

PROMPT CRAFT

Video prompts

Duration, shot size, camera movement and the audio a clip describes for itself. A prompt is a list of decisions, not a paragraph of atmosphere.

HOW TO USE THIS

Five habits that do most of the work

- Work down the aspects in order. The order is the recommended order in the prompt too.
- One clause per aspect. A prompt is a list of decisions, not a paragraph of atmosphere.
- Prefer a number over an adjective wherever a number exists: 116 BPM over upbeat, 85mm over flattering, 15 seconds over short.
- Put the negatives last, in one sentence beginning with No.
- Reuse the identical phrasing across a batch. Paraphrasing is what makes a set of images look unrelated.

THE ORDER

Work down these, in this order

The order below is also the order that works inside the prompt itself. Each one is a decision; state it in one clause.

- Duration, Aspect ratio, Medium and style, Shot size
- Camera angle, Camera movement, Lens and focal length, Depth of field
- Lighting, Colour and grade, Subject motion, Mood
- Audio bed, Pacing and cuts

ASPECT 1 OF 18

Duration

Models hold a shot for a fixed span. Naming the length stops a model compressing a three beat idea into one, or padding a single beat with drift.

Vocabulary	6 seconds, 8 seconds, 10 seconds, 15 seconds, 30 seconds, 60 seconds
Phrases that work	15-second cinematic clip.
	Six seconds, one continuous take, no cuts.
	30 seconds in three beats of roughly ten seconds each.

ASPECT 2 OF 18

Aspect ratio

Decides whether the subject can breathe. A vertical crop of a wide composition loses the sides, so the ratio has to be chosen before the composition is described.

Vocabulary

16:9, 9:16, 1:1

Phrases that work

Framed 16:9 for landscape playback.

Vertical 9:16, composed for a phone held upright.

Square 1:1 with the subject centred.

ASPECT 3 OF 18

Medium and style

Being specific beats being evocative.

Vocabulary	cinematic, photorealistic, anime, documentary, 3d render, unreal engine, stop-motion, 35mm film, watercolor, vector
Phrases that work	Cinematic, shot on 35mm film.
	Photorealistic, indistinguishable from a real camera.
	3D render, clean studio lighting, product visualisation.

ASPECT 4 OF 18

Shot size

The most reliable lever there is. Naming it removes the model's habit of defaulting to a mid shot for everything.

Vocabulary	close-up, wide shot, medium shot, extreme close-up, establishing shot, two-shot, macro shot, over-the-shoulder, closeup
Phrases that work	Extreme close-up on the texture, filling the frame.
	Wide establishing shot, subject small in a large space.
	Medium shot from the waist up, room to move on both sides.

ASPECT 5 OF 18

Camera angle

Changes who has power in the frame. Low angle makes a product monumental, overhead flattens it into a diagram.

Vocabulary	overhead, low-angle, eye level, three-quarter, top-down, profile, high-angle
Phrases that work	Low-angle looking up, subject towering over the lens.
	Directly overhead, top-down on the surface.
	Eye-level, camera at the subject's own height.

ASPECT 6 OF 18

Camera movement

If you do not name it the model invents drift, and drift reads as an accident.

Vocabulary	push-in, tracking shot, handheld, orbit, locked-off, slow zoom, truck, slow dolly, parallax, pull-back
Phrases that work	Slow push-in toward the subject, ending tight.
	Locked-off tripod, no camera movement at all.
	Smooth orbit around the subject, one quarter turn.

ASPECT 7 OF 18

Lens and focal length

A focal length is a shorthand a model understands: 85mm flatters a face, 24mm bends a room outward, macro turns a surface into a landscape.

Vocabulary	35mm, macro lens, anamorphic, 100mm, 50mm, 85mm, 28mm, wide-angle lens, 32mm, 50 mm
Phrases that work	Shot on an 85mm lens, compressed and flattering.
	Wide 24mm, close to the subject, edges stretching.
	Macro lens, the subject filling the frame at life size.

ASPECT 8 OF 18

Depth of field

Separates subject from background without changing the composition.

Vocabulary	shallow depth of field, bokeh, rack focus, f/1.4, f/1.8, f/2.0, soft focus, f/2.8
Phrases that work	Shallow depth of field, background dissolving into bokeh.
	Deep focus, everything from foreground to horizon sharp.
	Rack focus from the foreground object to the face behind it.

ASPECT 9 OF 18

Lighting

Sets mood more cheaply than any other choice. Naming a setup also stops the flat, evenly lit look models fall back on.

Vocabulary	soft lighting, rim lighting, rim light, silhouette, volumetric lighting, golden hour, volumetric light, soft light, side lighting, chiaroscuro
Phrases that work	Soft lighting from a large source, shadows barely there.
	Rim lighting from behind, edge of the subject glowing.
	Single hard key from the side, deep shadow on the far cheek.

ASPECT 10 OF 18

Colour and grade

Carries brand more than any other single element, and is easy to get consistent across a set of clips by reusing the same phrase.

Vocabulary	vibrant, pastel, film grain, black-and-white, natural color, high contrast, desaturated, crushed blacks, natural colour, low contrast
Phrases that work	Vibrant saturated grade, colours pushed but not clipping.
	Muted pastel palette, low contrast, gentle.
	High contrast with crushed blacks and a cool cast.

ASPECT 11 OF 18

Subject motion

Distinct from camera movement and frequently confused with it. Say what the subject does, or the model will hold it still and move the camera instead.

Vocabulary

reveal, float, drift, slow motion, glides, rotates, time-lapse, ripples, unfolds, hovers

Phrases that work

The lid glides open on hidden runners, slow and even.

Fabric billows in slow motion, every fold readable.

Steam drifts upward and dissipates before it leaves the frame.

ASPECT 12 OF 18

Mood

A single adjective steers dozens of small decisions the model would otherwise make at random. Cheap to add, and it makes a set of clips feel related.

Vocabulary	playful, energetic, whimsical, calm, dramatic, minimal, elegant, uplifting, moody, ominous
Phrases that work	Calm and unhurried throughout.
	Playful and energetic, quick and bright.
	Moody and restrained, close to darkness.

ASPECT 13 OF 18

Audio bed

Naming instruments and what must not be heard is more reliable than naming a genre.

Vocabulary	percussion, bells, ukulele, xylophone, piano, drums, bass, marimba, strings, synth
Phrases that work	Minimal deep electronic ambience with soft mechanical clicks.
	Warm ukulele and marimba, light percussion, no vocals.
	No music at all, only the room and the mechanism.

ASPECT 14 OF 18

Pacing and cuts

Without it a model gives you one unbroken drift. Naming beats is what turns a clip into a sequence.

Phrases that work

One continuous take, no cuts.

Three beats: reveal, detail, hero shot.

Cut away before the hand touches the product.

ASPECT 15 OF 18

Resolution / quality tier

Treat it as practice worth copying, not as a count.

Vocabulary 480p, 720p, 1080p, 4k, basic, high, ultra, pro, std, standard

ASPECT 16 OF 18

First/last frame anchoring

Treat it as practice worth copying, not as a count.

Vocabulary	start frame, end frame, start = end, one-shot, loop, end-frame reveal, generic image/reference role , not a start-frame role
Phrases that work	Don't redescribe the static frame , model already has it.
	Looping actions pass the SAME image as both start frame and end frame. One-shot actions (attack, death, hit, cast) pass only the start frame, forcing them back to the start pose ruins the
	Pass the finished cover as the END frame and describe the buildup

ASPECT 17 OF 18

Ad format / mode (branded video)

Treat it as practice worth copying, not as a count.

Vocabulary	ugc, hook, setting, ad reference
Phrases that work	Looks like a real person filmed on phone
	Polished broadcast commercial
	Show the product itself, less presenter

ASPECT 18 OF 18

Edit instruction (video editing workflows)

Treat it as practice worth copying, not as a count.

Vocabulary make the jacket red, sketch, timestamp

NEGATIVES

Say what you want, not what you don't

Most media models expose no separate negative field, so a banned word is still a word in the prompt. Keep the list short and aimed at the failure you actually see.

- Text and branding: text, logos, subtitles, watermark, watermarks, captions, on-screen text, text on screen
- Anatomy and faces: extra limbs, distorted faces, extra characters, hands, extra fingers, extra animals
- Content and safety: violence, scary imagery, scary elements, weapons
- Audio: music, narration
- Other: dialogue, copyrighted characters, talking, cuts, horror, humans, clothes, flickering

Read the rest online

The web pages are the version that gets corrected. A sheet printed six months ago has not moved.

Cinematic language: lenses, film stocks, lighting and mood recipes.

Every measurement on the site carries the date it was read.

shotcraft.video/prompts/video/

