

NICHE RAIDERS
AI FICTION PROMPT GUIDE

Show, Don't Tell

Turn flat telling into living scenes.

50 prompts to show, not tell, in AI fiction

How to use this guide

This is a working toolkit for the craft note every writer hears and few fully crack: show, don't tell. Fifty Claude prompts, grouped into six parts that move from spotting telling to converting it, then back to the balance and pace that keep a book readable.

Each prompt is written to be copied straight into Claude. Anything in [BRACKETS] is a placeholder. Swap in your passage, your emotion, your genre, or your character before you send it. The more specific your inputs, the sharper the showing you get back.

A simple order that works for most scenes:

1. Diagnose the telling first (Part One) so you know what to convert.
2. Put emotion in the body (Part Two), then trade abstraction for sensory detail (Part Three).
3. Cut the filter and deepen the POV (Part Four) so the reader experiences it directly.
4. Dramatize character, backstory, and theme (Part Five), then balance and polish (Part Six).

What is inside

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Diagnose the Telling

You cannot fix telling you cannot see. These prompts make Claude flag every place the prose explains a feeling instead of letting the reader experience it.

1. Full Telling Diagnostic

P R O M P T

Act as a developmental editor focused on the show-don't-tell craft. Read the passage below and list every line that tells the reader something instead of showing it: named emotions, summarized actions, stated traits. For each, quote the line and label the type of telling in a few words. Do not rewrite yet. Just diagnose, hardest critic mode.

Passage:
[PASTE]

Tip *Diagnose before you rewrite. Naming the type of telling is half the fix.*

2. Named-Emotion Detector

P R O M P T

Scan this passage for every place a feeling is stated outright: she was angry, he felt nervous, they were happy. Quote each one and tell me what bodily or behavioral evidence could replace it. Flag only, no rewrite.

[PASTE]

Tip *A named emotion is a note that says insert feeling here. Replace it with evidence.*

3. Summary vs Scene Finder

P R O M P T

Find the moments in this passage that are summarized when they should be dramatized in real time, the emotional beats the reader deserves to live through. Mark each and tell me why it earns a full scene.

[PASTE]

Tip *The beats you summarize are often the ones readers most want to live through.*

4. Filter-Word Scan

PROMPT

Highlight every filter word in this passage that distances the reader from the character: saw, heard, felt, noticed, realized, watched, seemed, could see. Quote each line and show how it would read with the filter removed.

[PASTE]

Tip Filter words put a pane of glass between reader and character. Most can simply go.

5. Abstraction Flag

PROMPT

Find the vague, abstract nouns in this passage doing the work that concrete detail should do: fear, beauty, tension, sadness, chaos. Quote each and suggest a specific, sensory image that could replace it.

[PASTE]

Tip Abstract nouns are placeholders. Trade beauty and fear for the specific thing that caused them.

6. Adverb and Adjective Tell Check

PROMPT

Flag the adverbs and adjectives in this passage that tell the reader how to feel instead of showing it: angrily, nervously, the tense silence, the beautiful view. For each, tell me whether to cut it or convert it to demonstrated action.

[PASTE]

Tip An adverb on a weak verb is usually telling in disguise. Strengthen the verb instead.

7. Information Telling Check

PROMPT

Find any place where the prose stops to explain backstory, motivation, or world information directly to the reader rather than revealing it through scene. Mark each info-dump and note where it could be dramatized or trimmed.

[PASTE]

Tip Info-dumps stall momentum. Dramatize what matters and cut what does not.

8. Show-to-Tell Ratio Audit

P R O M P T

Estimate the balance of showing to telling in this passage and tell me whether it leans too far toward telling for [GENRE]. Point to the three lines where converting to showing would most improve the scene.

[PASTE]

Tip *Show the big emotional beats; you do not have to show everything. Ratio is the goal.*

Put Emotion in the Body

Readers feel what characters feel through the body. These prompts turn named emotions into physical sensation, involuntary tells, and behavior.

9. Physicalize the Emotion

P R O M P T

Rewrite the marked lines so the emotion is shown through physical sensation and involuntary response instead of being named. Keep it specific to this character and this moment, and avoid the most common cliches (no pounding hearts or churning stomachs unless truly earned).

Emotion: [NAME IT]

Lines:

[PASTE]

Tip Skip the pounding heart. The fresh, specific physical tell is what makes emotion land.

10. Emotion-to-Sensation Map

P R O M P T

For the emotion below, give me a menu of ten fresh physical and behavioral cues a writer could use to show it, ranging from subtle to overt. Avoid the overused ones. I will choose what fits my character.

Emotion: [NAME IT]

Character: [BRIEF]

Tip Build a menu of cues, then pick. Range keeps your emotion beats from repeating.

11. Show Anger Without Naming It

P R O M P T

Rewrite this passage so the character's anger comes through entirely in body, action, and speech rhythm, never in the word angry or its synonyms. Make it specific to how this particular person runs hot or cold.

[PASTE]

Tip Anger reads in rhythm and action, not the word angry. Show how this person burns.

12. Show Fear and Anxiety

PROMPT

Rewrite this moment so the reader feels the character's fear or dread through the body and behavior rather than being told. Use restraint, the quiet physical tells of anxiety, not just adrenaline.

[PASTE]

Tip *Fear lives in small, quiet tells as often as in adrenaline. Restraint sells dread.*

13. Show Grief and Sadness

PROMPT

Rewrite this passage so grief or sadness shows in physical detail, small actions, and what the character notices or avoids, without naming the feeling or tipping into melodrama.

[PASTE]

Tip *Grief shows in what a character avoids and the small things they cannot do. Underplay it.*

14. Show Joy and Desire

PROMPT

Rewrite this moment so happiness, attraction, or longing shows through the body, behavior, and the character's shifting attention, rather than being stated. Keep it true to a [GENRE] tone.

[PASTE]

Tip *Joy and desire show in shifting attention. Watch where the character's focus goes.*

15. Show Emotion Through Action

PROMPT

Instead of body cues alone, rewrite this beat so the character's emotion drives a concrete action or choice that reveals how they feel. Let what they do carry the feeling.

[PASTE]

Tip *The strongest emotional proof is a choice. Let feeling drive an action.*

16. Involuntary Tells and Microexpressions

P R O M P T

Give this character three involuntary tells, the small, unconscious physical reactions that leak their true feeling, and weave the most fitting one into the marked moment so the reader catches what the character tries to hide.

Character and moment: [DESCRIBE]

Tip *Involuntary tells reveal what dialogue hides. Give each character one the reader learns to read.*

17. Show Conflicted Emotion

P R O M P T

This character feels two things at once. Rewrite the moment so both emotions show through competing physical cues and behavior, letting the contradiction play on the body without naming either feeling.

Emotions: [NAME BOTH]

Moment:

[PASTE]

Tip *Real feelings are mixed. Competing cues on the body are more believable than one clean emotion.*

Action, Detail, and the Senses

Concrete beats abstract every time. These prompts trade vague summary for the specific, sensory, telling detail that makes a scene real.

18. Convert a Told Trait to Action

P R O M P T

I keep telling the reader this character is [TRAIT: brave, kind, ruthless]. Give me five small, specific actions or moments that would demonstrate the trait instead, so I never have to state it.

Character: [BRIEF]

Tip *Do not tell me she is brave. Show the moment she steps forward when no one else will.*

19. Find the Telling Detail

P R O M P T

Rewrite this description by replacing several vague details with one or two precise, telling details that imply the rest. Show me how a single specific image can do more work than a pile of general ones.

[PASTE]

Tip *One precise detail implies a hundred. Specificity beats accumulation.*

20. Engage the Five Senses

P R O M P T

This passage relies only on sight. Rewrite it to bring in the other senses where they would deepen the scene: sound, smell, touch, taste. Use them with restraint, only where each earns its place.

[PASTE]

Tip *Sight alone is flat. One sound or smell can open a scene into three dimensions.*

21. Show Setting Through Action

PROMPT

Instead of describing this setting in a static block, rewrite it so the place reveals itself through the character moving and interacting with it. Let the details surface as the character uses the space.

[PASTE]

Tip *Let the character move through the setting. Place revealed in motion never reads as a description block.*

22. Concrete Nouns and Strong Verbs

PROMPT

Rewrite this passage to replace abstract nouns and weak verbs with concrete, specific nouns and vivid, active verbs. Cut the adverbs that prop up weak verbs. Keep the meaning, sharpen the image.

[PASTE]

Tip *Concrete nouns and active verbs carry the image. Abstraction and adverbs leak it.*

23. Show Mood Through Detail

PROMPT

Convey the mood of this scene, [TENSE / PEACEFUL / OMINOUS], through selected concrete details and the character's filtered perception, without naming the mood or leaning on weather clichés.

[PASTE]

Tip *Mood is built from chosen details, not announced. Skip the convenient storm.*

24. Show a Relationship Through Behavior

PROMPT

Rewrite this interaction so the history and dynamic between these two characters shows in how they behave toward each other, the small gestures, habits, and friction, rather than being explained to the reader.

[PASTE]

Tip *A relationship shows in behavior: the habits, the distances, the friction. Let it play.*

25. Ground a Flat Scene in the Senses

P R O M P T

This scene feels like it is happening in a white void. Add grounding sensory and physical detail so it has a real place and body to it, without slowing the pace or burying the action.

[PASTE]

Tip *If a scene feels like a white void, give it a body and a place, lightly, without stalling.*

26. Let an Object Carry the Emotion

P R O M P T

Give this emotional beat a physical object or prop the character interacts with, so the feeling is shown through how they handle the object rather than stated. Suggest the object and write the moment.

Moment and emotion: [DESCRIBE]

Tip *An object in the hands can hold a feeling words would only flatten.*

Cut the Filter, Deepen the POV

Filtering keeps the reader at arm's length. These prompts collapse the distance so the reader experiences the story directly through the character.

27. Cut the Filter Words

P R O M P T

Rewrite this passage to remove filter words such as saw, heard, felt, noticed, and realized, presenting the sensations and thoughts directly. Show me the before and after so I can hear the difference.

[PASTE]

Tip *Cut saw, heard, and felt and the reader stands inside the character instead of beside them.*

28. Deepen the Point of View

P R O M P T

Pull this passage into deep POV: collapse the distance so the narration sounds like the character's own perception and voice, not a camera describing them. Show me one paragraph reworked.

[PASTE]

Tip *Deep POV makes narration sound like the character thinking. Close the distance.*

29. Direct Sensation

P R O M P T

Rewrite these lines so the reader receives the sensation directly instead of through she saw or he heard. Put the image or sound on the page first, and let the character's reaction follow.

[PASTE]

Tip *Put the image on the page first, the reaction second. That is how perception actually works.*

30. Show Thought Without Thought Tags

PROMPT

Rewrite this passage so the character's thoughts come through the narration directly, cutting most she thought and he wondered tags. Use deep POV so interiority reads as the prose itself.

[PASTE]

Tip *In deep POV, thoughts are the prose. You rarely need she thought.*

31. Build a Reaction Sequence

PROMPT

Rewrite this beat as a clean internal reaction sequence: first the visceral physical response, then the instinctive emotion, then the thought, then the action or speech. Order them the way the body actually experiences them.

Stimulus and character: [DESCRIBE]

Draft:

[PASTE]

Tip *Visceral, then emotion, then thought, then action. Order the reaction the way the body runs it.*

32. Remove Began To and Started To

PROMPT

Find every began to and started to in this passage and rewrite so the character simply does the action. Tell me if any instance should stay because the action is genuinely interrupted.

[PASTE]

Tip *Began to usually means just do it. Cut it unless the action is truly interrupted.*

33. Show Realization Without Realized

PROMPT

Rewrite the marked moment so the character's realization dawns through observation and reaction rather than the words she realized or it hit her. Let the reader arrive at the understanding alongside the character.

[PASTE]

Tip *Let the reader realize alongside the character. She realized steals the discovery.*

34. Adjust the Psychic Distance

P R O M P T

Show me this paragraph rewritten at three levels of psychic distance: distant and cinematic, medium, and deep inside the character's head. Tell me which best fits an emotional peak so I can control the zoom.

[PASTE]

Tip *Psychic distance is a zoom lens. Pull close for the peaks, pull back for the transitions.*

35. Tune Showing to the POV

P R O M P T

This story is in [FIRST PERSON / CLOSE THIRD]. Rewrite this passage to show emotion and sensation in a way that suits that POV, using its strengths for immediacy and voice.

[PASTE]

Tip *First person and close third each have their own immediacy. Show in a way that uses it.*

Show Character and Backstory

Who a character is, and where they came from, lands harder when revealed in action. These prompts dramatize personality, history, skill, and theme.

36. Show Personality Through Choice

P R O M P T

Rewrite this moment so the character's personality shows in the choice they make under pressure, not in narration describing what they are like. Action under stress is the truest characterization.

Character and situation: [DESCRIBE]

Tip *Character is what they choose under pressure. Dramatize the choice.*

37. Reveal Backstory Through Action

P R O M P T

I have a chunk of backstory I am tempted to dump here. Show me how to reveal the most important one or two pieces through present-scene action, behavior, or a charged object instead, and write a sample.

Backstory:
[PASTE]

Tip *Backstory lands in the present. Reveal it through a charged action or object, not a flashback dump.*

38. Characterize Through Dialogue Behavior

P R O M P T

Rewrite this exchange so the characters reveal themselves through how they speak and what they do while speaking, their evasions, interruptions, and tells, rather than through narration explaining their personalities.

[PASTE]

Tip *Characters expose themselves in how they talk and what they do while talking. Let them.*

39. Show the History Between Characters

PROMPT

Show the shared past between these two characters through loaded behavior in the present: the inside references, the careful distances, the old habits, without stopping to explain their history.

Characters and history: [DESCRIBE]

Tip Shared history shows in loaded little behaviors. Trust the reader to feel the past.

40. Show Status and Mood in Body Language

PROMPT

Rewrite this scene so each character's status and current mood read through posture, gesture, and how they occupy space, no narration labeling who is dominant or how they feel.

[PASTE]

Tip Status and mood live in posture and space. Drop the labels.

41. Show a Hidden Feeling or Lie

PROMPT

Rewrite this moment so the reader senses what the character is hiding through the gap between their words and their body, without the narration telling us they are lying or concealing.

The hidden truth: [DESCRIBE]

Moment:

[PASTE]

Tip A lie shows in the gap between word and body. Open that gap and let the reader catch it.

42. Show Competence, Not Claims

PROMPT

Instead of telling the reader this character is skilled or expert at [SKILL], rewrite the scene so their competence shows in precise, confident action and the details only a pro would notice.

[PASTE]

Tip Do not claim expertise. Show the precise, confident details only a pro would notice.

43. Show Change Over Time

P R O M P T

Show this character's growth through contrast in behavior: write a brief early-story beat and a parallel later beat so the reader sees the change in what they do, not in narration announcing it.

Character and arc: [DESCRIBE]

Tip *Growth shows in contrast. Put an early beat beside a later one and let the change speak.*

44. Show the Theme, Don't State It

P R O M P T

My theme is [THEME]. Show me how to let it surface through events, choices, and imagery rather than a character or the narrator stating it outright. Rewrite the marked moment to carry the theme quietly.

[PASTE]

Tip *A stated theme preaches. A shown theme resonates. Bury it in choices and images.*

Balance and Polish

Showing everything is its own mistake. These prompts find the right balance, fix overwritten passages, and run the final pass.

45. Know When to Tell

P R O M P T

Read this passage and tell me where telling is actually the right choice: transitions, time jumps, minor logistics, or pace control. Mark anything I am over-dramatizing that a line of summary would serve better.

[PASTE]

Tip *Telling is a tool, not a sin. Use it for transitions, logistics, and pace.*

46. Show-Tell Balance Pass

P R O M P T

Rewrite this scene to convert the high-impact emotional beats to showing while keeping efficient telling for the connective tissue. Aim for rhythm, not relentless showing. Tell me what you chose to leave told and why.

[PASTE]

Tip *Great prose alternates show and tell. Show the peaks, tell the connective tissue.*

47. Fix Overwritten Showing

P R O M P T

This passage piles on too many body cues and sensory details, so the showing feels overwritten and slow. Trim it to the one or two strongest cues per beat and restore the pace.

[PASTE]

Tip *Too many cues is its own kind of telling. Keep the one or two strongest and cut the rest.*

48. The Visualization Test

P R O M P T

Read this passage and tell me, line by line, whether you can clearly picture what is happening or whether you are only being told about it. Flag the lines that fail to produce an image and suggest a fix.

[PASTE]

Tip *If you cannot picture it, the reader cannot either. The visualization test never lies.*

49. Convert a Told Paragraph Live

P R O M P T

Here is a paragraph that is almost entirely telling. Rewrite it fully into showing, then annotate your version: point out each change and which telling technique it replaced, so I can learn the moves.

[PASTE]

Tip *Study the conversion with annotations and the technique becomes yours, not just this fix.*

50. Final Show-Don't-Tell Polish Pass

P R O M P T

This is my final pass on this scene. Identify the five lines that most rely on telling, and for each give three options: one shown through the body, one through action, one through sensory detail. Then tell me which you would use and why, keeping a [GENRE] pace in mind.

Scene:

[PASTE]

Tip *End every scene here. Three ways to show your five worst told lines is a fast, large lift.*

Now go make them feel it.

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