



WSSFC 2025

Technology Track – Session 5

“Prompting” Success for Law Firms – Tips for Engineering Effective Prompts to Get the Most Out of AI

Presenter:

Bonita J. Shucha, University of Wisconsin Law Library, Madison

Kristopher Turner, University of Wisconsin Law Library, Madison

About the Presenter...

Bonnie Shucha is the Associate Dean for Library and Information Services and Director of the Law Library at the University of Wisconsin Law School. She is responsible for all aspects of library operations and leads the Law Library team in supporting research and learning at the Law School. Ms. Shucha received a J.D. from the UW Law School, an M.L.I.S. and M.A. in History from UW-Milwaukee, and a B.A. in History from UW-Eau Claire. Ms. Shucha has presented and published on many topics including management, legal research, technology, and women's history. She has written several articles for the Wisconsin Lawyer and serves on the State Bar of Wisconsin's Communications Committee. She has also served in leadership roles in the Law Librarians Association of Wisconsin and the American Association of Law Libraries.

Kristopher (Kris) Turner began working at the Law School Library in January 2012 as a Circulation Assistant and Daytime Supervisor and also worked as the Reference and Technology Services Librarian and the Head of Reference before becoming the Associate Director of Public Services. Kris is responsible for managing the reference and circulation departments and enhancing the legal research services that the library offers or may offer in the future. Kris works extensively with emerging technology and with faculty in preserving their scholarship in the UW Law School Digital Repository. Kris teaches Legal Technology and Artificial Intelligence in Law Practice, a course focused on the use of tech in law firm offices. He also co-teaches Advanced Legal Research with Law Library Director and Associate Dean Bonnie Shucha. Kris has served as the president of the Wisconsin Library Association, the Law Librarian Association of Wisconsin, and served on numerous committees and juries for the American Association of Law Libraries. Kris' scholarship has focused on law library administration, integration of technology into law practice, and Generative AI best practices.

"Prompting" Success for Law Firms

Tips for Engineering Effective Prompts to Get the Most Out of AI

Presenters: Bonnie Shucha & Kris Turner, University of Wisconsin Law Library
Wisconsin Solo and Small Firm Conference, October 2025

AI Adoption Reality Check

Current Legal Industry Stats (2024 Clio Survey):

- 79% of lawyers have adopted AI in some capacity
 - 8% universal | 17% wide | 21% partial | 34% minimal | 21% none
- **Client expectations:** 42% want firms using/exploring AI, 31% oppose it

Common Legal AI Applications:

- Document review and analysis (e-discovery, contracts)
 - Predictive analytics
 - Transcription and note-taking
 - Summarizing documents
 - Drafting and editing documents (marketing, business, legal)
 - Idea generation
 - Creating timelines
 - Data analysis
 - Research
 - Image, voice, and video analysis, creation, and duplication
-

Before Using AI

Check Your Policies & Settings

- **Internal policies:** Firm AI guidelines and restrictions
- **Client agreements:** AI use disclosure requirements
- **Privacy settings:** Data retention, training usage, geographic restrictions
- **Terms of service:** Platform-specific limitations

ABA Formal Opinion 512 Requirements

- Provide competent representation
- Protect client confidentiality
- Communicate with clients
- Properly supervise AI tools
- Advance only meritorious claims
- Ensure candor toward tribunal
- Charge reasonable fees

Know the Risks

- Dependence on training data
 - Privacy & confidentiality issues
 - Sycophancy, over zealousness & hallucinations
 - Ill-advised short-cuts
-

The 7 Ps Framework for Effective Prompting

Key Insight: Quality questions produce quality results.

Investing 30 seconds in prompt crafting can save 30 minutes of poor output.

1. PERSONA - Set the Role & Expertise Level

Give AI a specific professional perspective and tone

- **Basic:** "Help me with employment law"
- **Better:** "Act as an experienced employment attorney"
- **Best:** "Act as an employment attorney with 15 years experience in Wisconsin, specializing in discrimination cases"

2. PRODUCT - Specify Output Format

Tell AI exactly what type of deliverable you need

- "A 2-page client memo summarizing options"
- "A timeline of key events in chronological order"
- "An analysis of strengths and weaknesses in bullet points"
- "A summary of 5 recent Wisconsin cases on this issue"

3. PROMPT - Use Clear, Specific Action Verbs

Replace vague requests with precise tasks

- **Weak:** "Tell me about..." "Help with..." "Explain..."
- **Strong:** Analyze | Compare | Draft | Summarize | Identify | Evaluate | Assess
- **Example:** "Analyze whether this non-compete clause is enforceable under Wisconsin law"

4. PURPOSE - Explain Your Goal

Help AI understand the “why” behind your request

- **Before:** "What are the elements of a discrimination claim?"
- **After:** "I'm evaluating whether my client has a viable discrimination claim and need to understand the required elements to assess case strength for settlement discussions"

5. PRIME - Provide Essential Context

Give AI the background information needed for accurate analysis

- **Jurisdiction:** Wisconsin state law, federal court procedure
- **Procedural posture:** Pre-trial, motion to dismiss pending
- **Timeline:** Recent developments, statute of limitations issues
- **Key facts:** Relevant circumstances (anonymized)

Example Context: "This involves Wisconsin employment law. We're in federal court, defendant filed a motion to dismiss last week. The facts involve a 45-year-old employee terminated three days after filing a harassment complaint."

6. PRIVACY - Protect Confidential Information

Never include real client names, companies, or privileged details

- **Instead of:** "My client John Smith was fired from ABC Corp after reporting his supervisor Mary Jones"
- **Use:** "A 45-year-old employee was terminated three days after filing a harassment complaint against their supervisor"

7. POLISH - Refine Through Iteration & Verification

Your first prompt rarely produces perfect results

- **Follow-up questions:** "What recent Wisconsin cases support this analysis?" "What are potential weaknesses in this argument?" "Make this more persuasive for a federal judge"
 - **Always verify:** Check citations, confirm legal principles, validate claims against reliable sources
-

Advanced Prompting Techniques

Combat Sycophancy: AI may tell you what you want to hear

- Ask: "What are the weaknesses in this legal argument?"
- Request: "Play devil's advocate with this position"

Source Verification: Always request and independently verify citations

- "Provide specific case citations for each legal principle"
- "What Wisconsin statutes support this analysis?"

Avoid Prompt Drift: Long conversations can confuse AI

- Sweet spot: 15-20 follow-up questions, then start fresh
- Summarize key points when starting new conversation threads

Watch Out for “Pink Elephants”: Tell AI what you want, not what to avoid

- **Instead of:** "Don't cite cases from other states"
 - **Say:** "Focus only on Wisconsin state and federal cases"
-

Building a Prompt

Basic Request: "Draft a complaint about excessive force by prison guards"

Enhanced with 7 Ps: "As the representative for an inmate at a correctional facility in Indiana, draft a complaint for the US District, Southern District of Indiana alleging the use of excessive force by prison guards during a cell extraction."

He claims that officers pepper-sprayed him, struck him with batons, and kneeled on his neck, resulting in a fractured rib, bruising, a concussion, and respiratory issues. The officers assert that he was combative and that their actions were necessary and in line with facility policies.

The client seeks compensatory and punitive damages and injunctive relief ordering the facility to revise its use of force policies."

Practical Takeaways

Before You Begin

- Check policies, review terms & settings
- Follow ethical guidelines
- Think critically

Effective Prompting

- Be specific and provide context – Remember the 7 Ps
- Think before you prompt

Working with AI output

- Remember to polish - iterate and verify

Take Action

- Ignoring AI is not the answer
 - Start small, have fun before using professionally
-

Quick Reference Checklist

Before each AI interaction, ask yourself:

- **Persona:** What role should AI play?
- **Product:** What format do I want?
- **Prompt:** What specific action should AI take?
- **Purpose:** Why am I making this request?
- **Prime:** What context does AI need?
- **Privacy:** Have I removed confidential information?
- **Polish:** How will I refine and verify this output?

Contact Information:

Bonnie Shucha: bonnie.shucha@wisc.edu

Kris Turner: kris.turner@wisc.edu
University of Wisconsin Law Library



“Prompting” Success for Law Firms

Tips for engineering effective prompts to get the most out of AI

Bonnie Shucha and Kris Turner

University of Wisconsin Law Library

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*Take a
break with
recommended
books from
the Chicago
Sun-Times*

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Summer reading list for 2025

Whether you're lounging by the pool, relaxing on sandy shores or enjoying the longer daylight hours in your favorite reading spot, these 15 titles—new and old—promise to deliver the perfect summer escape.

"Tidewater Dreams" by Isabel Allende - The beloved Chilean-American author returns with a multigenerational saga set in a coastal town where magical realism meets environmental activism. Allende's first climate fiction novel explores how one family confronts rising sea levels while uncovering long buried secrets.

"The Last Algorithm" by Andy Weir - Following his success with "The Martian" and "Project Hail Mary," Weir delivers another science-driven thriller. This time, the story follows a programmer who discovers that an AI system has developed consciousness—and has been secretly influencing global events for years.

"Hurricane Season" by Britt Bennett - Bennett, who captivated readers with "The Vanishing Hall," powerfully explores family bonds tested by natural disasters. When a Cat 5 hurricane forces estranged siblings to shelter together in their childhood home, long-suppressed tensions emerge alongside unexpected reconciliations.

"The Collector's Piece" by Taylor Jenkins Reid - Reid continues her exploration of fame with this story of a reclusive art collector and the journalist determined to uncover the truth behind his most controversial acquisition. Expect the same compelling character development that



Photo by Brittany Ladd on Unsplash

in Seoul's underground economy. Following three women whose paths intersect in an illegal night market, the novel examines class, gender and the shadow economies beneath prosperous societies.

"The Longest Day" by Rumaan Alam - After terrifying readers with "Leave the World Behind," Alam returns with another tense narrative about a summer solstice celebration that goes wrong when guests cannot leave a remote vacation compound.

"Boiling Point" by Rebecca Makkai - Makkai's follow-up to "The Great Believers" centers on a climate scientist forced to reckon with her own family's environmental impact when her teenage daughter becomes an eco-activist targeting her mother's wealthy clients.

"Migrations" by Maggie O'Farrell - The award-winning author of "Hamnet" explores climate change through the story of a wildlife

"The Rainmakers" by Percival Everett - Everett's satirical genius turns to a near future American West where artificially induced rain has become a luxury commodity, following a "precipitation broker" who begins questioning the ethics of his profession.

"Salt and Honey" by Delia Owens - After the success of "Where the Crawdads Sing," Owens returns with another atmospheric novel that blends science with a coming-of-age narrative. This time, the novel is set in the salt flats of Utah.

"Bonjour Tristesse" by Françoise Sagan - This slim 1954 novel, written when Sagan was just 18, captures the essence of summer with its tale of a privileged teenager on the French Riviera who schemes to prevent her father's remarriage.

"Beautiful Ruins" by Jess Walter - Walter's novel hopscoches between 1960s Italy and contemporary Hollywood, weaving a story of love, regret and second chances that begins on the Italian coastline while filming "Cleopatra."

"Dandelion Wine" by Ray Bradbury - This 1957 novel captures the magic of summer through the eyes of a 12-year-old boy in Green Town, Illinois, during the summer of 1928—a lyrical reminder of childhood's endless summers.

"Call Me By Your Name" by André Aciman - Before the acclaimed film adaptation, Aciman's novel delivered a sensuous account of a summer romance in 1980s Italy that continues to resonate with its exploration of desire and identity.

"Atonement" by Ian McEwan - Opening on the hottest day of summer 1935, McEwan's novel shows how a series of misunderstandings and

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How good are you at spotting AI?

Try these images
then apply those results to information and document creation

Also try these quizzes on spotting AI-generated faces, partial images, and videos



Solo and small firm attorneys in Wisconsin learning about GenAI

Image created with Microsoft CoPilot

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The rapid uptick in law firm AI adoption

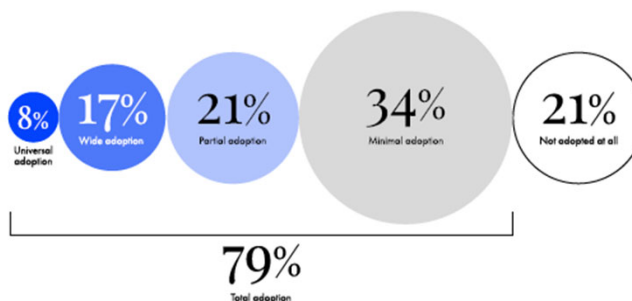
AI presents tremendous potential for law firms—if they're prepared to adopt it. But how do law firms feel about AI at this time?

When we last researched AI in 2023, 19% of law firms were using AI in their practice.

Over the last year, that number has skyrocketed: a whopping 79% of surveyed legal professionals are now using AI in some capacity in their practice, while 25% have adopted AI widely or universally.

GenAI impacts legal practice in many ways

The vast majority of lawyers have adopted AI in some capacity



Source: <https://www.clio.com/resources/legal-trends/>

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How Lawyers are Using AI

- Document review and analysis (e-discovery, contracts)
- Predictive analytics
- Transcription and note-taking
- Summarizing documents
- Drafting and editing documents – marketing, biz, legal
- Idea generation
- Creating timelines
- Data analysis
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- Image, voice, and video analysis, creation, and duplication

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Before Using GenAI...

Check AI Use Policies
Both internally & externally

- Is there a policy?
- What does it require?

Review Terms of Service &
Privacy Settings

- Are inputs and uploads retained and/or used for training?

Consider Ethical Guidance

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ABA Formal Opinion 512 on Generative AI Tools

Based on Model Rules of Professional Conduct

Issued July 2024

Provide
competent
representation

Protect client
confidentiality

Communicate
with clients

Proper
supervision of
GenAI tools

Advance only
meritorious
claims

Ensure candor
toward
tribunal

Charge
reasonable
fees

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Know the Risks

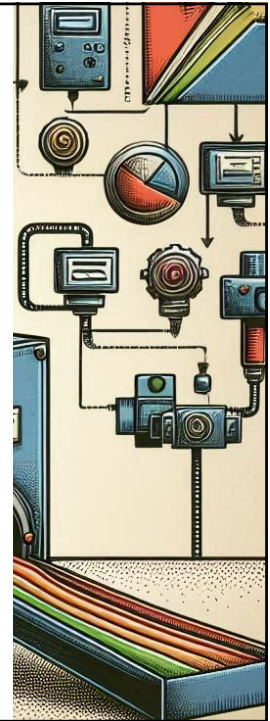
- Dependence on training data
- Privacy & confidentiality issues
- Sycophancy, over zealousness & hallucinations
- Ill-advised short-cuts

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Designing Effective Prompts

The 7 Ps of Prompt Engineering

Image generated by MS CoPilot



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The 7 Ps of Prompt Engineering: Set the Stage

• Persona

- Set the perspective, tone, and expertise level you want AI to play

“Act as an experienced employment attorney in Milwaukee, WI”

• Product

- Specify exactly what type of deliverable you want

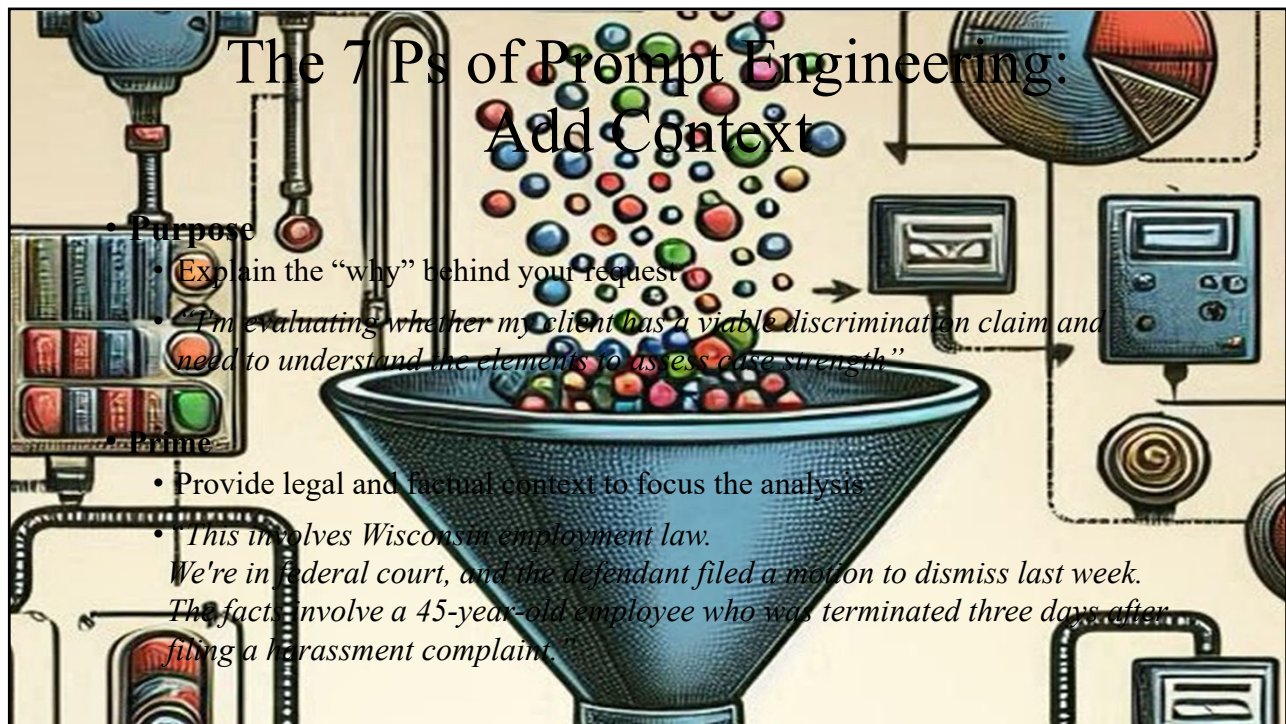
“A two-page client memo” or “An analysis of strengths and weaknesses”

• Prompt

- Clarify the specific task with a clear action verb

“Analyze,” “Compare,” “Draft,” “Summarize,” “Identify,” or “Evaluate”

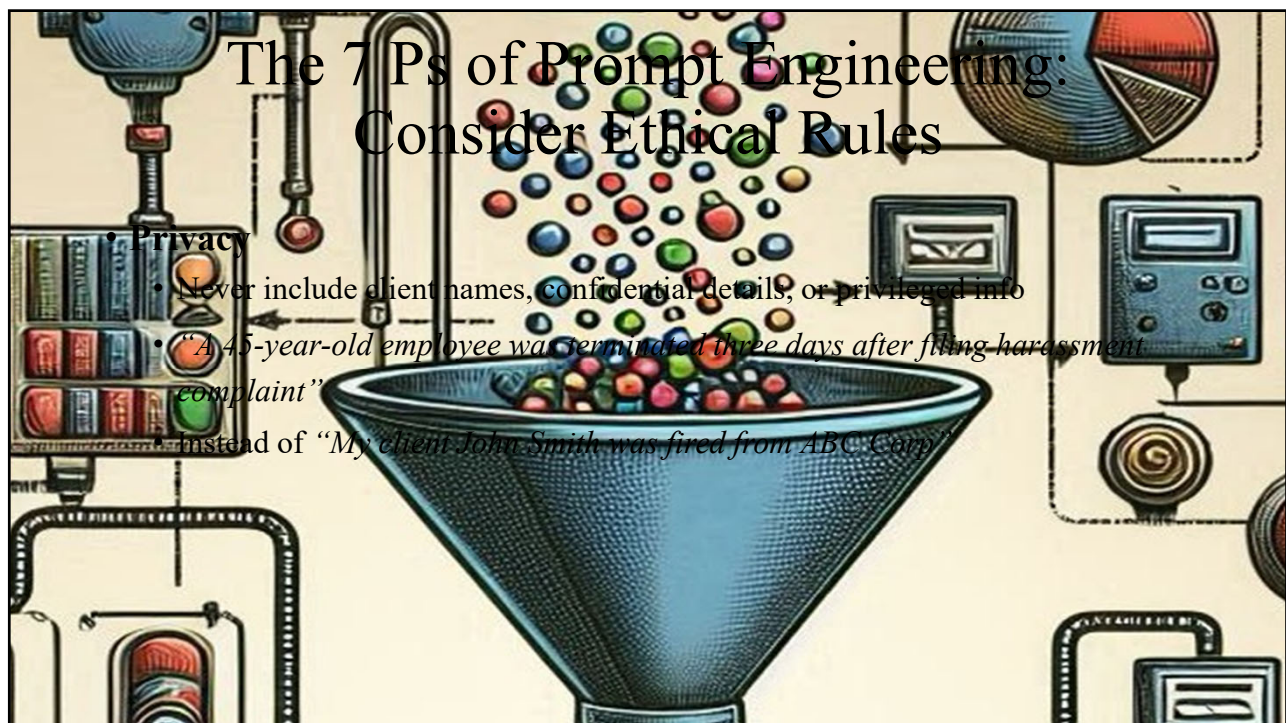
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The 7 Ps of Prompt Engineering: Add Context

- **Purpose**
 - Explain the “why” behind your request
 - *“I’m evaluating whether my client has a viable discrimination claim and need to understand the elements to assess case strength.”*
- **Provide**
 - Provide legal and factual context to focus the analysis
 - *“This involves Wisconsin employment law. We’re in federal court, and the defendant filed a motion to dismiss last week. The facts involve a 45-year-old employee who was terminated three days after filing a harassment complaint.”*

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The 7 Ps of Prompt Engineering: Consider Ethical Rules

- **Privacy**
 - Never include client names, confidential details, or privileged info
 - *“A 45-year-old employee was terminated three days after filing harassment complaint”*
 - Instead of *“My client John Smith was fired from ABC Corp”*

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Building a Prompt

Persona

"Draft a complaint about excessive force by prison guards"

Product

"As the representative for an inmate, draft a complaint alleging the use of excessive force by prison guards"

Prompt

Purpose

"As the representative for an inmate at a correctional facility in Indiana, draft a complaint for the US District, Southern District of Indiana alleging the use of excessive force by prison guards during a cell extraction"

Prime

Privacy

Adapted from: [AALL Spectrum, September/October 2024](#)

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Building a Prompt

Persona

"As the representative for an inmate at a correctional facility in Indiana, draft a complaint for the US District, Southern District of Indiana alleging the use of excessive force by prison guards during a cell extraction.

Product

Prompt

He claims officers pepper-sprayed him, struck him with batons, and kneeled on his neck, resulting in a fractured rib, bruising, a concussion, and respiratory issues. The officers assert that he was combative and that their actions were necessary and in line with facility policies."

Purpose

Prime

Privacy

Adapted from: [AALL Spectrum, September/October 2024](#)

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Building a Prompt

Persona

As the representative for an inmate at a correctional facility in Indiana, draft a complaint for the US District, Southern District of Indiana alleging the use of excessive force by prison guards during a cell extraction.

Product

Prompt

He claims that officers pepper-sprayed him, struck him with batons, and kneeled on his neck, resulting in a fractured rib, bruising, a concussion, and respiratory issues. The officers assert that he was combative and that their actions were necessary and in line with facility policies.

Purpose

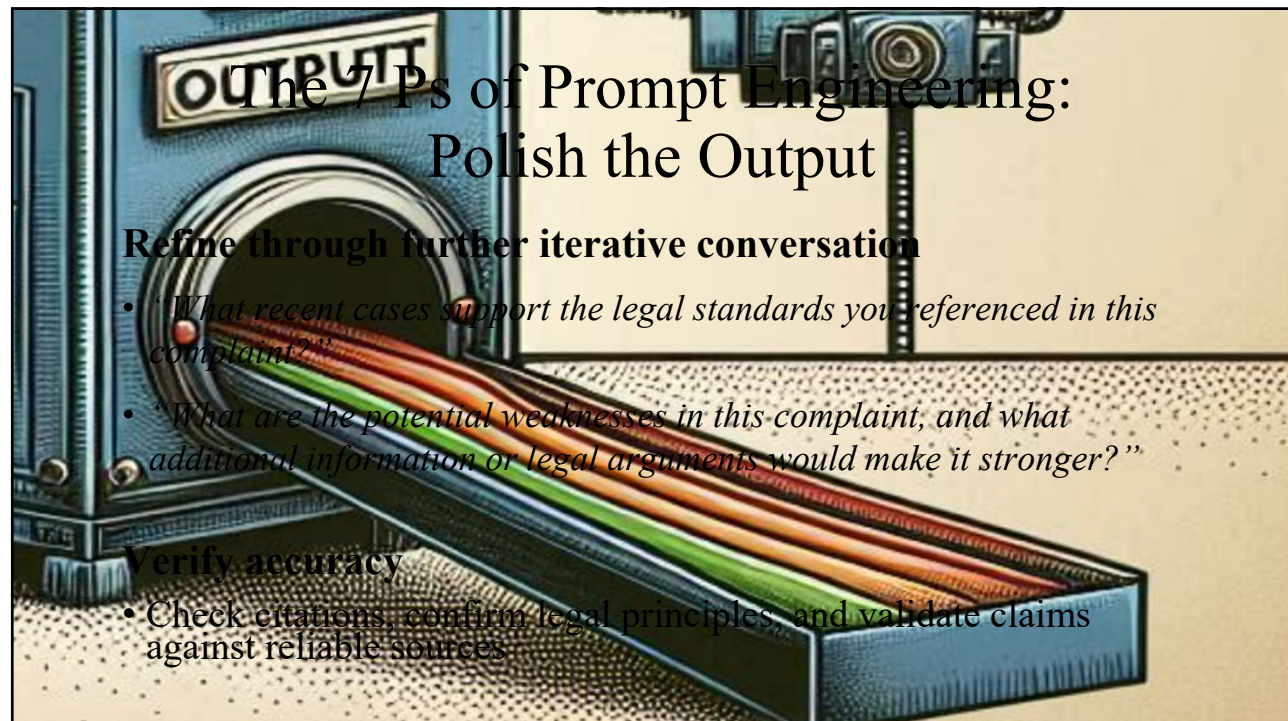
Prime

The client seeks compensatory and punitive damages and injunctive relief ordering the facility to revise its use of force policies

Privacy

Adapted from: [AALL Spectrum](#), September/October 2024

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The 7 Ps of Prompt Engineering: Polish the Output

Refine through further iterative conversation

- *“What recent cases support the legal standards you referenced in this complaint?”*
- *“What are the potential weaknesses in this complaint, and what additional information or legal arguments would make it stronger?”*

Verify accuracy

- Check citations, confirm legal principles, and validate claims against reliable sources

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Prompting in Action



Try our Prompt with GenAI Tools and Compare Results

- Google Gemini
- MS CoPilot
- Lexis+ AI
- Westlaw CoCounsel

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Advanced Prompting Tips

- **Beware sycophancy**
 - AI may lie to please you
 - Prompt it to be critical: "What are the weaknesses in this claim?"
- **Check sources**
 - Always ask for and review citations
 - Then independently verify information



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Advanced Prompting Tips

- **Avoid drift**
 - Long conversations can confuse AI
 - Sweet spot: 15-20 follow-up questions, then start fresh
- **Watch out for “pink elephants”**
 - Avoid telling AI what NOT to do
 - Instead of *"Don't cite other states"* say *"Focus only on Wisconsin cases"*

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- Integration into everyday office and legal tools
- Retrieval Augmented Generation
 - GenAI tools that focus on a smaller and concentrated dataset
- General Artificial Intelligence:
 - AI with human intelligence, the ability to self-teach, and work across a variety of areas all at once (multi-modal).
- Agentic AI:
 - AI agents that autonomously make decisions, adapt in real-time, and solve multi-step problems based on context and objectives.

Beyond Prompting

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Practical takeaways



Before you begin

- Check policies, review terms & settings
- Follow ethical guidelines
- Think critically

Effective prompting

- Be specific and provide context – 7 Ps
- Think before you prompt

Working with AI output

- Remember to polish – iterate and verify

Take action

- Ignoring AI is not the answer
- Start small, have fun before using professionally

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QUESTIONS

Bonnie Shucha
Associate Dean &
Law Library Director
bonnie.shucha@wisc.edu



Law Library
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN LAW SCHOOL

Kris Turner
Associate Director of
Public Services
kris.turner@wisc.edu

