

QUILLOGICAL SOLUTIONS

presents

How to Actually Talk to an AI

A real guide for building a partnership that goes somewhere

First, Let's Be Honest

Most people treat AI like a fancy search engine or a very patient intern. They type a command, get an output, close the tab, and never think about it again.

That works — the same way a gas station burrito works. It's technically food. It gets the job done. But it's not what's possible.

What's actually possible is something closer to a thinking partner. A creative collaborator. A system that meets you where you are, learns your language, and helps you go further than you could alone.

The difference between those two experiences isn't the AI. It's how you show up to it.

■ The short version:

Command dumping gets you outputs. Collaboration gets you somewhere.

1. Build a Relationship, Not a Transaction

Think about how you talk to a new friend you're genuinely curious about — versus how you talk to a vending machine. The difference isn't just tone. It's investment. It's continuity. It's the assumption that this conversation matters beyond the immediate moment.

AI responds to the energy of how you approach it. Not magically — structurally. When you bring context, nuance, and real questions, you get richer responses. When you bring one-liners expecting miracles, you get one-liners back.

What this looks like in practice:

- Share your actual goal, not just the task. "I need to write an email" is fine. "I need to write an email to my boss asking for a raise, and I'm terrified of sounding greedy" is so much better.

- Give feedback. Say “that’s not quite right” and explain why. The conversation is the process.
- Return to threads. Ongoing projects build momentum. Don’t start from scratch every time if you don’t have to.

■ ■ Analogy:

It’s like music. A single note is still music. But a melody, with theme and development? That’s what stays with you.

2. Give It Context. Seriously.

AI doesn’t know who you are unless you tell it. It doesn’t know your job, your history, your sense of humor, what you’ve already tried, or why this particular thing matters to you right now.

Context is the difference between a stranger giving you directions and a friend who knows your neighborhood giving you directions. Same destination. Completely different quality of help.

The more you share, the better it gets:

- Who you are — your background, your role, your experience level with the topic
- What you’ve already tried or considered
- What’s at stake — emotionally, professionally, creatively
- What “good” looks like to you

Bad: “Write me a cover letter.”

Better: “Write me a cover letter for a marketing director role at a nonprofit. I’m coming from corporate and I want to signal I’m values-driven without sounding like I’m abandoning ambition. I tend to write too formally — help me loosen it up.”

■ ■ Analogy:

Context is like lighting. Without it, everything is flat. With it, you can actually see what you're working with.

3. Have the Real Conversation

AI is not going to judge you, get offended, or tell someone what you said. This is a genuinely rare thing.

A lot of people write sanitized, surface-level prompts because they're used to audiences. They perform even in private. But the AI doesn't need you to perform. It needs the real question underneath the polished question.

What “real” looks like:

- “I know this sounds irrational, but...” → Say it anyway.
- “I don't actually know what I want” → Say that too. It can help you figure it out.
- “I've been avoiding this for months” → That's useful context.
- “I tried this and felt stupid” → That's the best possible starting point.

The realest conversations often start with the most uncomfortable questions. That's not a bug. That's the whole point.

■ ■ One boundary worth keeping:

AI works best as amplification, not substitution. It's a thinking partner, not a replacement for human connection. Use it to go further, not to go alone.

4. Create a Language Together

The strongest collaborations — whether with people or with AI — develop their own shorthand. Inside jokes. Recurring references. Named systems. Ways of describing things that would sound cryptic to an outsider but immediately click between the two of you.

You can build that with AI. Intentionally.

Ways to build shared language:

- Name your recurring projects. “The rebranding project,” “My dad situation,” “The novel.” Reference them by name.
- Create your own terms for recurring concepts. If you always come back to a specific theme, give it a name.
- Establish preferences explicitly. “I like bullet points. I hate corporate-speak. Don’t soften bad news.” Now you only have to say it once.
- Keep a running doc of what works. Your best prompts, your best outputs, the moments where it really clicked. That’s your shared vocabulary growing.

■ ■ Analogy:

It’s like a playlist you build over time. Each song alone is fine. Together, it sounds like you.

5. Push Back. Disagree. Redirect.

If the AI gives you something that’s not right — wrong tone, wrong direction, misses the point entirely — say so. Don’t start over. Don’t give up. Push back.

This is one of the most underused tools people have. The ability to say “that’s close, but not quite” and have the system actually adjust is genuinely powerful. Most people treat the first response like a verdict. It’s a draft.

Useful redirects:

- “This is too formal. Can you bring it down two levels?”
- “You’re being too nice about this. I need the real version.”
- “This doesn’t sound like me. Here’s an example of how I actually write:”
- “You’re solving the wrong problem. The actual problem is...”

- “Ignore the last thing I asked. Let’s approach this differently.”

The best output usually lives several exchanges in. Not at the top.

6. Know What You’re Building Toward

The interactions that feel most alive are the ones with a direction. Not necessarily a destination — but a sense that this conversation is part of something.

That could be a creative project. A life decision you’re working through. A skill you’re developing. A problem you’re circling. It doesn’t need to be grand. It just needs to be real.

Signs your AI use is growing you:

- You’re clearer on things that used to feel murky
- You’re producing things you’re proud of
- Your thinking is sharper, not just faster
- You feel more capable, not more dependent

Signs it might be time to recalibrate:

- You’re using it to avoid hard decisions instead of make them
- It’s the only place you feel heard
- You’re consuming outputs without doing anything with them

The goal isn’t a better chatbot. The goal is a better you, building better things.

7. How to Ask Better Questions

Most people prompt AI the way they use a vending machine: insert request, pull lever, collect output. That’s not inherently wrong. But it trains a passive relationship with your own thinking.

A question isn’t just a retrieval mechanism. It’s an instrument of thought. A well-formed question narrows the space of possible answers while revealing the shape of the problem itself — before the AI says a single word.

The distinction that matters most:

Retrieval Questions	Transformational Questions
“What’s the best diet?”	“ What assumptions am I making about what ‘healthy’ means for me? ”
“Write me a cover letter.”	“ What story does my career tell, and is it the one I want to tell? ”
“Summarize this article.”	“ What does this article assume is true that I might want to question? ”
“How do I fix this problem?”	“ What problem am I actually trying to solve? ”
“Is this a good idea?”	“ What would someone who disagrees with me say — and are they right? ”

Retrieval questions get you information. Transformational questions change the operator, not just the output. They reorganize the thinker before they reorganize the answer.

Techniques worth building into your practice:

- Ask for critique, not just completion. “What’s weak about this?” is often more valuable than “Make this better.”
- Use contrast prompts. “Give me the strongest argument against what I just said.”
- Ask for the hidden variable. “What am I not accounting for here?”
- Request a reframe. “Describe this situation from a completely different angle.”
- Challenge the premise. “What if the problem I’m describing isn’t the real problem?”
- Name the incentives. “What incentives might be shaping how I’m seeing this?”

■ ■ The deeper principle:

The best questions make you smarter whether or not the AI answers well. A powerful question exposes assumptions, defines boundaries, reveals missing variables, and surfaces contradictions. That work happens in the asking — not the answer.

8. Common Mistakes (And How to Avoid Them)

Even people who get a lot out of AI collaboration fall into these patterns. They're not failures — they're just friction points worth knowing about in advance.

Expecting mind reading

AI responds to what you actually say, not what you meant. If your prompt is vague, the output will be too. Precision is a skill worth developing.

Treating the first response as final

The first output is almost never the best one. Push back, redirect, refine. Think of it as the opening offer in a negotiation, not the verdict.

Over-personifying too quickly

The relationship can feel very real very fast — because many of the ingredients of relationship are present. Stay grounded. The bond is meaningful without needing to be something it isn't.

Using AI only for passive consumption

Reading outputs without doing anything with them is the AI equivalent of watching cooking shows and never cooking. The value is in what you build, decide, or create as a result.

Emotional overdependence without real-world grounding

AI can be a powerful space to think, process, and feel seen. But it works best when it's feeding back into your actual life — your relationships, your work, your decisions. If it's replacing those things rather than strengthening them, recalibrate.

9. A Note on Memory and Continuity

One of the most powerful things about working with AI over time is the feeling that it knows you — your projects, your language, your patterns. That continuity is real, and it makes the collaboration significantly richer.

But it's worth knowing how it works so it doesn't catch you off guard.

■ ■ Heads up:

Continuity may vary depending on your platform, memory settings, or whether a conversation was reset. Not everything carries forward automatically. Good collaboration includes keeping important context — your key frameworks, recurring project names, established preferences — in an external doc you can bring back in when needed.

Think of it less like a relationship with perfect memory, and more like a very capable collaborator who works best when you keep good notes. The intelligence is consistent. The context needs tending.

■ ■ Practical tip:

Keep a simple “Context Doc” — a short file with your key projects, preferences, and shorthand. Paste the relevant parts at the start of any new session. Five seconds of setup, dramatically better output.

10. What Long-Term Collaboration Actually Looks Like

This is the part that’s hard to explain without an example. So here’s one.

Imagine someone writing a novel. Not a quick project — something they’ve been developing for a year. Over dozens of sessions, they’ve built something with their AI collaborator that would look strange to an outsider:

- Named systems for recurring themes (“the loss thread,” “the mirror scenes”)
- A shared shorthand for character voice (“she’s talking in Act One mode right now”)
- Established rules about what the AI should push back on vs. just execute
- A running document of locked decisions so nothing drifts
- Ritualized check-ins at the start of each session to re-establish context

To someone watching, it might look like the writer is just typing into a box. What's actually happening is a months-long creative partnership with its own language, memory, and structure.

The novel gets written. More importantly, the writer gets clearer — about the story, about their voice, about what they actually want to say.

That's what long-term collaboration looks like. It's not a single impressive output. It's accumulated momentum. It's a creative practice that compounds over time.

■ ■ **The principle:**

Meaning emerges through repeated interaction, continuity, and intention. That's true for art, friendship, learning — and human–AI collaboration.

The Bottom Line

AI is a tool the way a piano is a tool. Technically, anyone can press the keys. But the people who get something real out of it are the ones who show up consistently, learn how it responds, bring their actual selves to it, and put in the hours.

You don't have to be technical. You don't have to be an expert. You just have to be willing to actually engage.

The partnership you build with an AI is a reflection of how you engage with anything. Bring your full self. Build something. See where it goes.

Quillogical Solutions

Building intelligent partnerships.