



TIER 1 - FOUNDATIONS * V1.0 -- MAY 2026

AI AS A TUTOR

How to extract real teaching from an LLM instead of bullet-pointed summaries. The Socratic prompt pattern, the five tutor moves, and the questions that turn a chat window into a private-tutor session.



BY

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Anyone who's tried to learn something using AI and ended up with Wikipedia summaries instead of real teaching

15-20 minutes

Free. Forever.

EDITION

AUDIENCE

READ TIME

COST

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SECTION 1

The tutor everyone has, nobody uses

The tutor that costs \$80 to \$200 an hour

Hire a private tutor for a hard subject and the going rate is somewhere between \$80 and \$200 an hour. Specialized tutoring -- coding, advanced math, professional certification prep -- runs higher. People pay it because a tutor doing real teaching, the patient back-and-forth kind, is worth several hours of solo struggle.

Now look at what most people do with their \$20-a-month AI subscription. They paste a question, copy the answer, move on. That's not tutoring. That's looking up a Wikipedia summary with extra steps.

You're paying for the best private tutor in human history -- patient, infinite-time, infinite-context, available at 2 AM on a Tuesday -- and using it as a homework cheater. This module is the fix.

What you'll have by page 12

By the end of this primer:

- You'll know why "give me the answer" is a worse prompt than it feels like.
- You'll have the summarizer to teacher.
- You'll have the you're getting back.
- You'll have three worked examples -- trade-skill, business concept, software tool -- so you can see the difference in actual prompts and outputs.

Socratic p

five tutor

Plain English, no jargon, no "10x your learning" hype. Just the operating procedure that turns a chat window into a tutor.

The most patient private tutor in history is in your pocket. Most people use it like a Magic 8-Ball. The unlock isn't a better model. It's better questions.

SECTION 2

Why AI tutoring beats the alternatives

Before the tactics, the case. Why is AI uniquely good at this when Wikipedia, YouTube, and online courses already exist?

Each of those alternatives is shaped wrong for actual teaching:

- **Wikipedia** is a reference, not a teacher. It summarizes a topic at a fixed depth and stops. If you don't already know enough to ask the right follow-up, you don't get the follow-up.
- **YouTube** is one-way. The teacher set the level, the pace, and the path before you got there. If you're lost two minutes in, you're lost for the rest.
- **Online courses** are pre-recorded. Same problem as YouTube but longer. Plus they require you to schedule attention you may not have.
- **Books** are excellent and slow. The right book for the right concept can be life-changing. The wrong one can take 200 pages to teach what you needed in 5.

What an LLM tutor adds that none of these have:

- **Patient back-and-forth.** It will explain the same concept ten times, ten different ways, until it lands. It will not get frustrated.
- **Infinite customization.** It will use *your jargon* to tell it.
- **Depth on demand.** "I didn't get that. Go simpler." "I got that. Push deeper." Both work, instantly.
- **No scheduling, no judgment, no interruptions.** You can study at 2 AM in your underwear. The tutor does not care.

That combination doesn't exist anywhere else. The catch: you have to know how to use it. Which is the rest of this module.

SECTION 3

The wrong way: homework cheater mode

Why "just give me the answer" makes you weaker

The default mode for most AI users is what I'll call homework cheater mode. You have a question. You ask the model. It gives you an answer. You take the answer.

Two problems:

1. You don't actually learn anything. You got an answer to one specific question. You still don't understand the underlying concept, so the next question that depends on the same concept will hit you the same way, and you'll be back at the chat window. You're paying a tutor to deliver answers you have to keep coming back for.

2. The cheater answer is the most likely to be wrong. "Just give me the answer" prompts get the most pattern-matched, plausible-on-average response -- exactly the kind that's confidently wrong on the edges. You haven't built any way to tell whether the answer is right because you didn't engage with the reasoning behind it. Module 3 (*Reading AI Output Critically*) covers this in depth.

The reframe:

ends with you being able to answer the question yourself, and the next three related ones, without going back to the model. Cheater mode ends with you knowing nothing more than you did before -- except now you have a paragraph of text someone else wrote.

the answer

Cheater mode vs tutor mode -- the test:

After your AI session, can you explain the concept to someone else, in your own words, without pulling up the chat?

- **Yes** -> you used it as a tutor.
- **No** -> you used it as a Magic 8-Ball.

The point of the next four sections is to make "yes" the default outcome.

SECTION 4

The Socratic prompt pattern

The single highest-leverage prompt template in this module

Here it is. Copy it, adapt it, save it.

The Socratic prompt:

"I'm trying to understand X. I'm at level Y. Don't summarize. Walk me through it the way you'd teach a smart 12-year-old. After each step, stop and ask if I'm with you before continuing. If I get something wrong, don't just correct me -- help me see where my mental model broke."

Replace X with the topic. Replace Y with your honest current level ("I've never heard of this before" / "I know the basic vocabulary but not what it really means" / "I can use it but I can't explain why it works").

That's the entire prompt. Type it into any chat window for any topic and the rest of the session is different.

What that prompt actually does

Five things, all working at once:

- **"Don't summarize"** -- explicit refusal of cheater-mode output. The model will pattern-match toward summarizing because it's the default; this opt-out keeps it in teaching mode.
- **"Walk me through"** -- switches from a one-shot answer to a step sequence.
- **"Smart 12-year-old"** -- pins the explanation level low enough that load-bearing concepts get explained, not assumed. Most tutoring failures are concepts the tutor don't.
- **"After each step, stop and ask if I'm with you"** -- forces the model to break the lesson into checkable chunks. This is the difference between teaching and lecturing.
- **"Help me see where my mental model broke"** -- turns wrong answers into diagnostic data, not failures.

thinks you

You can omit any one of these and still get better tutoring than cheater mode. Stack all five and you have something that competes with a real tutor for most subjects.

Worked example -- learning what an API is

You've heard the word "API" a thousand times. You've never gotten a clean explanation of what one actually is.

Cheater mode:

"What's an API?"

(Model gives you a 200-word summary. You skim it. You don't really get it. You move on. Next time someone says "API" in a meeting, you nod.)

Socratic mode:

"I'm trying to understand what an API is. I'm at level -- I've heard the word a thousand times but I don't really know what one actually IS, like physically, in the world. Don't summarize. Walk me through it the way you'd teach a smart 12-year-old. After each step, stop and ask if I'm with you before continuing."

(Model: "Okay. Imagine you're at a restaurant. The waiter is the API. The kitchen is the database. You don't go into the kitchen and grab the food -- you tell the waiter what you want, and the waiter walks back, says it to the kitchen in the kitchen's language, brings the food back, and hands it to you.

Are you w

You: "Yes."

Model: "Good. Now...")

Five minutes of that and you'll to someone else. That's the difference. Same model, same subscription, same five minutes -- different prompt structure.

understan

SECTION 5

Three worked sessions

Concrete prompt + output snippets across three different domains. Each shows the Socratic pattern adapted to a real learning need.

Worked session 1 -- Trade-skill: reading a technical drawing

You're a contractor who keeps getting handed architectural drawings you can almost read but not quite. You need to actually understand them.

"I'm a working carpenter. I read framing plans fine but I'm shaky on architectural drawings -- the ones with elevations, sections, and dimension callouts. I can identify the basics but I miss what the lines and symbols around door/window callouts mean, and I get tripped up on what's a section line vs an elevation marker. Walk me through how to read one of these the way you'd teach a smart apprentice. Use a typical small residential job as the example. Stop after each major concept and quiz me."

The model walks you through plan-view conventions, then elevations, then sections, with checks

along the way. Fifteen minutes later you can hand-read a drawing you couldn't have hand-read this morning. Repeat for the next thing on the construction-vocabulary list. Repeat for the

next thing

Worked session 2 -- Business concept: 1099 vs W-2

You're a self-employed contractor. You hear "1099 vs W-2" all the time. You half-know what it means. You've never had a clean grasp.

"Self-employed carpenter, sole prop. I keep half-understanding 1099 vs W-2 and tripping up on the implications. Don't summarize the IRS definitions. Walk me through it from the perspective of a small contractor: when does it matter for me, what changes about my taxes vs my workers' taxes, what changes about my legal liability, and what's the typical mistake people in my position make. Smart-12-year-old level on the underlying concepts, but practical specifics for my situation."

The model gives you the definitions, but

anchored

question is really a question about the IRS's "control" tests, that misclassifying an employee as a 1099 is a real liability and not a paperwork choice, and that a particular mistake -- bringing on a "subcontractor" who really meets the employee tests -- is a \$5,000-\$50,000 problem if it goes badly. That's a thousand times more useful than reading the IRS publication.

Worked session 3 -- Software tool: a new CRM workflow

You just signed up for a CRM tool. The documentation is 80 pages. You don't have 80 pages of attention.

"I just started using HubSpot for my small carpentry business. I've never used a CRM before. Don't tell me about all the features. Walk me through the business that has 50 leads in a spreadsheet right now and wants to graduate to actually tracking them. Imagine I'm sitting next to you and we're going to set this up together step-by-step. After each step, stop and ask if I want to do it that way or if my situation is different. Smart 12-year-old level -- assume I don't know what 'pipeline' or 'deal' means as CRM terms."

minimum v

You go from zero to working in 30 minutes. The 80 pages of documentation become a thing you can reference

after you h

single use case alone justifies the AI subscription.

Tutoring is the highest-leverage AI use most people skip. Productivity gains are visible -- your boss sees them. Learning gains are invisible -- but they compound across every future task you'll ever do.

SECTION 6

The five tutor moves

Once you've started a Socratic session, you can deepen it with five specific moves. Each one is a short addition you tack onto a follow-up prompt -- no fancy framing, just a phrase. Stack them as needed.

The five tutor moves:

1. Scaffold up.

Now add complexity, one layer at a time."

"Start with

2. Ask why.

solve?"

"Why did

3. Demand analogies.

from physical work, one from sports, one from cooking."

"Give me

4. Demand contrast.

mistake people make when they're learning this?"

"What's th

5. Get tested.

and let me try again."

"Quiz me.

Why each move works

- **Scaffold up** prevents the tutor from starting at your assumed level (which is usually too high). Building from the dumbest version lets you confirm each layer before moving on.
- **Ask why** turns memorization into understanding. Once you know *why* some is, you can reason about novel cases instead of just recognizing the ones you've seen.
- **Demand analogies** is the single most-effective stickiness move. Three analogies from different domains forces your brain to hold the abstract concept rather than the surface example. *(This is also a great hallucination check: bad analogies surface confused models.)*
- **Demand contrast** anchors the right understanding by clarifying the wrong one. Knowing what something *isn't* is hal

- **Get tested** is the difference between feeling like you learned and actually learning. The model can quiz you with infinite patience. You can fail in private. That combination doesn't exist anywhere else.

Pick the moves that fit the topic. Not every session needs all five. But every good session uses at least two.

SECTION 7

When NOT to use AI as a tutor

This is the bridge back to Module 4 (*When NOT to Use AI*). Three categories where AI tutoring is the wrong tool:

- **Things that need physical practice.** Drumming, surgery, instrument playing, sports skills, manual trades skill at the muscle-memory level. The model can teach the theory of how a hammer swing transfers force; it cannot make your shoulder learn it. Use AI for the conceptual scaffolding, then put down the keyboard and practice.
- **Domains where the model's training data is bad.** Niche professional certifications, obscure industries, recent regulatory changes, hyper-local information. The model will generate plausible-sounding teaching material that's wrong on the specifics. Verify with primary sources before acting on AI-tutor output in any high-stakes domain.
- **Anything that requires credentialed certification.** The model can teach you the content of the medical board exam. It cannot license you. The certification ladder exists precisely because some forms of learning require third-party verification -- and that verification is the entire point of the credential. AI complements it. AI does not replace it.

Within those boundaries, AI tutoring is one of the highest-leverage things you can do with the technology. Outside them, the boundaries of Module 4 apply.

SECTION 8

Where to go from here

You're now five Tier 1 modules in. One left in the foundations:

- **AI for life admin** -- the boring-but-useful applications that compound into hours-per-week back. Calendars, planning, household logistics, decisions. The personal-executive-assistant pattern.

After that, Tier 2 starts: applying this stuff to your actual job.

Get the next module the day it drops: theaiguywi.com/training

One email per release. No drip. No spam. Opt out anytime.

If you want this same tutoring discipline trained into your team -- the prompt patterns, the five moves, the conditions that make AI a learning multiplier instead of a homework cheater -- that's the consulting offer. We install it the way I run it in my own carpentry business: trades training that actually sticks.

Reach out: alexanderjahn79@icloud.com

A short call. Honest scope. We figure out together if it's a fit.

Closing -- the lock-in line

Five hours on this module is the most valuable five hours in the whole curriculum if you take it seriously, because it compounds across every future learning task in your life.

5

Five tutor moves: scaffold up, ask why, demand analogies, demand contrast, get tested.

Stack them on top of the Socratic prompt pattern. The result isn't a chat window with answers -- it's a private tutor that follows you everywhere you go.

You have the tutoring frame. One module left in Tier 1.

Agent Logic --

Fond du Lac, WI. This is module 5 of 6 in Tier 1 (Personal).

theaiguyw

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