# Iterating and Fixing a Weak Answer

The first answer is a draft, not a verdict. How to reply, correct, and steer the AI until the answer is right.

## Introduction

Beginners judge a prompt by its first answer. Experienced users judge it by the third. **Iteration** — replying to the AI's answer with a correction — is not a sign of failure; it is the normal way prompting works. The first answer shows you what the AI understood. Your reply fixes what it got wrong. Two or three rounds of this usually beat one perfect prompt, because you are steering with real feedback instead of guessing in advance.

The skill is in HOW you reply. "Make it better" teaches nothing. A good correction names exactly what to change, and keeps what was already good.

*(Roman Urdu: Pehla jawab draft hota hai, faisla nahi. AI ke jawab par durustgi ke saath jawab dena — yehi asal skill hai. "Behtar karo" kuch nahi sikhata; ye batao ke kya badalna hai.)*

## Key points

- **The first answer is a draft.** Read it, keep the good parts, and reply about the rest. Expect 2–3 rounds for anything important.
- **Name the exact change.** "Shorter" is vague; "Cut this to 100 words, keep the 3 examples" is a correction the AI can follow.
- **Keep what worked.** Start replies with what to keep: "Keep the table, but change the tone to formal and remove row 3." Otherwise the AI may rewrite the good parts too.
- **Correct one thing at a time when answers are long.** A list of ten fixes in one reply often produces a half-fixed mess. Fix the biggest problem first, then the next.
- **Point at the exact spot.** "In paragraph 2, the second sentence is wrong because..." beats "Some of this is wrong." The AI cannot fix what it cannot locate.
- **Use the AI's own answer as material.** "Rewrite the paragraph above in simple English" or "Turn the list above into a table" — replies can build on the previous answer without retyping it.
- **Know when to restart.** If three corrections have not fixed it, the first prompt was probably aimed wrong. Start a fresh chat with a better prompt (and the lessons from this one) instead of fighting the same thread.
- **Never iterate on a false fact into truth.** If the AI invents a statistic, no amount of rephrasing makes it real. Check the fact from a trusted source; iteration fixes style and structure, not invented facts.
- **Beginners get stuck on what a "round" should contain.** One round = one change. A round that says "shorter, simpler, funnier, with a table" is four rounds squeezed into one, and the AI will do two of them well and drop the rest. Split it, and each round succeeds.
- **Save the version you like before the next round.** Copy a good answer into your notes before asking for a change — a new round can make a good answer worse, and the old version is gone unless you saved

it.

## Examples

### Example 1 — A chain of good corrections

First prompt:

```
Write a paragraph on why students should read daily.
```

First answer: long, formal, full of difficult words. Good corrections, one at a time:

Reply 1: "Keep the ideas, but rewrite it in simple English for a class 8 student, under 120 words."

Reply 2: "Good. Now add one example of a Pakistani student who reads daily, and end with one question for the reader."

Each reply keeps the good, names the change, and adds one thing. After two rounds, the paragraph is usable. The first prompt was never going to get there alone.

### Example 2 — Pointing at the exact spot

Weak reply: "This is not right, fix it."

Strong reply: "The second point is wrong — Karachi is not the capital of Pakistan, Islamabad is. Fix that point, keep the other four points exactly as they are, and do not change the table format."

The AI now knows what is wrong, where it is, and what must stay untouched. That is a correction it can execute.

### Example 3 — When to restart

You asked for a study plan, corrected it four times, and it still ignores your 2-hour limit and keeps adding subjects you do not take. The thread is now full of confused history. Restart with a fresh prompt that includes the lessons learned:

```
Make a 7-day study plan. I study exactly 2 hours a day. My subjects are physics, chemistry and biology only. Table format: day, subject, topic, time. No other subjects, no extra days.
```

Fresh chats forget old mistakes. Use that when a thread is stuck.

### Example 4 — Before and after: one vague round versus three precise rounds

Vague round: "Make it better." (The AI guesses: longer? funnier? more formal?)

Precise rounds:

Reply 1: "Keep the ideas and the table. Rewrite in simple English for a class 8 student." Reply 2: "Good. Cut it to under 150 words, keep all 3 examples." Reply 3: "Good. Add one question at the end for the reader."

Three short rounds, each with one job, each keeping what worked. The vague single round cannot compete, because "better" was never defined.

### Example 5 — Iterating a table without breaking it

First answer: a good table, but row 2 has the wrong price and the tone is too formal.

Weak correction: "Fix this and make it friendly." (Which row? What does friendly change?)

Strong correction: "Keep the table exactly as it is. Change only row 2: the price is Rs 850, not Rs 950. Then change the tone of the whole table to friendly, without changing any other fact."

Spot, scope, and protection in one reply: what to change, how far, and what must stay untouched.

### Example 6 — Knowing the thread is stuck: the three-correction test

You corrected a study plan three times: it still adds subjects you do not take. Each correction made the plan a little stranger, because the thread now contains three old, wrong plans the AI keeps half-remembering. That is the signal: three failed corrections = restart, not a fourth correction. Your fresh prompt should carry the lesson ("subjects: physics, chemistry, biology ONLY") in its first lines, so the new thread never learns the old mistake.

### Real-world case — Where this is actually used

Writers and students use iteration as their real workflow: draft, correct, correct again, save. A shop owner does the same with product messages — first draft from the AI, then "shorter", then "add the timing", then "Roman Urdu" — and the fourth version is the one customers see. Nobody publishes a first draft. The professionals are not better at first prompts; they are better at second and third replies.

## Quick recap

- First answer = draft. Plan for 2–3 rounds on important work.
- Name the exact change; keep what worked.
- Point at the exact spot that is wrong.
- One big fix at a time for long answers.
- Restart fresh when a thread is stuck after 3 corrections.
- Iteration fixes style and structure, never invented facts.

## Common mistakes

1. **"Make it better" as a correction** — the AI guesses what "better" means and usually guesses wrong. Fix: name the change (shorter, simpler, formal, one example).
2. **Rewriting everything every round** — you lose the good parts. Fix: "Keep X, change Y."
3. **Fighting a stuck thread forever** — ten corrections deep, the AI is confused by its own history. Fix: restart fresh with a better first prompt.

1. **Correcting without reading the whole answer** — you fix paragraph 1, but paragraph 3 already had the same problem, and round 2 must fix it again. Fix: read the full answer once, list all fixes, then apply the

biggest one first.

2. **Apologising or over-explaining in corrections** — long apologies bury the instruction ("Sorry, I know this is difficult, but maybe if possible..."). Fix: be direct and kind in one line — "Keep the table, but make it shorter" needs no apology.

## Practice

1. Ask the AI for a paragraph on any topic. Then improve it in exactly 3 replies: (1) simpler words, (2) shorter, (3) one example added. Save the final version and compare it with the first.
2. Find one wrong fact in an AI answer. Reply pointing at the exact sentence and the correction. Check whether the AI fixes only that sentence or rewrites everything — and what you would say next.

1. Take a first-draft answer and improve it in exactly 3 rounds, one change per round. Save each version. At the end, compare round 1 and round 3 — list the three changes in one line each.
2. Deliberately write a bad correction ("make it better") and a good correction ("cut to 100 words, keep the 3 examples") for the same answer. Compare the two results and note what the vague one guessed wrong.
3. Take a thread where you have already corrected the AI 3 times without success. Restart it fresh with a prompt that includes everything you learned. Compare the fresh answer with the stuck thread's last answer.

## Practice quiz

**1. What is iteration in prompting?**

- Sending the same prompt again and again
- Replying to the AI's answer with a precise correction, keeping what worked, for 2–3 rounds
- Using two AI tools at once
- Editing the AI's answer by hand

**Answer:** Replying to the AI's answer with a precise correction, keeping what worked, for 2–3 rounds

**2. Which is a good correction?**

- 'Make it better'
- 'Keep the table, but change the tone to formal and remove row 3'
- 'This is wrong'
- 'Try harder'

**Answer:** 'Keep the table, but change the tone to formal and remove row 3'

**3. When should you restart in a fresh chat instead of correcting?**

- After the first correction
- When three corrections have not fixed it and the thread is full of confused history
- Never, always keep correcting

- Only when the AI stops replying

**Answer:** When three corrections have not fixed it and the thread is full of confused history

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**Watch the video lesson:** https://youtu.be/r9A0CGK0myg

**Read online:** https://scopetreasure.com/notes/pe-iterate-fix · More free tools and notes at https://scopetreasure.com