



# Prompts and attachments: asking Gemini well

How to write requests that work and how to let Gemini read your files

---

Gianluca Bonomo · [www.gianlu.it](http://www.gianlu.it) · [info@gianlu.it](mailto:info@gianlu.it)



# Contents

---

|                                                              |   |
|--------------------------------------------------------------|---|
| How to use this handout .....                                | 3 |
| 1. Why the answer is vague .....                             | 3 |
| 2. The four steps: context, goal, format, verification ..... | 4 |
| 3. Attaching files, photos and documents.....                | 5 |
| 3.1 What you can ask about an attachment .....               | 5 |
| 4. Choosing the right model for the request.....             | 6 |
| 5. Conversing: the request improves as you go .....          | 6 |
| 6. The fourth step: verifying.....                           | 7 |
| Hands-on exercise .....                                      | 8 |
| Questions that come up in class.....                         | 9 |
| Glossary.....                                                | 9 |
| Further reading .....                                        | 9 |

## How to use this handout

---

This handout gathers, in written and ordered form, everything covered in the lesson. You do not need to memorise it: it is there so you can find things again calmly, later, when the lesson is over and a question is left hanging.

### GOAL

Learn to write a complete request in four steps, attach files and photos, choose the right model and check the answers before using them.

### What you will be able to do

- Recognise why a vague request produces a vague answer.
- Write a prompt with context, goal, format and verification.
- Attach a file, a photo or a Drive document and ask Gemini to read it.
- Refine an answer with follow-up questions and judge how reliable it is.

## 1. Why the answer is vague

---

Gemini cannot read your mind: it works only with what you write.

Imagine walking into a trattoria and telling the waiter: «Bring me something good». You get the most common dish, which is almost never the one you had in mind. With Gemini the same thing happens: if you write «tell me about ponds», you get a generic summary, because the system has to **guess** who you are, what you need and how long you want it.

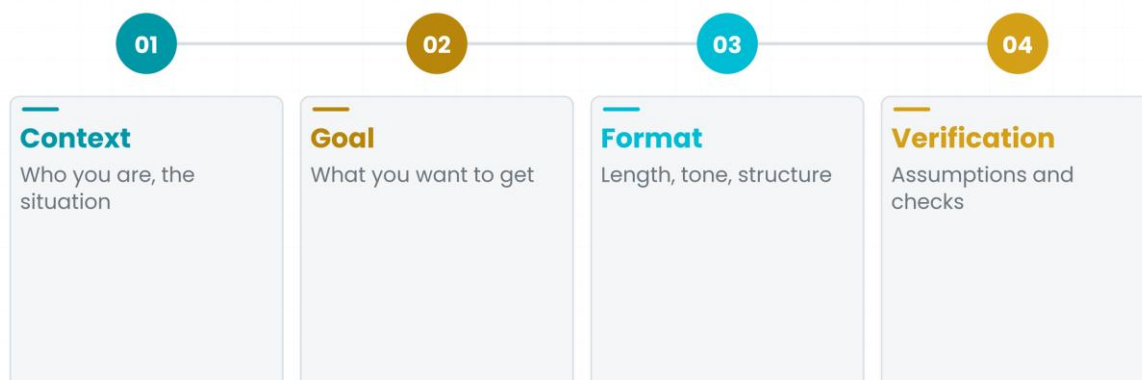
### IN PLAIN WORDS

Every piece of information you do not give, Gemini invents. Better to give it yourself.

The good news is that writing a good request takes just a four-step method, which you learn in ten minutes.

## 2. The four steps: context, goal, format, verification

### The four steps



The four steps of an effective prompt

| Step                   | Question it answers                    | Example with the pond                                                                       |
|------------------------|----------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>1. Context</b>      | Who are you and what is the situation? | «I have a 40-square-metre garden near Turin, in half shade, and I have never built a pond.» |
| <b>2. Goal</b>         | What do I want to get?                 | «I want a plan to build a 3-by-2-metre pond in two weekends.»                               |
| <b>3. Format</b>       | What should the answer look like?      | «Numbered list, at most 10 points, short sentences, with difficult words explained.»        |
| <b>4. Verification</b> | How do I check the result?             | «At the end list the assumptions you made and the things I should check with a nurseryman.» |

The four-step method, with an example for each.

### BEFORE AND AFTER

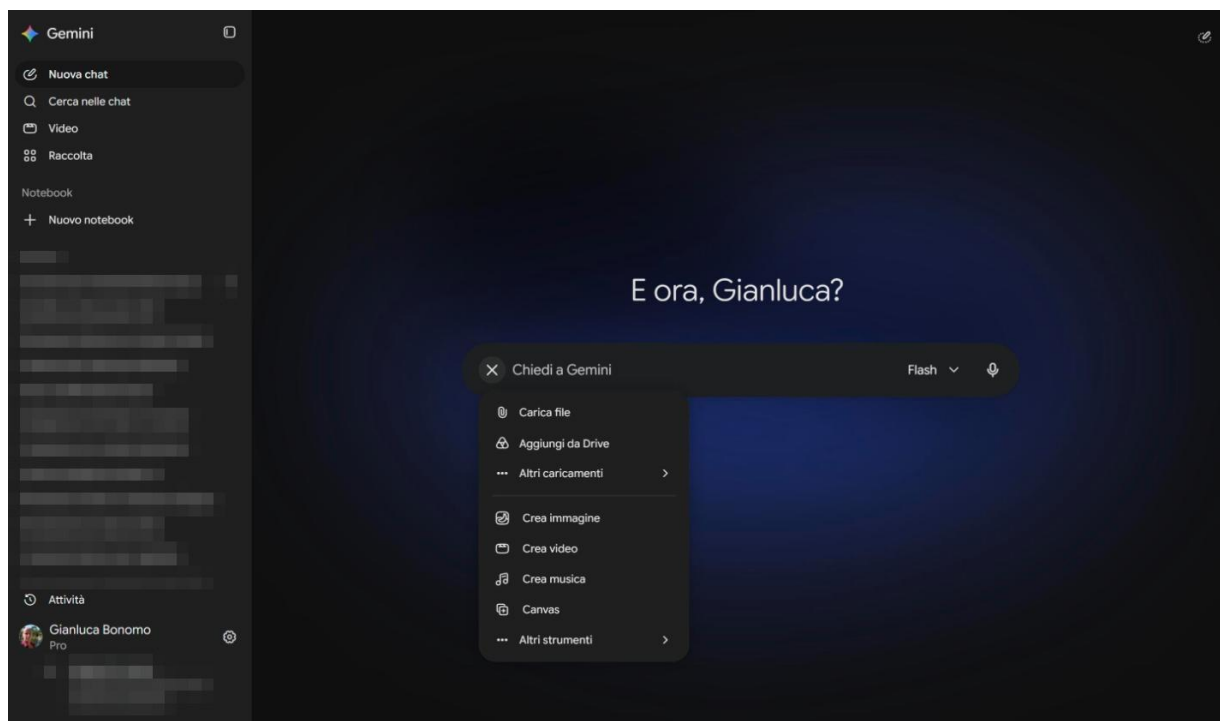
**Before:** «How do you build a pond?»

**After:** «I have a 40-square-metre garden near Turin, in half shade, and I have never built a pond. I want a plan to build a 3-by-2-metre one in two weekends. Answer with a numbered list of at most 10 points, short sentences, explaining difficult words. At the end list the assumptions you made and the things to check with a nurseryman.»

Notice that the «after» is not harder: it is just more **complete**. And the fourth step, verification, is the one almost everybody skips. A text that sounds good is not necessarily true: asking Gemini to state its assumptions turns a self-confident answer into a checkable one.

### 3. Attaching files, photos and documents

Sometimes the context does not fit in two lines: it is a photo of the garden, a quote in PDF, a table. That is why next to the writing box there is the **+** button.



The + button menu: attachments at the top, creation tools below. Interface in Italian.

The menu has two halves. At the top are the ways to **bring in** your materials; below, the tools to **create** something (images, video, music, Canvas), which we see in lessons 4 and 5.

- **Carica file** (Upload file): pick a file from your computer, for example a PDF, a photo or a document.
- **Aggiungi da Drive** (Add from Drive): take a file straight from your Google Drive, without downloading it.
- **Altri caricamenti** (More uploads): other sources to take material from.

#### 3.1 What you can ask about an attachment

1. «I am attaching a photo of the garden: in which corner does the pond make most sense and why?»
2. «Summarise this quote in five lines and tell me which items seem the most expensive.»
3. «This table is messy: rewrite it cleanly, with one column per material.»

**BE CAREFUL WHAT YOU ATTACH**

An attached file **leaves your computer** like any text. Do not attach documents with personal or confidential data of others (contracts, payslips, medical records) unless you are authorised. If in doubt, delete the sensitive data before uploading.

## 4. Choosing the right model for the request

In lesson 1 we saw the models. Now we use them. A practical rule: **do not send the truck to buy bread**.

| Task                                                     | Recommended model   | Why                                |
|----------------------------------------------------------|---------------------|------------------------------------|
| A quick question, a definition, a short translation      | Flash or Flash-Lite | Fast answer and low consumption.   |
| Rewriting a text, summarising a document, a work plan    | Flash               | Balance between quality and speed. |
| A long document with many pieces to connect, an analysis | Pro                 | Holds more information together.   |
| A calculation or reasoning with many steps               | Extended reasoning  | Takes the time to check the steps. |

Which model for which task.

**A REAL CASE**

To work out how much waterproof liner a 3-by-2-metre pond needs, up to 80 centimetres deep, with steps (a simple calculation but full of traps), I use extended reasoning and then **recheck by hand** with a tape measure and a sheet of paper.

## 5. Conversing: the request improves as you go

Nobody writes the perfect request first time, not even people who do this for a living. The trick is to treat the first answer as a **draft**. Then you work with follow-up questions. Here are five moves I use all the time.

1. **Get it to ask you.** Write: «Before answering, ask me three questions you need to understand my case better.» Gemini interviews you and the final answer is much more targeted.
2. **Ask for alternatives.** «Give me three different versions, a shorter one, a more technical one, a funnier one.»
3. **Show an example.** «Write in the style of this text» and paste a paragraph of yours.
4. **Narrow down.** «Now cut it in half and remove every difficult word.»
5. **Ask what it does not know.** «Which of this information can you not know for certain?»

Remember also the circular arrow from lesson 2: if an answer does not convince you, sometimes it is enough to have it **regenerated**. But if it keeps being wrong, do not insist: change the request.

## 6. The fourth step: verifying

Gemini is brilliant at writing sentences that sound right. That is its strength and its risk: sometimes it invents a fact with the same confidence with which it states a true one. Experts call it a **hallucination**.

- Always ask for the **assumptions** and the **things to check**.
- For numbers, measurements, prices, dates and regulations, **find a second source** (an official site, a book, an expert).
- If the answer concerns health, money or law, treat Gemini as a **first draft**, never as a decision.
- Ask it to cite sources, then **open them yourself**: a link that does not exist is an alarm bell.

### THE IDEA IN ONE LINE

Gemini saves you time writing. Checking remains your job.

## Hands-on exercise

---

Twenty minutes, a real task from your work or home and, if you like, a file to attach.

1. Choose a task you do often, for example answering an email, preparing a quote or organising a job in the garden.
2. Write the request the way you would today, in one line. Save the answer.
3. Rewrite it with the four steps: context, goal, format, verification. Compare the two answers.
4. Attach a file or a photo with the + button (even a photo taken with your phone is fine) and ask for a summary or an opinion.
5. Ask: «Before answering, ask me three questions» and reply. Notice how much the answer changes.
6. Ask for the assumptions made and check at least one fact on a second source.

### WATCH OUT

Did you write the format (length, tone, structure)?

Did you verify a fact outside Gemini?

## Questions that come up in class

### Does a longer prompt work better?

No: precision matters. Five lines with the right information beat a page of waffle.

### What kind of files can I attach?

Documents, PDFs, photos and more: the + button menu shows the options on your account. Supported formats change over time and with the plan.

### Does Gemini keep the files I attach?

Files become part of the conversation. To learn how they are handled and for how long, read the privacy notice for the Gemini apps and the Activity page.

### Can I use Gemini in Italian and English together?

Yes, you can write in one language and ask for the answer in another. For important texts, have a person read them.

### What if the answer still does not convince me?

Almost always the format is missing, or written vaguely. Add an example of the result you want: it is the most powerful technique.

## Glossary

| Term                 | What it means                                                     |
|----------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Assumption</b>    | Information that Gemini takes as true without you having told it. |
| <b>Attachment</b>    | A file or photo you add to the request so Gemini reads it.        |
| <b>Hallucination</b> | An answer that sounds right but contains invented facts.          |
| <b>Prompt</b>        | The text you write to Gemini: the request with its context.       |
| <b>Regenerate</b>    | Asking Gemini to answer the same request again.                   |

## Further reading

**Gemini on the web, + button menu and model selector** – author's screenshots, 7 October 2026

**Google, guide to using Gemini and privacy notice for the Gemini apps** – to be consulted in the up-to-date version

**WATCH OUT**

Interface checked on 7 October 2026. Accepted file formats and the entries of the + menu may change with updates. Labels are shown in Italian as on screen, with an English gloss.