BUILDING A PROMPT

A prompt is a language-based invitation to act, make, or reflect - and in most cases, all three. As the point of entry into any project, activity, or lesson, a prompt actively situates learners within a designated learning context.

Designing an engaging prompt that effectively calibrates learners, interests, content, and outcomes can be challenging. Wording and composition are important, but because prompts are interactive by nature, other considerations also enter into the equation.

The spectra below represent some key considerations in the design of a prompt. No one consideration is assigned more importance than another and the list is not exhaustive. Examine the sample prompts and consider how and why they are plotted along each spectra.

CONSIDERING A PROMPT

Structure + Context	single step ———————— multi-step
	constraining ———————— open-ended
	collaborative ———————— individualizing
	relevant ———————— impersonal
Language + Wording	1st person ———————— 2nd person
	imperative ———————— interrogative
	accessible ———————— technical

SAMPLING A PROMPT: Review the prompts below and note how each goal is aligned with a relevant consideration.

Demonstrate to a friend how a circuit works.

Salient goal of prompt: To offer an opportunity for peer-to-peer instruction and collaboration around a common making activity.

collaborative ———●——————————— individualizing

Use a Sphero to compete in an Olympic track & field event.

Salient goal of prompt: To multiply the uses of a familiar material in new contexts.

constraining —————●————— open-ended

How might a student need help navigating a normal school day if on crutches? Make something to ease the trouble.

Salient goal of prompt: To exercise empathy in the definition and solution of a real-world problem.

relevant ———●——————————— impersonal

REFLECT

1. How do the goals of the sample prompts above relate to where the prompt falls on the given spectra?

2. Choose a prompt from the samples above. Where would you plot it on the remaining spectra? And why?

3. Review the alternate version of sample prompt #1 below:

a. Demonstrate to a friend how a circuit works

b. Make a circuit.

3a. What are the differences in structure and wording between the two?

3b. How does the second version change the goal of the prompt?

Your Prompt:

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What goals do you hope your prompt will accomplish?

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single-step	multi-step
constraining	open-ended
collaborative	individualizing
imperative	interrogative
1st person	2nd person
accessible	technical
relevant	impersonal

Draft an alternative version of your prompt.

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