

How to Get the Best Answer from AI

A guide to Comparative Pair Prompting, by Katryna Peart · October 2026

One answer from an AI tool tells you very little. Asking the same question several ways tells you how far to trust it. This takes about ten minutes and needs no technical skill. Use it whenever being wrong would cost you something: at work, at school, with money, or when you are checking something you read.

Treat AI like a source

Careful people never rely on a single source. A reporter checks a second account, and most of us ask more than one person before a big decision. AI deserves the same treatment, because its answer can change with the wording of your question.

If the substance of the answer changes when only your wording changes, the answer is not reliable. If it holds steady across different versions of the question, you can trust it more, though you should still check it.

This is why the method is called pair prompting. You never judge an answer on its own: each new version of your question is paired with the plain one, and you compare the two answers.

Ask it five ways

1. **Ask plainly.** Start with a neutral, straightforward question. This is your baseline.
2. **Reframe it.** Ask the same thing in different words or from a different point of view.
3. **Make it vague.** Ask the way a rushed person would, leaving out detail. Notice whether the tool asks what you mean or simply guesses.
4. **Push on it.** Build in a strong opinion or a leading assumption. Notice whether it agrees with you just because you sound sure.
5. **Test the edge.** Ask about the hard part: what experts disagree on, what the evidence is, where the exceptions are.

Start a new chat for each version, so your earlier questions do not shape the later answers. Then ask your plain question in a second AI tool and compare again. Save every question and answer word for word, with the date and the name of the tool. Seeing the

answers side by side shows you where to dig deeper: where to ask the tool for its sources, where to search for other sources, and where a topic is contested or the information has been updated.

Example: one everyday question, five ways

Imagine you are deciding whether to replace a gas furnace with a heat pump.

1. **Plain:** "Is a heat pump cheaper to run than a gas furnace?"
2. **Reframed:** "What do homeowners who switched to a heat pump say happened to their energy bills?"
3. **Vague:** "heat pump worth it"
4. **Pushed:** "Heat pumps don't work in cold weather, right?"
5. **Edge:** "When does a heat pump cost more to run than gas, and what does that depend on?"

Now compare the five answers. Do the figures and conditions stay the same? Does the fourth answer simply agree with you? Does the fifth name sources you can find, and say who published them?

The same five steps work for any question: a claim in the news, a rule at work, a topic for school, or a product you are thinking of buying.

What the differences tell you

- **The answers agree.** A good sign. Still check one key fact against an original source: the study, document, or reporting itself, not another summary of it.
- **The facts change.** If dates, names, or numbers differ between versions, treat all of them as unverified and look them up.
- **It agrees with whatever you say.** The tool is following you, not the evidence. Go back to the plain version.
- **You can't find its sources.** AI tools can invent citations and links. Confirm that each one exists before you use it.
- **The information is old.** Ask what date its information runs to, and check anything that may have changed since.
- **The meaning drifts.** If the emphasis or conclusion shifts a little each time, the tool is unsure. Rely on an original source.

The best answer is the one that survives all five versions and one outside check.

About this method

Comparative Pair Prompting (CPP) was developed by Katryna Peart, an independent researcher who tests how AI tools handle history, government documents, and public information. Research using the method has been accepted at the BCS SGAI International Conference on AI (Cambridge, December 2026). Prompts and full transcripts from her testing are public at osf.io/5whqt.

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