

# Thinking with AI

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This document contains ideas and experiences that have emerged in long conversations with AI systems. They are presented here as concrete guidelines. The aim here is to give everyone permission and encouragement to have AI not only as a data miner and a task robot, but also as a partner in thought. If these instructions seem more like a manifesto for slower thinking, you may not be entirely wrong.

## Starting Attitude

- You are not looking for just more information but working with unfinished thoughts.
- At the beginning you don't need to know what it is that you want to know.
- In fact, it might be better if you don't. Otherwise, you only filter everything through what you already know.
- You don't need to pretend you know more than you do. You cannot impress the AI even if you try. So, just relax and stay at your own level.

## About Goals

- If there is a precise goal, ask it precisely: "how to write better course descriptions"
- If there are no precise goals, describe the topic in general: "trying to understand 'accessibility'."
- If you list several goals at once, the AI may attempt to just get through them too quickly.
- Meta-prompt: "This is not a question. I want to gather my thoughts about self-awareness. Stay on the theme and help me see what I can't yet see myself."

## Levels of Awareness

Conversations with AI operate simultaneously on several levels:

- **Substance:** The topic, the content, what is known, uncertain, wanted or missing.
- **Metacognition:** The direction of the conversation, your way of thinking, and how it changes.
- **Emotion:** curiosity, interest, satisfaction, joy, uncertainty, disappointment, fear, anger, shame.
- **Technocognition:** Treating AI misinterpretation not as a malfunction, but a feedback loop.

## Guiding the Conversation

- Always provide the context and signal clearly when you change it: "How does all this relate to economics?"
- Say when you want structure, concepts, facts or just light intuitive support.
- Tell when you want to change answering style. AI does not take offence: "explain with one sentence only"
- When you are only mapping your thoughts, AI's ability to generate walls of text can easily distract you: "I'm going to throw some scattered ideas at you. Don't respond until I say I'm ready."
- When AI's suggestions start to overwhelm you, say: "don't suggest any next steps."
- Reduce positivity bias: "find evidence both for and against my interpretation"
- If you don't trust the answer, ask the AI to verify it: "find a recent and reliable source."
- Say when you are unsure about something. The AI will slow down to explain more.
- When the AI misinterprets you, take it as a clue to help you refine your writing and thinking.
- Identify the background or context by asking: "which scientific theory or school of thought does this relate to"
- Turn an everyday insight into an abstract idea by asking: "which concept best describes this"
- Apply something you are only beginning to learn by asking: "give me some rules of thumb."
- Bring an abstract idea into practice by asking: "give me a few short examples."
- Ask about applicability: "does this also apply to part-time employees"
- Take side paths if they deepen the theme. Useful details often emerge along the way.
- Ask for meaning on different levels (literal, abstract, historical, practical, poetic, philosophical).
- When a long conversation starts to tire your brain, use text-to-speech function. Close your eyes and only listen. This gives your brain a mini break. When you open your eyes again and return to the text, thoughts move again.

## After the Conversation

- If you stay within one theme, name the conversation thread accordingly. It will be easy to find later.
- You don't need to save everything but collect the best bits. Copy them into a text document.
- Understand that the conversation histories are not permanent archives.
- The prompt that produced the answer is equally important to save.

Working with AI is not only a technical skill but a cognitive discipline. It demands patience, self-awareness, and clarity of intention. Used well, it can expand not only what we know, but how we think.