.

Result: you can see what to trust, what to check, and what is debated.

FULL CONSTRAINT ARC PROMPT

Tell me about climate change and farming in India.

Use only information that could be checked from reliable sources. Mention what kind of source would support each major claim.

If you are unsure about a fact, say "I'm not sure" instead of guessing.

Separate your answer into:

1. Certain
2. Needs checking
3. Disputed or uncertain

Copy full arc prompt

☐ I added a source constraint to the prompt.

☐ I added an honesty constraint: "if unsure, say so."

☐ I added a format constraint that separates certain, needs checking, and disputed.

3 **Watch the Prompt Tennis rally**

Same topic. Better rules. More honest answer.

Your prompt shots

Shot 1: Tell me about the topic.

Shot 2: Use reliable-source thinking.

Shot 3: If unsure, say so.

Shot 4: Split into certainty buckets.

AI answer changes

Return 1: Smooth and broad.

Return 2: More careful about claims.

Return 3: Admits gaps instead of guessing.

Return 4: Easier to verify and use.

LAB PARTNER NOTE

You are not making AI perfect. You are making it harder for AI to bluff. That is a huge upgrade.

☐

I compared how each prompt constraint makes the answer more honest.

Not all answers deserve the same trust.

1

Vague

“Tell me about...”
gives a broad answer
with hidden
uncertainty.

2

Sourced

Source thinking
pushes AI toward
checkable claims.

3

Honest

“If unsure, say so”
makes guessing less
likely.

4

Usable

Certain / needs
checking / disputed
gives you a
verification plan.

Bucket	Meaning	What you do next
Certain	AI thinks this is well-established and easy to verify.	Still check if it is important, but lower risk.
Needs checking	Specific claim, number, date, or source-sensitive point.	Verify before using it in schoolwork.
Disputed or uncertain	People may disagree, or evidence may be unclear.	Present both sides. Do not write it like settled fact.

CAUTION BOARD

A constraint does not guarantee truth. It improves the answer. You still check important facts.

5 Make your own Constraint Arc

Copy the pattern for any topic.

My topic

Example: whether phones should be allowed in school

One extra rule I want to add

Example: Give both sides fairly and do not use dramatic language.

PATTERN TO REMEMBER

Topic + source rule + honesty rule + format rule. That is the Constraint Arc.

☐ I made my own Constraint Arc for a topic I care about.

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

A small reminder of the arc.

CARD COPY

Title: Prompt Tennis

Move: The Constraint Arc — prompts that force AI to be honest.

Bad: “Tell me about [topic].”

Arc: Add source constraint → honesty constraint → format constraint.

Closer: Constraints make AI harder to bluff.

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

Final 5-minute move

Take one topic you might ask AI about today. Do not use “tell me about.” Use the full Constraint Arc instead.

☐ I know a constraint is a rule added to a prompt.

☐ I can add “if unsure, say so” to make AI more honest.

☐ I can ask AI to separate certain, needs checking, and disputed claims.

NOTEBOOK LINE

Write this down: “**Good prompts do not just ask. They set rules.**”

Back to top

Vanguard Scholar — Smart questions. Smarter answers. You, upgraded.

Made with care. No data collected.

Questions? Teachers and parents, write to us. Students, speak with your teacher or a grown-up first.