Weekly readings - 2024-06-23

Tom Rochette <tom.rochette@coreteks.org>

November 2, 2024 — 36c8eb68

How to. . . use ChatGPT to boost your writing
Tips from the article:

- More elaborate and specific prompts work better.
- You can ask the AI to use specific styles for writing.

Tips from me:

- Use it to review your syntax, grammar, clarity, tone, biases, identify convoluted sentences, sentences that are too long.
- Use it to generate alternative sentences when you don't like how yours reads.
- Ask it to give you feedback on what you have written so far, what gaps are there.
- Ask it to produce an article with the opposite viewpoint.

Working with AI: Two paths to prompting
> Structured Prompting is about turning the AI into a tool that does a single task well in a way that is repeatable and adapts to its user.

Structured prompts are very powerful. Once you start using a LLM regularly you'll frequently have the same type of requests which will nicely lead you to collect those statements (prompts) so that you can simply copy/paste them and adapt them to your new use case. I think that being able to share, easily edit, and observe how others use your structured prompts can help you improve them. I've personally found that reading other people's prompts enabled me to broaden my capabilities and the breadth of my thinking.

LLM prompting guide
Tips:

- When choosing the model to work with, the latest and most capable models are likely to perform better.
- Start with a simple and short prompt, and iterate from there.
- Put the instructions at the beginning of the prompt, or at the very end. When working with large context, models apply various optimizations to prevent Attention complexity from scaling quadratically. This may make a model more attentive to the beginning or end of a prompt than the middle.
- Clearly separate instructions from the text they apply to.
- Be specific and descriptive about the task and the desired outcome - its format, length, style, language, etc.
- Avoid ambiguous descriptions and instructions.
- Favor instructions that say "what to do" instead of those that say "what not to do".
- "Lead" the output in the right direction by writing the first word (or even begin the first sentence for the model).
- Use advanced techniques like Few-shot prompting and Chain-of-thought
- Test your prompts with different models to assess their robustness.
- Version and track the performance of your prompts.

Cognitive Load is what matters
Interesting way to discuss cognitive load when reading code.

No, you don't owe me a favor

> If I take the time to do something for you, it's not because I'm a matcher looking for something in return. It's because I aspire to be a giver—I enjoy being helpful. My effort to support you means that I think highly of you and might even care about you. When you say you owe me, it reduces my investment in you to an accounting transaction.

Something that resonated with me quite a lot. When I do things for others, it's not because I expect things in return. Maybe the only thing I hope is that you acknowledge and possibly appreciate the help, but I don't expect reciprocation.