

Gripping as a Service: LLM-assisted requirements analysis



#vBrownBag

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Docs-/Specs-/Behavior-/Test- ...-Driven Development

If you can't write the user manual yet, you have no business starting to code.

-paraphrase of [Dr. Joseph M. Newcomer](#)

If you can't explain it to a six-year-old, you don't understand it yourself.

-apocryphally credited to Albert Einstein

We get emotional about requirements



When words are scary, and there's no writing pro...

The screenshot shows a web browser window with the address bar displaying "howtoprofessionallysay.akashrajpuhrit.com". The page content includes a toggle for "Current flow of data", a search bar with the placeholder "What are you looking for?", and two highlighted phrases with suggested alternatives.

← → ↻ 🏠 🔒 howtoprofessionallysay.akashrajpuhrit.com 📄 ☆

Current flow of data ☐

What you might feel like saying → What you can prefer to say instead

What are you looking for? 🔍 🖨️ 🗑️

You are overcomplicating this ☆

→ Being mindful of timelines. Let's concentrate on the initial scope.

That meeting sounds like a waste of my time ☆

→ I'm unable to add value to this meeting but I would be happy to review the minutes.

Example: blameless postmortem for a wasted internship

“I didn’t do anything useful, this whole rotation, **because Chris won't tell me** what he does for a living. I don't know how I was supposed to come in here and be the new intern with the fresh ideas and automate the boring stuff about the jobs that Chris allegedly teaches everyone to do, when Chris won't actually teach me how to do it. ... Anyway **from what I can tell it seems like** there's some sort of upgrade coordination process on the weekends where Chris has to do some database work and then Katie has to shut down a running processes on some servers and download zip files from the vendor and follow instructions out of a PDF...Katie **refuses to learn a shell scripting language** so it's all clicks...”



“I spent time analyzing our weekend maintenance cycles. While I didn't want to **disrupt live production systems** during my short time here, I have **mapped out processes**, and to ensure a smooth transition for the team and the next intern, I have authored a roadmap outlining how the department can **leverage existing CLI tools** to transition this from a manual, high-touch process into a repeatable script-driven workflow...”

(tone-change demo)

Starting prompt:

I'm an exiting intern, and this is my rant -- what can I leave behind that'll not get me fired and be useful to the department I'm rotating out of?

Gripping do's & don't's

Do:

- Borrow relationship-counseling therapy-speak. Non-Violent Communication “[observation, feeling, needs, request](#)” framing is excellent. And well-represented in LLM training data.
 - e.g. “that %&@*ing *#@^%!\$” → “**exasperated**”
 - e.g. “never tells me...” → “**pattern ... overlooked**”
- Learn whether company culture expects meeting-like prompt professionalism, or allows a more casual tone. If casual allowed, *maybe*:
 - “This *idea / decision / behavior* is stupid”
 - Occasional cursing for emphasis
 - “Always” / “Never” exaggerations
- Give people and departments pseudonyms or composite/replacement identities/stories.
- [Straw-man](#) fallacies are fine, if you're self-aware!
- Ask it to play devil's advocate against you.
- Ask it to capture “Cranky Chris's” needs, too.
- Ask it to help you rephrase professionally.

Don't:

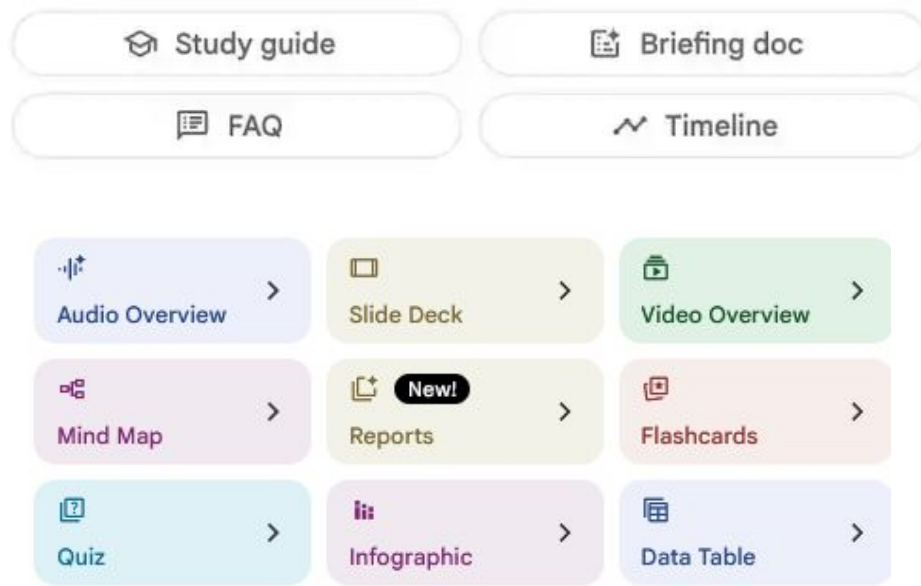
- Wish violence, threats, or harm.
- Name-call: avoid actually saying “Cranky Chris” or saying someone *is* stupid.
- Let the LLM's flattery go to your head and make you bull-headed outside the chat.
 - (This process should help you get the gripes *out* of your system and simmer down and approach others *more* professionally.)
- Gossip to non-corporate LLMs.

TL;DR: it's a robot “[rubber duck](#),” but...

YOU'RE STILL AT WORK.

Know what's expected at *your* workplace.

When you can do, but not explain, & there's no business analyst...



(assisted analysis demos)

Tips

- Remember it's the **Library of Alexandria**. It simultaneously knows both your vendor's weird product *and* business-school planning vocabulary. It's like that dual-English-computer-science-major programmer, or that project manager who really knows your stack. Embrace that and let the chat dance all over.
- Don't let it code for you. Sure, a "show me a hello world," if that helps you understand the problem enough to ask better plain-English questions, but remember: "If you can't write the user manual yet, you have no business starting to code." This round is requirements analysis, asking **what** on earth you're even supposed to be building in the first place, not code-file templating.
- Journalism: Who, What, Where, When, Why. (Though not so much "How.")
 - Some favorite phrases for getting it to turn "how" runbooks into "5-W" **stories**: "pain points," "quick wins," "low-hanging fruit," "heavy lifts."
 - Ask the LLM **why** anyone even cares about your stack. And which parts people often do/don't bother to automate, and **why (not)**. And what **competitors** are out there, and how the automation opportunities do/don't tend to **translate** across all similar platforms.
- **Pair-prompt** often. Watch & learn from each other.
- Encourage it to **expand** from your "known-unknowns" into possible "unknown-unknowns."
 - Learn just enough vocabulary/jargon to help it know what domain to expand (e.g. the "NotebookLM labels", "synthesis," "analysis," and all those other parts of planning and critical thinking that explain how we humans end up with "aha!" moments and fresh perspective)
 - "Is there any jargon for that?" (e.g. maybe you'll pick up phrases like "serverless" or "event-messaging")
 - Also, ask it for 101 / ELI5 / flavor / variants / perspectives.
- Use emotionally **vulnerable** phrasing. It trained on Q&A forums, where people had mercy on the desperate. Sometimes "weak & whiny" maps to its best answers.
- Ask it to play **devil's advocate** and poke holes in its own and your ideas.
- Got too many secrets in your "how" runbooks to show the LLM? Take **dictation** and play censor while you speak!