Talking to AI is a skill

How better instructions immediately deliver better results

A whitepaper by Laurens Vandebergh, newITera
Business Development Manager AI and Project Manager
2026

© newITera. All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced without permission.

Executive Summary

Almost everyone who works with AI has had the same experience: you ask a question, get an answer that is just slightly off, and conclude that the tool is disappointing. But the problem is usually not the AI. It is the instruction.

Description is the second core competency within AI Fluency and is about the art of communicating effectively with AI. Not by learning clever tricks, but by understanding how AI listens to your instructions and what you need to say to get what you actually mean.

This whitepaper explains how that works, with concrete examples, six practical techniques, and a simple model for making every instruction better. Whether you use AI for writing, data analysis, or meeting preparation: better instructions deliver better results immediately.

> *Think of AI as a new, enthusiastic colleague who always tries their best, but needs clear expectations to truly deliver good work.*

The problem: AI does not always understand you the way you think

AI tools are more powerful than ever, but they cannot read minds. A large language model (LLM) generates a response based on what you provide. The vaguer your instruction, the more room for interpretation, and the greater the chance that the result is not what you had in mind.

This is not a flaw in AI. It is a characteristic of the technology. LLMs are trained on enormous amounts of text and are excellent at filling in missing context. But that filled-in context is not always yours.

Three common mistakes with AI instructions

Do you recognize these patterns?

- **Too vague**: "Write something about sustainability." AI does not know who it is for, how long, in what tone, or for what purpose.
- **Too broad**: packing multiple assignments into one prompt, leaving AI unable to make choices and doing everything halfway.
- **No context**: AI has no idea who you are, what your organization does, or what the situation is. It just guesses.

The good news: this is easy to fix. Not by learning to code or acquiring technical knowledge, but by communicating differently. Something anyone can learn.

What is Description within AI Fluency?

Description is the second competency within the 4D framework of AI Fluency. It goes beyond writing a prompt, an instruction to the AI. It is about building a shared working environment in which you and AI can collaborate effectively.

Effective Description works on three levels simultaneously:

WHAT DO YOU WANT?	HOW TO APPROACH IT?	HOW TO BEHAVE?
Product Description The end result: format, audience, length,	*Process Description The approach: step by step, priorities,*	*Performance Description The behavior: tone, proactivity, level of*

© newITera. All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced without permission.

style	*order*	*detail*
Write a 3-paragraph summary for a non-technical audience	Start with the conclusion, then support with max 3 arguments	Be direct, avoid jargon, ask follow-up questions if anything is unclear

Most people communicate only at the first level: they describe what they want. The big leap in quality comes from the second and third levels. How should AI approach the task? And how do you want AI to behave during your collaboration?

Six techniques that make an immediate difference

Based on the AI Fluency framework, there are six concrete techniques that anyone can apply, regardless of which AI system they use. They reinforce each other and become more powerful as you combine them.

TECHNIQUE	WHAT IT DOES	EXAMPLE
1. Provide context	AI understands your situation and tailors the answer accordingly	I'm an HR manager at a company of 200 people and I'm looking for…
2. Show an example	AI sees what 'good' looks like and replicates it	Write this in the style of: [example text]
3. Set boundaries	AI knows exactly what the end result should be	Maximum 5 bullet points, business tone, no jargon
4. Break down complex tasks	AI works step by step instead of guessing	First do X, then Y, close with Z
5. Ask AI to think first	AI considers multiple perspectives before answering	Think this through before you respond…
6. Define role or tone	AI adapts its communication style to your needs	You are a critical review partner. Give honest feedback on…

From vague to sharp: before and after examples

Theory only becomes useful when you recognize it in practice. The examples below show how a small adjustment to your instruction can make a big difference in the result.

VAGUE	SHARP
Write an email about tomorrow's meeting.	*Write an invitation for a kickoff meeting tomorrow morning at 9:00. The meeting lasts one hour. Attendees are the management team of a mid-sized company. Agenda: project update, decision on planning, action points. Tone: professional but accessible. Maximum 150 words.*

VAGUE	SHARP
Give me feedback on this report.	*You are a critical reader with no prior knowledge of this topic. Read this report and give feedback on three points: is the main message immediately clear? Are the conclusions substantiated? Which paragraph*

© newITera. All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced without permission.

	loses your attention? Be direct and concrete.

VAGUE	SHARP
Analyze our customer satisfaction data.	*Analyze the attached customer satisfaction data. Do this in three steps: 1) identify the three lowest-scoring categories, 2) look for patterns over the past six months, 3) formulate two concrete improvement recommendations. Present the outcome as a brief management summary.*

Description is a conversation, not a search query

One of the most common mistakes is thinking that a prompt is a one-time thing: you type something, get an answer, and you are done. But the power of modern AI systems lies precisely in the dialogue. You can redirect, refine, and go deeper.

Effective Description is iterative. You start with an initial instruction, evaluate the result, and adjust your approach. Every interaction teaches you something about how to phrase things better next time.

The secret weapon: ask AI to help with your instruction

Stuck? Ask AI itself. Say: “I’m trying to achieve X. Help me formulate a better instruction.” AI systems are excellent at improving the assignments you give them. Use that.

Good communication with AI develops through practice. Not by taking a course and then “knowing” it, but by regularly experimenting, reflecting, and improving. Just as you get better at presenting, writing, or running meetings: by continuing to do it.

What does good Description require from an organization?

Individuals can start communicating better with AI tomorrow. But organizations that invest in this structurally build a lasting advantage.

Shared language and ways of working

When teams develop a common approach to AI instructions, they work more consistently and efficiently. Think of shared prompt libraries for frequently performed tasks, or team agreements on how to structure AI assignments for specific work processes.

Learning from each other

Employees who discover what works do not always share it automatically. Organizations that create space to share AI experiences accelerate the learning curve for the entire team. This does not have to be formal: a brief update in a team meeting is already valuable.

Quality assurance

Better instructions lead to better output, but that does not relieve anyone of the responsibility to evaluate AI output. Description and Discernment, the third competency within AI Fluency, go hand in hand. The better you instruct, the more targeted your quality checks can be.

How to get started: three steps toward better AI instructions

You do not need to change everything at once. Start small and build from there:

© newITera. All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced without permission.

- **Step 1 —** Choose one task you regularly perform with AI and apply the six techniques. Compare the result with what you got before.
- **Step 2 —** Save your best instructions. Build a personal prompt library for tasks you perform frequently. It saves time and ensures consistency.
- **Step 3 —** Share what works with your team. One shared example is worth more than ten individual experiments.

An AI Readiness Assessment maps out how your organization currently handles AI communication, where the greatest gains are, and which steps will have the most impact in the short term.

Conclusion

AI is only as good as the instructions you give it. That is not a limitation, it is an opportunity. Because it means that without technical knowledge, without extra budget, and without major changes, you can immediately get better results from the AI tools you already use.

Description is a skill. And skills develop through practice, learning from mistakes, and getting a little sharper every time. Organizations that support their people in this do not use AI as an expensive search engine, but as a genuine working partner.

Want to know how strong your organization is at AI Description?

newITera's AI Readiness Assessment maps out how your people, processes, and governance score across all four AI Fluency competencies, including Description.

Contact us at laurens.vandebergh@newitera.nl or visit www.newitera.nl

About newITera & Laurens Vandebergh

newITera is a Dutch IT consultancy based in Beuningen, Gelderland. Founded in 2011, initially as a specialized SAP firm, newITera has grown into a broad digital transformation partner. Today, newITera combines deep SAP expertise with services in data analytics, AI, cloud strategy, and low-code platforms. With a team of more than a hundred consultants, newITera serves leading enterprises and multinationals across their full digital transformation journey. What sets newITera apart is its combination of early adoption and deep specialization, as an independent partner that values human connection just as highly as technical excellence.

Laurens Vandebergh is Business Development Manager AI and Project Manager at newITera. With a broad background in technology and organizational change, he guides organizations in defining their AI strategy, conducting an AI Readiness Assessment, and realizing concrete use cases.

Contact: laurens.vandebergh@newitera.nl | www.newitera.nl

© newITera. All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced without permission.