The *DREAM* cheat sheet.

Five parts of a prompt worth asking. Four checks for the answer.

01 BUILD THE PROMPT

A short brief for a capable stranger who knows nothing about you.

D — Destination

What you want to walk away with, and its shape: what it is, who it is for, how long, what format.

Could a stranger tell when the job is done?

SAY
I want to end up with…

R — Reality

Your situation: the facts, the limits, what you already tried. If there is a document, paste it.

Would a friend who has never met you have enough?

SAY
Here's my situation…

E — Example

One sample of what good looks like, or of what you don't want, and what to take from it.

Did you show it, or only describe it?

SAY
Here's the kind of thing I mean…

A — Ask

This one runs backward: the assistant questions you before it answers.

Does it know it is allowed to ask?

SAY
Before you answer, ask me…

M — Measure

How the answer will be judged, and a request to check itself: what it assumed, what it is unsure of.

How will you know the answer is good?

SAY
Before you finish, check…

02 MATCH THE DOSE TO THE STAKES

You rarely need all five. You always need the first.

D R E A M

Quick
Small asks: a subject line, a swap for buttermilk.

D **R** E A M

Personal
Anything about you. Advice that ignores your situation is for someone else.

D **R** **E** **A** **M**

Deep
Decisions, sensitive topics, anything you will act on.

03 ONE DEEP PROMPT, TAKEN APART

D I want to end up with a clear yes, no or not yet on getting a dog this spring, with the three reasons that decided it.

R We're two adults in a second-floor apartment, both out 8 to 6 three days a week, with about $150 a month to spare.

E The kind of answer I mean: "Not yet. Your Tuesdays are the problem, and here is what would fix them."

A Before you answer, ask me up to five questions, one at a time.

M Before you finish, tell me what you assumed about us and give the best case for the opposite verdict.

04 THEN WAKE THE ANSWER

Assistants can be wrong and still sound sure. Before you act on one:

W — Where is this from?
Ask for sources. Open at least one.

A — Assumptions
Ask what it assumed about you, and what was missing.

K — Kick the tires
Check the one claim your decision rests on, outside the chat.

E — Escalate or edit
Health, money, law and safety go to a qualified person.