



AI CODING

Quick reference

# AI Coding Prompt Guide

Learn how to use AI effectively for coding objectives, when to start in plan mode versus a focused chat, and how to use Git and GitHub prompts to finish the work cleanly.

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## An AI prompting formula

Before you write your prompt, choose the right mode. Then use this formula to give the AI what it needs. You do not need perfect wording, just enough context for the AI to understand the outcome and the finish line.

### CHOOSE YOUR MODE FIRST

Choose your mode first. Use plan mode for bigger work with open questions. Use a focused chat for scoped changes in one area.

### Context + outcome + restrictions + done criteria

- Context: the page, file, workflow, or product area involved
- Outcome: what you want changed or built
- Restrictions: tone, layout, guardrails, or things not to break
- Done criteria: how you will know the work is complete (e.g., tests pass, page looks right, summarize what changed)

### 1 PLAN MODE

```
We are launching a new project management tool for small teams and need a marketing landing page to drive free trial signups. The page will live on our existing website. Keep the design modern and clean, consistent with our current brand, and do not change any other pages. Start in plan mode and create a PRD before making any changes. Before you begin, ask me any questions that would improve the plan. When done, give me a plan I can review and list any decisions you need me to make before work begins.
```

### 2 FOCUSED CHAT

```
Update the contact page so the form sends an email confirmation on submit. The form is in the contact section of our marketing website. Keep the existing layout and button style, and do not change any other pages. Make the change now. When done, act as a user and validate the change works as expected. Keep updating until you are confident it will function correctly, then let me know what you did.
```

## 1 Plan mode

### USE FIRST FOR PROJECTS AND LARGER CHANGES

Ask the AI to create a **Product Requirements Document (PRD)** before it edits so you can review scope, tradeoffs, and implementation steps.

#### USE THIS WHEN

- New projects or major changes
- Redesigns or unclear requirements
- Multi-file work with dependencies

#### WHAT TO ASK FOR

- A PRD or implementation plan
- Tradeoffs and missing decisions
- Acceptance criteria, testing, and rollout steps

**Best practice:** Use for new projects or big changes.

#### WHAT TO EXPECT

You should get a PRD, open questions, and a clearer implementation path before code changes begin.

#### WHY THIS WORKS

Planning mode reduces rework, surfaces hidden decisions early, and keeps bigger efforts from turning into messy chats.

#### WHEN NOT TO USE IT

Do not use plan mode for a one-line copy tweak, a small app fix, or normal day-to-day commit and sync work.

## 2 Focused chat

### USE FOR DAY-TO-DAY WORK AND FOCUSED CHANGES

Keep the chat scoped to one page, feature, or product area. Related tweaks can share a session — just avoid mixing unrelated areas.

#### USE THIS WHEN

- Website or app updates in one area
- Bug fixes or wording changes
- Commit, sync, or verify tasks

#### WHAT TO ASK FOR

- The exact change you want
- Any constraints that matter
- A commit, GitHub sync, or build verification if needed

**Best practice:** Use for focused changes in one area.

#### WHAT TO EXPECT

You should get a focused implementation, a short summary of what changed, and any requested verification at the end.

#### WHY THIS WORKS

Focused chats reduce context drift, speed up execution, and make it easier to review whether the change is correct.

#### WHEN NOT TO USE IT

Do not use a focused chat for new projects, redesigns, or work with many moving parts.

## Copy-ready prompts

### New project or bigger change

Enable plan mode first, then use this prompt to kick off planning before any implementation begins.

```
We are starting a new project. Review the current design and create a Product Requirements Document (PRD) before making changes.
```

```
Include goals, audience, key screens or user flows, design considerations, technical changes, dependencies, testing, rollout steps, and any missing decisions I should approve first.
```

### Small app or website change

Use this for focused changes scoped to one page or product area.

```
Update this page so it does X. Keep the existing design approach, make only the necessary changes, and when you finish summarize what changed and flag anything that might affect other parts of the site.
```

```
If anything is unclear, ask only the questions needed to complete this one task.
```

### Commit locally

Use this when you want to save your work but are not ready to push to production.

```
Commit all changes locally with a clear commit message describing what was done. Do not sync or push to GitHub. This work is not ready for production yet.
```

### Commit and confirm

Use this after a change is ready to save your work and verify nothing broke.

```
Commit your changes, sync them to GitHub, and track GitHub Actions building my website to ensure there are no errors. When complete, provide me with the URL.
```

```
If anything fails, explain the error clearly and fix it before reporting back.
```

## Before you hit send

A good AI coding prompt does not need to be long. It just needs the right starting mode, enough context, and a clear finish line.

- ✓ Did I choose the right mode: plan mode or focused chat?
- ✓ Did I describe the outcome: what I want changed or built?
- ✓ For small work, did I keep this to one focused task?
- ✓ Did I include the context: the page, file, or workflow involved?
- ✓ Did I include any restrictions: tone, layout, or things not to break?
- ✓ Do I want a commit, GitHub sync, or build verification at the end?