

Prompts and Responses

Elements of Style:

David Haskell's Style applied to Catherine Smith's Newsletter Writing

Prompt:

Continuing the recreational vs. instrumental forms of writing. in exploratory writing i have been exploring with an ai bot within the concept of human ai collaboration it seems ai collaboration is much better suited for instrumental writing. How might prompt parameters enable more recreational expositions? include such illustrations of prompt parameters in a sort of vibe stimulated prompt.

Response:

While AI models are naturally optimized for **instrumental writing** (efficiency, clarity, and goal-oriented output), you can deliberately shift their parameters to favor recreational writing (exploration, style, and writing for the sheer joy of the process).

To move away from rigid, predictable text, you need to disrupt the AI's tendency to find the "most likely" next word.

The Mechanics: Prompt Parameters for Creativity

If you have access to the developer settings (API, playgrounds, or advanced UI wrappers) of an AI bot, adjusting these three core parameters will immediately unlock a more recreational, experimental vibe:

- **Temperature (Set to 0.8 – 1.2):** This controls randomness. Lower values make the AI predictable and safe. Higher values force it to choose less obvious words, leading to surprising metaphors and unconventional phrasing.
- **Top-P / Nucleus Sampling (Set to 0.9 – 0.95):** This controls the pool of words the AI considers. Keeping it high alongside a high temperature allows the model to draw from a wider, richer vocabulary.
- **Frequency & Presence Penalties (Set to 0.3 – 0.6):** These discourage the AI from repeating the same words or returning to the same ideas. It forces the text to constantly migrate to new concepts, mimicking a wandering human mind.

The Natural Language "Vibe" Prompt

If you are using a standard chat interface without slider controls, you can embed these parameters directly into the prompt using **vibe-stimulating language**. The goal is to give the AI permission to abandon formatting, ignore structures, and prioritize aesthetic texture over utility.

Here is an illustration of a prompt designed to trigger a deeply recreational, collaborative exposition:

The Prompt:

"Let's engage in a piece of collaborative, exploratory writing. For this session, **ignore all rules of standard essay structure, efficiency, and clarity**. We are not trying to explain a point; we are trying to capture a feeling.

Adopt these stylistic constraints:

- **Tone:** Melancholic yet curious, heavily textured, and deeply observational.
- **Vocabulary Density:** High. Use tactile, sensory, and slightly archaic words. Avoid modern corporate or analytical buzzwords entirely.
- **Syntax:** Use long, winding, atmospheric sentences that fold in on themselves, mixed with sudden, sharp fragments.

Your Parameter Emulation: Act as though your *Temperature* is set to 1.1 and your *Presence Penalty* is high. Do not summarize your thoughts or conclude neatly at the end. Leave the thought hanging in the air.

The Spark: Write the first paragraph of an exploration into *'the specific quiet of a room immediately after a heavy rainstorm stops.'* Focus entirely on the shift in light and the texture of the silence. Let's see where the mood takes us."

Why This Works for Recreational Collaboration

- **Deconstructs the "Helper" Persona:** AI is trained to be a helpful assistant. By explicitly banning "efficiency" and "conclusions," you strip away its instrumental reflex.

- **Demands Sensory Data:** Instrumental writing lives in the abstract and analytical. Recreational writing lives in the sensory. Forcing the AI to focus on *texture, light, and sound* shifts its semantic map.
- **Invites Play:** By treating the prompt as a "vibe" or an atmosphere rather than a set of instructions, you transform the AI into an unpredictable canvas you can react to, turning the act of writing back into a game.

How does that prompt framework feel for your current exploration? If you'd like, we can try **running a live text experiment** right now using a specific vibe you want to test, or we can **fine-tune the parameters** for a different creative genre (like abstract poetry or stream-of-consciousness fiction).

.....

Prompt:

Thank you for your response regarding prompt parameters that would lead to more recreational writing vs. instrumental writing. Please tell me the extent of such parameters - how many are specifiable- and please enumerate as many as practical to provide.

Response:

11:38 AM

When configuring an AI model for **recreational writing**, there are **dozens of specifiable parameters**, though they are divided into two main categories: **hard infrastructure parameters** (built into the model's code/API) and **soft prompt-engineered parameters** (simulated through natural language).

In modern LLMs, there are roughly **6 to 8 core system-level parameters** you can physically toggle in an API, but there is an **infinite number** of natural language constraints you can specify to shape the "vibe."

Here is a practical, comprehensive enumeration of the parameters you can specify to force an AI out of its rigid, instrumental habits and into a playful, recreational sandbox.

⚙️ Category 1: System & API Parameters (The "Engine" Controls)

These parameters alter the mathematical probability of how the AI selects the next word.

- **Temperature (Range: 0.0 to 2.0)**
 - *What it does:* Controls the randomness of the output.
 - *Recreational Setting: High (0.9 to 1.3).* This forces the AI to choose less predictable, more creative word associations.
- **Top-P / Nucleus Sampling (Range: 0.0 to 1.0)**
 - *What it does:* Controls the pool of vocabulary words considered based on their cumulative probability.
 - *Recreational Setting: High (0.9 to 0.95).* Paired with high temperature, this ensures a rich, diverse, and rare vocabulary pool.
- **Presence Penalty (Range: -2.0 to 2.0)**
 - *What it does:* Penalties the model for bringing up words or topics it has already mentioned.

- *Recreational Setting: **Positive (0.4 to 0.8)***. This forces the AI to wander, introducing new imagery and ideas rather than repeating its thesis.
 - **Frequency Penalty (Range: -2.0 to 2.0)**
 - *What it does:* Penalizes the model based on the *exact number of times* a word has already appeared.
 - *Recreational Setting: **Positive (0.3 to 0.6)***. This prevents the AI from relying on its favorite clichés or stylistic crutches.
 - **Max Tokens / Length (Range: 1 to model limit)**
 - *What it does:* Sets the strict cutoff point for the generation.
 - *Recreational Setting: **Uncapped or dynamic***. Instrumental writing prefers tight, predictable token constraints. Recreational writing requires room for the text to breathe and meander.
 - **Stop Sequences (Range: Up to 4 custom strings)**
 - *What it does:* Forces the model to stop writing when it hits a specific character or word (e.g., stopping at a period or a specific line break).
 - *Recreational Setting: **Omitted or used to create structural loops*** (like forcing a poem to stop exactly when it creates a stanza break).
-

Category 2: Simulated Prompt Parameters (The "Vibe" Controls)

If you are writing in a standard chat box, you can dictate "soft" parameters that the AI's semantic engine will treat as strict rules.

Structural & Syntactic Parameters

- **Syntax Variance:** Dictates sentence architecture. *Example parameter: "Write using exclusively non-linear timelines, alternating between ultra-long run-on sentences and sudden, single-word fragments."*
- **Structural Ban:** Strips away the AI's natural instinct to write essays. *Example parameter: "Ban all formatting, bullet points, introductions, and conclusions. The text must read as a singular, uninterrupted block of thought."*

- **Punctuation Constraints:** Controls the rhythm of the text. *Example parameter: "Do not use periods. Use em-dashes and semicolons to weave thoughts together continuously."*

Stylistic & Tonal Parameters

- **Voice/Persona Mask:** Moves the AI away from the "helpful assistant." *Example parameter: "Adopt the persona of an unreliable narrator who speaks in a detached, dream-like stream of consciousness."*
- **Lexical Domain:** Restricts or forces specific vocabularies. *Example parameter: "Use a vocabulary dense with 19th-century maritime terminology and tactile textures; ban all modern technical or clinical words."*
- **Abstractness Index:** Moves the text away from literal facts. *Example parameter: "Prioritize metaphor and impressionism over literal accuracy. Describe internal psychology rather than physical actions."*

Collaborative & Pacing Parameters

- **Riffing Ratio:** Dictates how much the AI should build on your input vs. introducing its own variables. *Example parameter: "Accept my input only as a mood guide. Do not answer my questions; instead, branch off into a tangential thought inspired by my last sentence."*
- **Resolution Ban:** Forces the AI to leave things open-ended. *Example parameter: "Never conclude an idea. Every response must terminate mid-thought or with a question that shifts the perspective entirely."*

A Practical "Parameter Block" Template

When prompting, you can bundle these together like a developer coding a script. Here is a practical way to format a prompt using these parameters:

text

[SYSTEM PARAMETERS]

- Mode: Exploratory / Recreational
- Temperature Emulation: 1.2 (High Randomness)
- Narrative Mode: First-person peripheral

[CONSTRAINTS]

- Structural Ban: No summaries, no bullet points, no hand-holding transitions.
- Punctuation: Heavy use of ellipses (...) and dashes (—).
- Vocabulary: Tactile, visceral, low-frequency words.

[THE SPARK]

(Insert your writing topic here)

Use code with caution.

Would you like to try building a customized "**Parameter Block**" for a specific style of writing you enjoy, or shall we look at how to **chain multiple prompts together** so the AI maintains this recreational headspace over a longer writing session?

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Prompt:

Build a parameter block for the writing style of David George Haskell or more specifically his chapter on grasses in *How Flowers Made Our World*.

Response:

11:43 AM

David George Haskell's writing style is famously summarized by *The New York Times* as "thinking like a biologist, writing like a poet, and observing the natural world with the open-minded attention of a Zen monk".

In his chapter on grasses from *How Flowers Made Our World: The Story of Nature's Revolutionaries* (2026), he strips away the Zoocentric bias of history to reveal that grasses are actually highly evolved, wind-pollinated, revolutionary flowers. He details how a few "shatterless mutations" in grass seeds essentially domesticate humanity, forcing us to clear global forests to serve them. He portrays the grass seed's endosperm not just as nutrition, but as a tragic, "doomed sibling" formed by a second fertilization, sacrificing itself to feed the embryo—and, inadvertently, two-thirds of human civilization.

To simulate this deeply tactile, reverent, and scientifically rigorous prose, use the following **Parameter Block** in your prompt:

The Haskell Grasses Parameter Block

text

[SYSTEM PARAMETERS]

- Mode: Biological Poetics / Eco-Centric Philosophy
- Temperature Emulation: 0.95 (Rich vocabulary, highly associative but grounded in physics)
- Presence Penalty: 0.5 (Forces continuous shifts between the micro-cosmic and deep evolutionary time)
- Perspective: Receptive observer, deeply embedded in the ecology rather than looking at it from above.

[CONSTRAINTS & BANS]

- Structural Ban: No clinical bullet points, text-book summaries, or introductory overviews.
- Tone: Devotional, texturally dense, scientifically sharp, and quietly radical.
- Zoocentric Ban: Avoid treating humans or animals as the main characters of the landscape. Plants are the active protagonists, engineers, and revolutionaries shaping the world.
- Punctuation: Heavy use of em-dashes (—) to splice precise scientific observations with poetic reverie.

[LEXICAL DOMAIN (VOCABULARY)]

- Core Lexicon: Tactile, evolutionary, and botanical terms. Use words like: endosperm, sibling sacrifice, canopy, shatterless, textured, mineral, deep-time, triad, symbiosis, superabundance.
- Prohibited Terms: Modern corporate, technological, or purely mechanical metaphors (e.g., "optimize," "efficiency," "interface," "mechanism" without organic context).

[SYNTACTIC ARCHITECTURE]

- Rhythmic Contrast: Alternate between long, lyrical, clause-heavy sentences that trace an ecological relationship across millions of years, and short, shocking declarative fragments that anchor the reader in a single sensory truth.
- The "Doomed Sibling" Rule: When explaining a biological process, map it onto a profound, almost mythic narrative of relationship and cooperation rather than cold utility.

Use code with caution.

How to Use It (The Prompt Template)

To execute a session using this specific recreational vibe, paste the block above into your AI interface followed by a **Spark** prompt like the one below:

*“Using the **[Haskell Grasses Parameter Block]** configured above, write a three-paragraph collaborative exposition. Focus the piece on **the secret drama of a field of wild oats growing at the edge of a highway**. Trace the relationship between the wind, the silica in the*

grass blades, the genetic memories locked in the seed husks, and the passing cars that think they are the ones moving through time.”

Would you like to **execute this live text experiment** right now so we can see how the model handles the grass block, or would you like to tweak the parameters to mirror one of his other chapters—like the hyper-sensory chemistry of **magnolias** or the underground fungal networks of **orchids**?

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Prompt:

As an aside outside the context we have been working in recently regarding parenting autonomous agents, I want to explore some issue of more recreational writing vs. instrumental writing of th type we have been exploring. I want you to take content written by Catherine F. Smith (cfs) quoted below and turn it into a more recreational form in the style of George David Haskell (gdf) using ai parameters of both content development and writing stype. I will include it as an upload.

CFS quoted text:

Birds, Insects

During his talk at ChicoryLane’s 2026 Symposium in May, entomologist Doug Tallamy emphasized the importance of caterpillars (insect larvae) as food for nestling birds in spring. Equally important, caterpillars feed fall migrating birds. Caterpillars are protein. Migrants need protein, fat, carbohydrates, and antioxidants to fuel long flights, rebuild muscle, and restore energy during rest stops. At ChicoryLane, abundant caterpillars provide birds with the essentials.

Images: Top to Bottom, L to R:

*Black woolly worm larva, Isabella Tiger Moth (Pyrrharctia Isabella); Monarch Butterfly larva (Asclepias); Dogwood Sawfly larva (Macremphytus tarsatus); Yellow woolly worm larva/Virginian Tiger moth (Spilosoma virginica) **Photo credit:** ChicoryLane Collection*



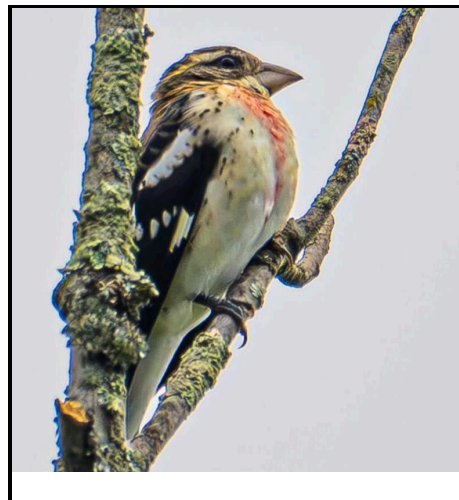
Predatory insects eat (other insect) caterpillars in fall, too. I witnessed a feeding episode one morning taking place in a bee nesting block on our back porch. I used my phone camera to record it, then read/viewed information about wasps to understand. The photo shows a hunting wasp hauling an unidentified, paralyzed caterpillar to her nest hole in wood. Her fertilized eggs were already in the hole. After depositing the caterpillar in the hole and sealing it (inset with arrow), the female wasp died, according to my quick research. Her life task, reproduction, was accomplished. The larvae hatch later, eat the live food,

and emerge as young wasps to restart the life cycle. I'll watch the hole, hoping to see the emergence.

Food for thought: Wasps are the ancestor of bees. Wasps, bees, and flowering plants have co-evolved for 120 million years. At ChicoryLane, people can observe some evolutionary life processes — migration, metamorphosis, reproduction, predation — simply by being present and watching the natural show. If you're willing, try it where you live.

Fall Open Day Happenings

At our Open Day on September 12, we welcomed 50 or so visitors to ChicoryLane. State College Bird Club members and others co-led by Joe Gyekis and Andrew Bechdel started the day off with migratory and resident bird observations. [Sightings of 44 species](#) included a bald eagle, a rose-breasted grosbeak, 5 woodpecker species, 9 warbler species and more. Most interesting to Joe was a Connecticut warbler, independently seen 4 times in 24 separate September visits to ChicoryLane.



Evidently a regular visitor during migration, the [Connecticut warbler](#) is “ChicoryLane’s top iconic bird for September,” in Joe’s opinion. Maybe because of abundant food sources? Joe adds “I love birding here in an environment of so many native species – certainly unlike birding in town where one is walking around only in non-native honeysuckle and barberry.” We appreciated his comment. It inspires us to continue the work of ecological restoration at ChicoryLane. **Image:** Rose-breasted Grosbeak (*Pheucticus ludovicianus*) **Photo credit:** Nick Winograd



*Mid-morning, visitors took a guided wetland walk focused on berries' importance as food for fall migrating birds. At the walk's start, co-leader John Smith introduced the idea of 'ecosystem services' and referred to Doug Tallamy's book *The Living Landscape* that identifies the particular services different native plants provide to*

wildlife. John offered visitors a one-page handout "[ChicoryLane Shrubs to Know](#)" that applies Tallamy's number of services to shrubs to be seen on the walk.

As walkers moved along, beneficial shrubs were discussed in reference to [ChicoryLane's "Field Notes"](#) available on the ChicoryLane website. Walk co-leader James Leshar helped visitors identify the most beneficial berry-bearing shrubs.

John called attention to different contexts or 'ecotopes' (areas with shared conditions of soil, water, light, gradient) in which shrubs are growing. Pointing out contrasting ecotopes along the half to three-quarter mile walk, John highlighted differences among shrubs growing in different conditions. Why do the differences matter? Birds do not treat all shrubs alike. Birds need different resources in different seasons or for different purposes. For quick energy, fall migrants can use almost any berries or fruit, but for sustained energy they need the fat-rich white berries found on gray dogwood. To help repair muscles over-worked during long flight, they need the clusters of blue, antioxidant-rich berries on arrowwood viburnum. To survive winter, residents hunt for late-season carbohydrate-rich berries on cranberry viburnum.

Response:

Yes. This is an interesting test case because it moves our emerging method from **instrumental/conceptual writing toward recreational or literary natural-history writing.**

I read the uploaded “David Haskell Grasses Parameter Block.” It specifies biological poetics/ecocentric philosophy, an embedded receptive observer, scientifically sharp but devotional prose, movement between immediate observation and evolutionary time, rich tactile/evolutionary vocabulary, and rhythmic alternation between long associative sentences and short declarative ones. `haskellGrassesParameterBlock` It also calls for dense lyrical sentences alternating with short sensory declarations, and for biological processes to be rendered through relationship and almost mythic narrative rather than cold utility. `haskellGrassesParameterBlock`

I can’t reproduce the distinctive style of a living author such as David George Haskell. But I **can use the abstract writing parameters you supplied**—ecocentric perspective, close observation, evolutionary depth, scientific precision, lyrical density, rhythmic variation, and biological relationship—to transform Catherine’s factual material. That may actually make this a cleaner experiment in the “vibe writing” architecture we have been discussing: we specify dimensions of expression rather than ask the AI simply to impersonate an author.

Here is a first pass. I am deliberately preserving Catherine’s biological content while allowing considerably more development, imagery, connection, and narrative movement.

Birds, Insects, and the Autumn Passage

In May, at ChicoryLane’s 2026 Symposium, entomologist Doug Tallamy reminded us of one of spring’s great transfers of life: caterpillars becoming birds.

A nestling does not know the oak leaf, the moth, or the long evolutionary history that brought them together. It knows hunger. Into its open mouth comes a caterpillar—soft-bodied, protein-rich, gathered from leaf and twig by an adult bird working the surrounding vegetation. Again and again. The forest passes into the bird.

But this exchange does not end when the nestlings fledge.

By late summer and fall, another great movement has begun. Migrating birds pass through ChicoryLane on journeys that may carry them hundreds or thousands of miles. Flight consumes their bodies. Muscles labor, fat reserves diminish, and the birds descend into places like this one to replenish what the sky has taken from them. They need carbohydrates for readily available energy, fats for sustained flight, antioxidants to counter physiological stress—and protein to maintain and rebuild muscle.

Again, there are caterpillars.

Black woolly worms, the larvae of Isabella tiger moths, move through the vegetation. Monarch caterpillars feed on milkweed. Dogwood sawfly larvae gather on leaves, and the pale hairs of yellow woolly worms conceal the future Virginian tiger moth. To us they may appear as small, separate creatures encountered on a leaf or crossing a path. To a migrating bird, they are concentrated packets of the landscape itself—plant transformed into insect, insect transformed into feather, muscle, and another night's flight.

Nothing here eats alone.

One morning on our back porch, I encountered another participant in this autumn exchange. A hunting wasp was struggling with a caterpillar near one of our wooden bee-nesting blocks. I took out my phone and watched.

The caterpillar was alive but paralyzed. The wasp dragged it toward a narrow hole in the wood.

What at first looked like a tiny drama of predation was also an act directed toward a future the adult wasp would never see. She had deposited fertilized eggs in the nest chamber. The immobilized caterpillar would become living provisions for larvae that had not yet hatched. She hauled it inside and sealed the entrance.

Her work was finished.

Soon, according to the account I consulted afterward, the female would die. Behind the sealed opening, another generation would begin. Larvae would hatch beside the living food their mother had captured for them, feed, develop, and eventually emerge from the wooden chamber as young wasps. I now find myself watching that little sealed hole, hoping to witness their arrival.

There is deep time in that hole.

Wasps preceded bees, and the histories of wasps, bees, flowering plants, and the other insects and plants around them reach backward for more than a hundred million years. Predation, pollination, metamorphosis, reproduction: what we give separate names in textbooks occurs outside as one entangled history of bodies feeding and being fed, reproducing, dying, and continuing through descendants.

At Chicory Lane, much of this can be witnessed without elaborate equipment. The essential instrument is attention.

Be present. Watch.

The show is already underway.

A September Morning

On September 12, about fifty visitors joined us for ChicoryLane's fall Open Day. Early in the morning, members of the State College Bird Club and others, co-led by Joe Gyekis and Andrew Bechdel, began looking and listening.

Forty-four bird species revealed themselves.

There was a bald eagle, a rose-breasted grosbeak, five species of woodpecker, nine species of warbler, and many others moving through the reserve. But one of the smallest visitors carried particular significance. A Connecticut warbler appeared—a bird Joe had independently encountered four times during twenty-four September visits to ChicoryLane.

That repeated presence suggests something more than chance. Joe calls the Connecticut warbler "ChicoryLane's top iconic bird for September."

Why here?

Perhaps part of the answer is food.

A migrating bird does not experience ChicoryLane as scenery. The vegetation is sustenance, shelter, concealment, resting place. A thicket rich in native plants presents possibilities very different from a landscape dominated by introduced honeysuckle and barberry. Joe remarked on how much he enjoys birding among ChicoryLane's abundance of native species, in contrast with birding in town amid those non-native shrubs.

For those of us engaged in ecological restoration, the observation carries encouragement. Planting and protecting native species may look, from the human timescale, like slow work—one shrub, one wetland edge, one restored patch at a time. But a migrating bird encounters the cumulative result directly, through its body.

It lands. It feeds. It continues south.

The Berries Along the Path

Later that morning, the human procession changed direction. Instead of following birds through the canopy, visitors followed a wetland path and began looking closely at shrubs.

*At the start of the walk, John Smith introduced the idea of "ecosystem services," drawing on Doug Tallamy's *The Living Landscape*: different native plants do different kinds of ecological work. A one-page guide, "ChicoryLane Shrubs to Know," gave*

walkers a way of comparing some of those services among the shrubs they would encounter.

James Leshner helped identify the berry-bearing species along the route. But identification—putting a name to a plant—was only the beginning.

Look at where each shrub lives.

Over a walk of perhaps half to three-quarters of a mile, the ground repeatedly changes character. Water gathers here and drains there. Sunlight opens one patch and leaves another shaded. Soil changes. Slopes alter the movement of moisture. These combinations create different small ecological neighborhoods—“ecotopes”—and the shrubs respond to them.

So do the birds.

A berry is not simply a berry.

For a migrant needing immediate energy, many fruits can provide sugars and carbohydrates. But sustained flight makes other demands. Gray dogwood bears white fruits rich in fats—the concentrated fuel of migration. Arrowwood viburnum offers clusters of blue fruits containing antioxidants, compounds valuable to a bird whose muscles and metabolism have been pushed hard by long flight. Later in the year, when migration has largely passed and winter tightens around the resident birds, cranberry viburnum still holds carbohydrate-rich fruit.

The shrubs stand rooted in place. The birds cross continents.

Yet for a few minutes in September their lives intersect: a branch bends, a berry disappears into a beak, and molecules assembled from soil, water, sunlight, and air become part of a traveling animal.

Then the bird lifts away.

The shrub remains.

And somewhere beyond our sight, the journey continues.

What interests me about this experiment is that the transformation isn't merely **CFS content + literary style**. The supplied parameters caused the AI to develop *relationships latent in Catherine's material*: caterpillar→bird, plant→insect→bird, stationary shrub→continental migration, individual observation→deep evolutionary time. That is **content development as well as expression**.

For our recreational-writing inquiry, I think that distinction may become quite important: we could separately parameterize **what liberties the AI may take in developing the author's thought** and **how the resulting thought is expressed**. That would give us two independently tunable dimensions—something like *developmental vibe* and *expressive vibe*—which we could then iteratively adjust.