FREE FIELD SHEET · Nº 013
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KEYWORD
OPUS

CLAUDE OPUS 5.5 PROMPT REWRITE KIT

Before/after rewrites and an effort-setting checklist to retest your Claude prompts today

CHECKS	DO FIRST	PARTS	COST
18	5	5	Free



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Anthropic published new prompting guidance for Claude Opus 5.5 saying that old "think carefully" style instructions and effort settings can behave differently now, and may hurt performance instead of helping. This kit gives you the exact before/after rewrites and a checklist to retest your prompts today, so your Opus 5.5 outputs stay consistent.

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TICK IT ON YOUR PHONE
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PART 1 OF 5 — 4 CHECKS

What changed

☐ 1.1

Anthropic published official prompting guidance for Claude Opus 5.5.

The guidance was released alongside the model and covers how to write prompts and set effort levels for it, according to Anthropic's own documentation as reported by Search Engine Journal.

☐ 1.2

The guidance says older prompt lines like 'think carefully' or 'take your time' may now hurt performance instead of helping.

This is a change from prior model generations, where those phrases were commonly recommended to improve reasoning quality.

☐ 1.3

Anthropic is asking developers to retest their effort settings for Opus 5.5.

Effort settings that were tuned for earlier Claude models may not carry over cleanly to Opus 5.5 and could produce inconsistent results if left unchanged.

☐ 1.4

The guidance applies to existing Claude prompts, not just new ones.

Search Engine Journal reports that prompts already in production, including chat prompts, may need review under the new guidance, not only prompts written from scratch for Opus 5.5.

PART 2 OF 5 — 3 CHECKS

Audit your existing prompts first

☐ 2.1 DO FIRST

Pull every prompt currently in production that targets Claude, including system prompts, chat prompts, and API calls.

You cannot fix what you have not listed. Put them in one sheet with columns for prompt text, effort setting, and where it lives.

WHERE `Claude › Console › Workbench (or wherever your prompts are stored, e.g. a prompts repo or CMS)`

☐ 2.2 DO FIRST

Search that list for the flagged phrases: 'think carefully', 'take your time', 'think step by step slowly', 'be thorough and careful'.

These are the exact style of instruction Anthropic's guidance singles out as potentially harmful for Opus 5.5. Flag every match for rewrite.

☐ 2.3

Note the current effort setting next to each flagged prompt.

You will need this baseline to compare before/after outputs once you retest, so you know if a change in output came from the prompt rewrite or the effort setting.

PART 3 OF 5 — 4 CHECKS

Before/after rewrites you can copy

Replace vague instructions with specific, checkable instructions.

☐ 3.1 DO FIRST

Replace 'think carefully before answering' with a specific output requirement.

Vague instructions to think carefully do not tell the model what carefully means. Replace with something the model can act on directly.

COPY THIS

```
Before: Think carefully before answering.
After: List the [3] factors that matter most for this decision, then give your recommendation in one sentence.
```

☐ 3.2

Replace 'take your time' with a defined process or checklist.

Give the model steps to follow instead of a general request for patience.

COPY THIS

```
Before: Take your time and make sure your answer is correct.
After: Check your answer against these [3] criteria: [criterion 1], [criterion 2], [criterion 3]. Revise if any criterion fails, then give the final answer.
```

☐ 3.3

Replace 'be thorough' with a required structure.

Thoroughness is subjective. A required structure forces completeness without relying on the model to interpret 'thorough.'

COPY THIS

```
Before: Be thorough in your analysis.
After: Cover these sections in order: [Summary], [Risks], [Recommendation]. Each section must have at least [2] sentences.
```

☐ 3.4

Replace 'think step by step' with numbered steps you define.

Open-ended step by step requests can cause meandering. Defining the steps yourself keeps the model on task.

COPY THIS

```
Before: Think step by step.
After: Follow these steps: 1) Identify the goal. 2) List constraints. 3) Propose one solution. 4) State one risk.
```

PART 4 OF 5 — 4 CHECKS

Retest and set effort levels

☐ 4.1 DO FIRST

Find the effort setting control for your Opus 5.5 calls.

This is where you control how much computation the model applies per response, and it needs to match your rewritten prompts.

WHERE `Claude › Console › Workbench › Model settings › Effort`

☐ 4.2

Run the same test prompt at each available effort level and compare outputs side by side.

Look for the point where output quality stops improving. That is your target setting, going higher just adds cost and latency without benefit.

COPY THIS

```
Test prompt: Summarize the following [document/customer message] in [3] sentences and flag any [risk/complaint]. [Insert content here]
```

☐ 4.3

Re-run your flagged prompts after rewriting them and compare against the old outputs.

Check for three things: is the answer still correct, is it the same length or shorter, and did it skip the vague filler language. If any of these fails, adjust the rewrite.

☐ 4.4 DO FIRST

Document the final prompt, effort setting, and date tested for each production prompt.

Anthropic's guidance may update again. A dated log lets you know quickly which prompts still need retesting next time.

COPY THIS

```
Prompt name: [name]
Effort setting: [low/medium/high]
Last tested: [date]
Rewrite applied: [yes/no]
Notes: [any output changes observed]
```

PART 5 OF 5 — 3 CHECKS

What good looks like

☐ 5.1

Prompts contain specific, checkable instructions instead of general encouragement to think or be careful.

If you removed a vague phrase and replaced it with a concrete task, checklist, or required structure, that is the correct fix.

☐ 5.2

Effort setting matches task complexity, not habit.

Simple lookups or short summaries should use lower effort settings, complex multi-step reasoning tasks should use higher ones. Test both ends of the range to confirm you are not overpaying or underperforming.

☐ 5.3

Every production prompt has a documented last-tested date after this guidance was published.

This is your proof that you retested rather than assumed the old prompts still work the same way on Opus 5.5.

WANT ME TO LOOK AT YOURS?

If you have gone through this and want a second pair of eyes, book a free call. We open the account together and look at what is actually happening. No deck, no pitch.

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SOURCES

1. https://www.searchenginejournal.com/anthropic-claude-opus-5-5-prompting-guidance/591278/