

The Complete Illustrious Realism Prompt Engineering Guide

A comprehensive guide to writing effective prompts for photorealistic image generation

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Introduction

This guide focuses exclusively on **how to write prompts** for Illustrious Realism by klaabu. You'll learn:

- How to structure effective prompts
- Which tags to use and in what order
- How to stay within the 77-token limit
- How to balance Danbooru tags with natural language
- How to write negative prompts
- How to use emphasis and weighting

What this guide does NOT cover:

- Technical settings (CFG, steps, samplers)
 - ComfyUI workflows
 - Model installation
 - Post-processing techniques
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Understanding the Model

What is Illustrious Realism?

Illustrious Realism is a **photorealistic fine-tune** of Illustrious XL, which was trained on Danbooru2023 (an anime image database with detailed tagging).

Key characteristics:

- Base model has **anime bias** (trained on anime images)
- Understands **Danbooru tag syntax** extremely well
- Requires **explicit realism tags** to override anime style
- Works best with **structured, tag-based prompts**
- Responds to both Danbooru tags AND natural language

Why This Matters for Prompting

Because the base model was trained on anime:

1. You **MUST** include strong realism tags
 2. Danbooru tags are recognized better than natural descriptions
 3. Tag order and structure matter
 4. Negative prompts are critical for excluding anime style
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The 77-Token Limit

Understanding the Constraint

Hard limit: Your prompt is cut off at **77 tokens** (75 usable after BOS/EOS tokens)

What is a token?

- NOT the same as words
- Text is encoded using BPE (Byte Pair Encoding)
- Some words = 1 token, others = multiple tokens

Tokenization Examples

Simple words (1 token):

girl, smile, red, sun, sky

Compound words (2+ tokens):

masterpiece = master + piece (2 tokens)

photorealistic = photo + realistic (2 tokens)

professional = profession + al (2 tokens)

Underscores ADD tokens:

long_hair = long + _ + hair (3 tokens)

long hair = long + hair (2 tokens)

Key insight: Underscores in Danbooru tags cost extra tokens!

What Happens When You Exceed 77 Tokens

The prompt is **truncated** at token 77. Everything after is **completely ignored**.

Example:

Your 90-token prompt:

[tokens 1-75: quality tags, subject, features, clothing...]

[tokens 76-90: background details, lighting...] ← IGNORED!

Result: No background or lighting because those tags were cut off.

Token Budget Management

Strategy 1: Prioritize Put most important tags at the START:

1. Quality tags (8 tokens)
2. Subject count (2 tokens)
3. Realism tags (10 tokens)
4. Core features (30 tokens)
5. Secondary details (25 tokens)

Strategy 2: Use Compact Alternatives

Instead of: Use:
long_hair (3 tokens) → long hair (2 tokens)
masterpiece, best quality → best quality (saves tokens)
photorealistic, realistic → photorealistic (choose one)

Strategy 3: Remove Redundancy

Don't use all of these:
masterpiece, best quality, ultra-detailed, high quality,
amazing quality, highest quality, absurdres, highres

Pick 2-3 maximum

Strategy 4: Split Complex Scenes

If you need more than 75 tokens:

- Write base prompt (75 tokens max)
- Use inpainting for additional details
- Or use regional prompting for different areas

Token Budget Worksheet

Total available: 75 tokens

Quality tags: 8 tokens (masterpiece, best quality, ultra-detailed, highres)

Subject count: 2 tokens (1girl, solo)

Realism: 10 tokens (photorealistic, realistic skin, natural lighting, photo_(medium))

Physical features: 15 tokens (age, hair, eyes, face, body)

Clothing: 10 tokens (outfit description)

Action/pose: 8 tokens (pose, expression, hands)

Setting: 10 tokens (location, background)

Composition: 5 tokens (framing, angle)

Lighting: 7 tokens (light quality, direction)

TOTAL: 75 tokens

Danbooru Tag System

What is Danbooru?

Danbooru is an anime image board with **7+ million images**, each manually tagged with detailed metadata.

Why it matters:

- Illustrious XL was trained on Danbooru2023
- The model "speaks" Danbooru tag language fluently
- Tag frequency correlates with model understanding
- Proper tag syntax = better results

Tag Categories

Danbooru has 5 main tag categories:

1. General Tags

Character features, clothing, actions, settings, composition

Examples:

1girl, long hair, blue eyes, smile, standing,
school uniform, outdoors, cherry blossoms

2. Artist Tags

50,000+ artist styles

Examples:
artist_name, style_name

Note: Limited effect in Illustrious Realism (photorealism overrides style)

3. Copyright Tags

Series/franchise tags

Format: series_name
Examples: original, vocaloid, fate_grand_order

4. Character Tags

Specific character recognition

Format: character_name_(series)
Examples:
hatsune_miku_(vocaloid)
saber_(fate)

For Realism: Only use if you want that specific character's features with photorealistic rendering

5. Meta Tags

Quality, resolution, rating, medium

Examples:
highres, absurdres, newest, best quality,
masterpiece, photo_(medium)

Tag Syntax Rules

Rule 1: All Lowercase

✓ Correct: blue eyes
✗ Wrong: Blue Eyes

Rule 2: Underscores vs Spaces

Both work, but have different token costs:

With underscore:

long_hair = 3 tokens (long + _ + hair)

Without underscore:

long hair = 2 tokens (long + hair)

Recommendation: Use spaces to save tokens (unless it's a compound concept that needs underscore for clarity)

Rule 3: Commas Separate Tags

✓ Correct: 1girl, long hair, blue eyes, smile

X Wrong: 1girl with long hair and blue eyes smiling

Danbooru uses comma-separated tags, not sentences.

Rule 4: Parentheses in Tag Names

Some tags have parentheses as part of the tag:

watercolor_(medium)

photo_(medium)

character_name_(series)

These are PART of the tag name, not weighting syntax.

Tag Frequency Tiers

The more often a tag appears in Danbooru, the better the model understands it.

Tier 1: Excellent (100,000+ uses)

1girl, smile, long hair, breasts, looking at viewer,
blue eyes, brown hair, dress, sitting, standing

Tier 2: Very Good (10,000-100,000)

ponytail, short hair, green eyes, blonde hair,
jacket, skirt, outdoors, indoors, day, night

Tier 3: Good (1,000-10,000)

ahoge, twin tails, freckles, mole, wavy hair,
turtleneck, cyberpunk, gothic

Tier 4: Fair (100-1,000)

Rare styles, uncommon features, specific aesthetics

Tier 5: Unreliable (<100)

Very rare tags - consider training a LoRA instead

How to check frequency: Visit <https://danbooru.donmai.us/> and search for a tag to see its post count.

Tags That DON'T Work in Illustrious Realism

Pony-Specific Tags

✗ Don't use:

score_9, score_8_up, score_7_up
rating_explicit, rating_safe
source_anime, source_cartoon

These are Pony Diffusion tags, not Danbooru tags

Vague Quality Terms

✗ Don't use:

high quality, detailed, 8k, HD, professional quality

These aren't Danbooru tags. Use instead:
best quality, ultra-detailed, highres

Resolution Tags (Mostly Placebo)

✗ Limited effect:

absurdres, highres

These were meta tags on Danbooru but don't significantly affect output quality in Illustrious Realism

Effective Danbooru Tag Usage

For Realism: Use Danbooru tag structure + realism modifiers

Example:

1girl, long brown hair, blue eyes, gentle smile,
wearing white dress, standing in park,
photorealistic, realistic skin, natural lighting,
photo_(medium)

Prompt Architecture

The Optimal Structure

Here's the recommended order for maximum effectiveness:

[QUALITY] → [SUBJECT_COUNT] → [REALISM] → [PHYSICAL] →
[CLOTHING] → [ACTION] → [EXPRESSION] → [SETTING] →
[COMPOSITION] → [LIGHTING] → [STYLE] → [YEAR]

Detailed Breakdown

1. Quality Tags (5-8 tokens)

Purpose: Establish generation quality baseline

Essential:
masterpiece, best quality

Enhanced:
masterpiece, best quality, ultra-detailed, highres

Maximum:
masterpiece, best quality, amazing quality, ultra-detailed, highres

Don't overdo it: More than 3-4 quality tags = diminishing returns

2. Subject Count (2 tokens)

Purpose: Define number of subjects (CRITICAL!)

Single subject:
1girl, 1boy, 1other, solo

Two subjects:
2girls, 2boys, 1girl 1boy

Multiple:
3girls, multiple girls, group

This is THE most important tag after quality tags!

Without it: random subject numbers

With it: consistent, predictable results

3. Realism Tags (8-12 tokens)

Purpose: Override anime bias, enforce photorealism

Minimal (8 tokens):

photorealistic, realistic skin, lifelike, natural lighting

Standard (10 tokens):

photorealistic, realistic, realistic skin,
natural lighting, photo_(medium)

Enhanced (12 tokens):

photorealistic, realistic, lifelike, realistic skin,
natural lighting, photo_(medium), skin texture

Critical for realism! Without these, you get anime-style output.

4. Physical Description (12-20 tokens)

Purpose: Define character appearance

Structure:

[age] [ethnicity] [hair] [eyes] [face] [body]

Example (15 tokens):

woman, 28 years old, shoulder-length brown wavy hair,
green eyes, natural makeup, fair skin, slim build

5. Clothing (8-12 tokens)

Purpose: Define outfit and accessories

Example (10 tokens):

wearing black blazer, white shirt, simple necklace,
professional attire

6. Action/Pose (5-8 tokens)

Purpose: Define body position and gesture

Example (6 tokens):

standing, arms at sides, relaxed stance

7. Expression (3-5 tokens)

Purpose: Define facial expression and emotion

Example (4 tokens):
subtle smile, confident expression

8. Setting/Background (8-12 tokens)

Purpose: Define environment and context

Example (10 tokens):
neutral grey background, studio setting,
soft focus background

9. Composition (4-6 tokens)

Purpose: Define framing and camera angle

Example (5 tokens):
portrait, upper body, eye level

10. Lighting (5-8 tokens)

Purpose: Define light quality and direction

Example (7 tokens):
soft lighting, studio lighting, even lighting

11. Photography Style (3-5 tokens)

Purpose: Define photographic aesthetic

Example (4 tokens):
professional photography, sharp focus

12. Year Modifier (1 token)

Purpose: Modern aesthetic

Example (1 token):
newest

Complete Example

Here's a 67-token prompt following this structure:

masterpiece, best quality, ultra-detailed, realistic skin, highres,
1girl, professional headshot,
photorealistic, lifelike, photo_(medium),
woman, 28 years old, shoulder-length brown wavy hair, green eyes, natural makeup,
wearing black blazer, white shirt, simple necklace,
standing, relaxed stance,
subtle smile, confident expression,
neutral grey background, soft focus,
portrait, upper body, eye level,
soft lighting, studio lighting,
professional photography, sharp focus,
newest

Token count: 67/75 ✓ (within limit)

Quality Tags

Essential Quality Tags

These establish the baseline for generation quality:

masterpiece → Highest quality indicator from Danbooru
best quality → High quality indicator
ultra-detailed → Maximum detail level
highres → High resolution indicator
amazing quality → Premium quality marker

Recommended Combinations

Minimal (5 tokens):

masterpiece, best quality, highres, realistic skin

Standard (7 tokens):

masterpiece, best quality, ultra-detailed, highres, realistic skin

Enhanced (9 tokens):

masterpiece, best quality, amazing quality, ultra-detailed,
highres, realistic skin

Quality Tags to AVOID

✗ Don't use:

worst quality (in positive) - this is for negative only

low quality (in positive) - this is for negative only

normal quality - unnecessary

high quality - not a Danbooru tag, use "best quality"

8k, 4k, HD - not Danbooru tags

professional quality - not a Danbooru tag

The "newest" Tag

newest → Indicates modern style (circa 2023)

Effect: Shifts aesthetic toward contemporary photography style

Alternative time indicators:

newest → 2023 style (modern)

recent → 2020s style

old → Pre-2010 style (avoid for modern look)

oldest → Very dated style (avoid)

Recommendation: Use newest for modern photorealistic aesthetic

Subject Count Tags

The Most Critical Tag

Subject count is THE MOST IMPORTANT tag after quality tags.

Why?

- Without it: model randomly adds/removes people
- With it: consistent subject count
- Affects how the model applies other tags

Single Subject

1girl → One female subject

1boy → One male subject

1other → One non-binary/ambiguous subject

solo → Alternative to emphasize "alone"

Recommendation: Use (1girl) or (1boy) rather than just (solo)

Two Subjects

2girls → Two female subjects
2boys → Two male subjects
1girl 1boy → One female, one male
2others → Two non-binary subjects

Three Subjects

3girls → Three female subjects
3boys → Three male subjects
mixed group → Mixed gender group of three

Multiple Subjects (4+)

multiple girls → 4+ female subjects
multiple boys → 4+ male subjects
group → General group
crowd → Large group/many people

Critical Rules

Rule 1: ALWAYS Specify

✓ Correct: 1girl, standing in park
✗ Wrong: woman standing in park (no count)

Rule 2: Use at Start of Prompt

✓ Correct: masterpiece, best quality, 1girl, long hair...
✗ Wrong: masterpiece, best quality, long hair, 1girl... (too late)

Rule 3: Don't Contradict

✓ Correct: 1girl, solo, alone
✗ Wrong: 1girl, 2girls (contradictory)

Realism Enforcement

Why Realism Tags Are Critical

Illustrious XL base model was trained on **anime images**. Without explicit realism tags, you get:

- Large anime eyes
- Smooth, unrealistic skin
- Simplified features
- 2D/flat appearance

Core Realism Tags

Tier 1 - Must Have:

photorealistic → Photographic realism
realistic → General realism
lifelike → Natural, living appearance

Tier 2 - Highly Recommended:

realistic skin → Natural skin texture
natural lighting → Realistic light
photo_(medium) → Photographic medium

Tier 3 - Enhancement:

skin texture → Visible skin detail
pores visible → Skin pore detail
depth of field → Photographic DoF
natural imperfections → Realistic flaws

Photography Medium Tags

These shift understanding toward photographic output:

photo_(medium) → General photo look
professional photography → High-end quality
amateur photography → Candid, natural
snapshot → Casual photo
iphone photo → Smartphone aesthetic
film photography → Analog film look

Film Stock Simulation

For analog photography aesthetics:

35mm film → Standard film format
kodak portra → Warm, natural skin tones
kodak portra 400 → Specific film stock
fujifilm → Japanese film characteristics
cinestill 800t → Night/tungsten film
film grain → Visible grain texture

Example:

35mm film, kodak portra, film grain, natural lighting, warm tones

Texture and Detail

For maximum surface detail:

Skin:
realistic skin, skin texture, skin pores, pores visible,
detailed skin, fine skin detail, natural skin imperfections

Materials:
fabric texture, material detail, leather texture,
metal texture

General:
ultra-detailed, intricate details, fine details,
sharp focus, crisp details

Rendering Quality

Technical rendering terms (limited effect, use sparingly):

ambient occlusion → Soft shadowing
subsurface scattering → Light through skin
volumetric lighting → Atmospheric light
sharp focus → Overall sharpness
crisp details → Clear edges

Warning: These are 3D rendering terms, not common in Danbooru, so effects may be limited.

Avoiding Artificial Look

Add to positive:

natural imperfections, slight asymmetry,
natural skin texture, realistic proportions

Add to negative:

perfect skin, flawless, airbrushed,
smooth skin (if you want texture),
3d render, cgi, digital art

Recommended Realism Stack

Minimal (8 tokens):

photorealistic, realistic skin, lifelike, natural lighting

Standard (12 tokens):

photorealistic, realistic, realistic skin,
natural lighting, photo_(medium), skin texture

Enhanced (15 tokens):

photorealistic, realistic, lifelike, realistic skin,
natural lighting, photo_(medium), skin texture,
depth of field, natural imperfections

Physical Description

Structure for Character Description

Organize physical features in this order:

[AGE] → [ETHNICITY] → [BODY] → [HAIR] → [EYES] → [FACE] → [SKIN]

Age Specification

Be specific for better results:

Specific age:

18 years old, 25 years old, 30 years old, 45 years old

Age ranges:

early 20s, mid 30s, late 40s

General descriptors:

teenage, young adult, adult, middle-aged, mature, elderly

Recommendation: Use specific ages (e.g., "28 years old") rather than vague terms

Ethnicity and Appearance

Danbooru doesn't have standardized ethnicity tags. Use descriptive terms:

Ethnicity descriptors:

caucasian, asian, african, hispanic, middle eastern,
european, latin american, south asian, east asian

Or describe features:

fair skin, tan skin, dark skin, olive skin,
european features, asian features

Note: Only specify ethnicity when relevant to your creative vision

Body Type

Build:

slim, skinny, slender, lean,
athletic, toned, muscular, fit,
curvy, voluptuous, plus-size,
petite, stocky

Height:

tall, short, average height, petite, statuesque

Proportions:

long legs, broad shoulders, narrow waist,
hourglass figure

Hair

Length:

short hair, medium hair, long hair, very long hair,
waist-length hair, shoulder-length hair, chin-length hair

Style:

straight hair, wavy hair, curly hair, kinky hair,
ponytail, twin tails, braid, braids, bun,
bob cut, pixie cut, undercut, messy hair,
slicked back, windswept hair

Color:

brown hair, blonde hair, black hair, red hair,
auburn hair, grey hair, white hair, silver hair,
dyed hair, highlights, ombre, two-tone hair

Details:

bangs, side-swept bangs, blunt bangs,
hair over one eye, hair between eyes,
hair ornament, hair ribbon, hairband

Eyes

Color:

blue eyes, green eyes, brown eyes, hazel eyes,
grey eyes, amber eyes, dark eyes, light eyes,
heterochromia (two different colors)

Shape/Expression:

large eyes, narrow eyes, almond eyes, round eyes,
hooded eyes, half-closed eyes, closed eyes,
wink, squinting, wide-eyed

Gaze Direction:

looking at viewer, looking away, looking to the side,
looking up, looking down, eye contact,
distant gaze, intense gaze

Facial Features

Face Shape:

round face, oval face, square face, heart-shaped face,
long face, angular face, soft features, chiseled features

Specific Features:

freckles, dimples, moles, beauty mark,
high cheekbones, sharp jawline, soft jawline,
prominent nose, small nose, full lips, thin lips

Facial Hair (male characters):

clean shaven, stubble, beard, goatee, mustache,
full beard, short beard, 5 o'clock shadow

Skin

Tone:

fair skin, pale skin, light skin, tan skin, tanned,
olive skin, dark skin, ebony skin, deep skin tone

Texture/Quality:

clear skin, smooth skin, realistic skin, skin texture,
pores visible, natural skin imperfections, freckled skin,
oily skin, matte skin

Details:

tattoo, tattoos, sleeve tattoo, scar, scars,
scarred, birthmark

Complete Physical Description Example

28 years old, caucasian woman, slim athletic build,
shoulder-length brown wavy hair, blue eyes, freckles,
high cheekbones, natural makeup, fair skin, skin texture

Token count: ~20 tokens

Composition and Camera

Framing (How Much is Visible)

Tightest to widest:

extreme close-up	→ Eyes/face details only
close-up	→ Face fills frame
headshot	→ Head + partial shoulders
bust shot	→ Head to upper chest
portrait	→ Head and shoulders
upper body	→ Head to waist
medium shot	→ Head to mid-thigh
cowboy shot	→ Head to mid-thigh
three-quarter shot	→ Head to knees
full body	→ Entire figure visible
wide shot	→ Figure + environment
extreme wide shot	→ Figure small in scene

Token efficient: Use only ONE framing tag

Camera Angle - Vertical

from above, high angle	→ Looking down (vulnerability)
eye level, straight-on	→ Neutral (equality)
from below, low angle	→ Looking up (power)
overhead view, bird's eye	→ Directly from above
worm's eye view	→ Directly from below

Emotional impact:

- High angle → subject appears smaller, vulnerable
- Eye level → neutral, conversational
- Low angle → subject appears powerful, heroic

Camera Angle - Horizontal

front view, facing viewer	→ Direct, confrontational
three-quarter view	→ Most flattering, dynamic
profile, from side	→ Silhouette, mysterious
from behind, back view	→ Following, mysterious
over-the-shoulder	→ POV perspective

Most versatile: three-quarter view

Depth of Field

Selective focus (portrait style):

shallow depth of field, bokeh, bokeh background,
selective focus, f/1.4, f/1.8, f/2.8

Everything sharp:

sharp focus, deep depth of field,
everything in focus, f/8, f/16

Soft overall:

soft focus, dreamy, gentle blur

Specific blur:

blurry foreground, blurry background,
foreground bokeh, background bokeh

For portraits: shallow depth of field, bokeh background

Perspective

Geometric:

one-point perspective, two-point perspective,
vanishing point, natural perspective

Distortion (use sparingly):

wide angle, slight wide angle, telephoto compression

Avoid for realism:

fish-eye, extreme distortion, barrel distortion

Compositional Rules

Rule of Thirds:

off-center, rule of thirds, asymmetrical composition

Golden Ratio:

golden ratio composition, golden spiral

Symmetry:

centered composition, symmetrical, perfect symmetry,
balanced composition

Leading Lines:

leading lines, perspective lines, diagonal composition

Camera Position Examples

Portrait photography:

portrait, upper body, eye level, three-quarter view,
shallow depth of field

Fashion photography:

full body, slight low angle, three-quarter view,
wide shot, bokeh background

Environmental portrait:

medium shot, eye level, environmental context,
layered composition

Lighting

Light Quality

Soft vs Hard:

Soft (flattering):

soft lighting, diffused lighting, overcast lighting,
even lighting, gentle lighting

Hard (dramatic):

hard lighting, direct sunlight, harsh shadows,
dramatic lighting, spotlight

For realism:

- Portraits: soft lighting
- Dramatic scenes: hard lighting

Light Direction

Front lighting:

front lighting, flat lighting, butterfly lighting

→ Even, minimal shadows

Side lighting:

side lighting, split lighting, Rembrandt lighting

→ Drama, dimension, texture

Back lighting:

backlighting, backlit, rim lighting, hair light,
edge lighting

→ Silhouette, glow, separation

Top lighting:

top lighting, overhead lighting

→ Sculpting (can be unflattering)

Three-point lighting:

three-point lighting

→ Professional standard

Time of Day

Golden Hour (warm, magical):
golden hour, sunset lighting, sunrise, warm sunlight,
late afternoon sun, magic hour

Blue Hour (cool, moody):
blue hour, dusk, dawn, twilight

Midday (harsh, bright):
midday sun, noon light, harsh sunlight,
overhead sun, bright daylight

Night (dramatic):
night lighting, moonlight, street lights,
neon lights, urban night, city lights

Most popular: golden hour for warm, flattering light

Color Temperature

Warm (orange/red):
warm lighting, warm tones, golden light,
candlelight, tungsten lighting, sunset colors,
amber tones

Neutral (balanced):
neutral lighting, balanced white, daylight balanced,
natural colors

Cool (blue):
cool lighting, cool tones, blue hour, moonlight,
blue tones, cyan hues

Lighting Effects

Atmospheric:

volumetric lighting, god rays, light rays,
light shafts, atmospheric haze, sunbeams,
crepuscular rays

Surface:

rim lighting, edge lighting, hair light,
catch light (in eyes), specular highlights,
lens flare, light glow, bloom

Shadows:

soft shadows, hard shadows, cast shadows,
long shadows, dramatic shadows, chiaroscuro

For maximum realism: volumetric lighting, soft shadows

Lighting Contrast

High contrast (dramatic):

high contrast, dramatic lighting, deep shadows,
bright highlights, chiaroscuro, low key lighting

Medium contrast (balanced):

balanced lighting, moderate contrast, even tones,
natural contrast

Low contrast (bright):

low contrast, flat lighting, high key lighting,
bright and airy, minimal shadows

Weather and Atmosphere

Clear: clear sky, sunny, bright, cloudless

Overcast: overcast, cloudy, diffused light, grey sky

Fog: foggy, misty, hazy, fog, mist, atmospheric fog

Rain: rainy, wet, rain, drizzle, stormy

Snow: snowy, snow, winter light

Storm: stormy, storm clouds, lightning, dramatic sky

Lighting for Moods

Romantic:

soft lighting, warm tones, golden hour,
candlelight, intimate lighting

Dramatic:

dramatic lighting, hard shadows, chiaroscuro,
spotlight, rim lighting

Peaceful:

soft diffused light, gentle lighting,
warm ambient light, calm atmosphere

Mysterious:

low key lighting, shadows, moody lighting,
dim lighting, silhouette lighting

Practical Examples

Flattering portrait:

soft lighting, golden hour, Rembrandt lighting,
warm tones, gentle shadows

Dramatic portrait:

side lighting, rim lighting, chiaroscuro,
dramatic shadows, low key lighting

Cinematic scene:

cinematic lighting, volumetric lighting,
god rays, atmospheric, golden hour

Background and Environment

Background Complexity

Simple (focus on subject):

white background, black background,
grey background, colored background,
neutral background, gradient background,
bokeh background, blurred colors

Moderate (context without distraction):

blurred background, bokeh background,
soft focus background, out of focus background,
indoor background, outdoor background

Detailed (immersive environment):

detailed background, elaborate background,
scenic background, rich environment,
environmental storytelling

Indoor Locations

Residential:

living room, bedroom, kitchen, bathroom,
home office, dining room, hallway,
cozy interior, modern interior, rustic interior

Commercial:

Office: office, cubicle, conference room, modern office
Retail: shop, store, boutique, mall, clothing store
Food: cafe, coffee shop, restaurant, bar, diner
Entertainment: gym, library, museum, art gallery

Institutional:

school, classroom, university, lecture hall,
laboratory, church, courthouse

Outdoor Locations

Urban:

city, urban, downtown, city street, alley,
sidewalk, plaza, square, rooftop, balcony,
skyscraper, building, modern architecture

Natural:

Vegetation: park, garden, forest, woods, meadow,
field, flower field

Water: beach, seashore, ocean, sea, lake,
river, waterfall, stream

Terrain: mountain, valley, canyon, cliff,
desert, countryside

Recreational:

playground, sports field, basketball court,
picnic area, campground, hiking trail,
theme park, zoo

Environmental Details

Vegetation:

Trees: trees, tree, pine tree, palm tree,
cherry tree, bare tree, canopy

Flowers: flowers, blooming flowers, wildflowers,
roses, tulips, flower petals

Grass: grass, lawn, green grass, tall grass

Other: bushes, shrubs, vines, ivy, bamboo

Water Features:

ocean, sea, waves, beach, lake, pond, river,
waterfall, water surface, ripples, reflections

Sky:

sky, blue sky, clear sky, cloudy sky,
dramatic sky, sunset sky, night sky,
starry sky, stars, moon, sun, clouds,
sunbeams

Atmospheric Conditions

Weather:

clear sky, sunny, bright, cloudless,
overcast, cloudy, foggy, misty, hazy,
rainy, rain, snowy, snow, stormy

Seasons:

Spring: spring, cherry blossoms, blooming flowers
Summer: summer, bright sun, lush greenery
Autumn: autumn, fall, falling leaves, autumn colors
Winter: winter, snow, bare trees, frost

Background Depth

Depth cues:
depth, layered composition,
foreground middle ground background,
atmospheric perspective, distant horizon

Foreground:
foreground, foreground detail, foreground blur,
framing foreground

Background:
background, background detail, distant background,
background scenery, horizon line

Practical Examples

Portrait with simple background:

neutral grey background, soft focus background,
blurred bokeh

Environmental portrait:

workshop, tools in background, wooden workspace,
environmental context, medium shot

Outdoor scene:

flower field, wildflowers, meadow,
golden hour, bokeh background, scenic

Clothing and Accessories

Clothing Categories

Tops:

Casual: t-shirt, tank top, blouse, shirt,
hoodie, sweater, crop top

Outerwear: jacket, coat, blazer, cardigan,
leather jacket, denim jacket

Formal: dress shirt, button-up shirt,
suit jacket, business shirt

Bottoms:

Pants: pants, jeans, trousers, leggings,
dress pants, slacks, joggers

Skirts: skirt, mini skirt, long skirt,
midi skirt, pleated skirt

Shorts: shorts, jean shorts, athletic shorts

Dresses:

dress, sundress, cocktail dress, evening dress,
maxi dress, midi dress, mini dress, formal dress,
casual dress, summer dress

Footwear:

Casual: sneakers, sandals, canvas shoes, flats
Formal: dress shoes, heels, pumps, stilettos
Boots: boots, ankle boots, knee-high boots,
combat boots
Athletic: running shoes, athletic shoes

Accessories

Jewelry:

necklace, pendant, choker, earrings,
bracelet, ring, watch, anklet

Head:

hat, cap, baseball cap, beanie, fedora,
sunglasses, glasses, headband, hair clip

Bags:

handbag, backpack, purse, shoulder bag,
tote bag, clutch

Other:

belt, scarf, gloves, tie, bow tie

Clothing Styles

Casual: casual wear, everyday wear, streetwear,
comfortable clothing

Formal: formal wear, business attire,
professional clothing, suit

Athletic: sportswear, athletic wear, workout clothes,
gym clothes

Vintage: vintage clothing, retro style,
1950s fashion, 1980s style

Alternative: punk style, goth style, grunge style

Elegant: elegant dress, sophisticated style,
designer clothing

Clothing Details

Fit:

tight, fitted, form-fitting, loose, baggy,
oversized, relaxed fit, slim fit

Material:

cotton, denim, leather, silk, satin, lace,
wool, knit, mesh

Patterns:

striped, plaid, checked, polka dot, floral,
solid color, two-tone, color block

Details:

buttons, zipper, pockets, sleeveless,
long sleeves, short sleeves, off-shoulder,
strapless

Clothing for Scenarios

Business/Professional:

business suit, blazer, dress pants, button-up shirt,
tie, professional attire, office wear

Casual/Everyday:

jeans, t-shirt, sneakers, casual dress,
hoodie, comfortable clothing

Athletic:

athletic wear, sports bra, leggings,
tank top, running shoes

Evening/Formal:

evening gown, cocktail dress, tuxedo,
formal suit, elegant dress

Beach/Summer:

swimsuit, bikini, sundress, flip-flops,
light summer clothing, beach cover-up

Color Specification

Specific colors:

white shirt, black pants, red dress,
blue jeans, green jacket

Color combinations:

black and white, two-tone jacket,
color block dress

Negative Prompting

Why Negative Prompts Are Critical

Illustrious Realism is **extremely sensitive** to negative prompts. They directly tell the model what NOT to generate.

Without good negatives:

- Anime style leaks through
- Extra fingers appear
- Text/watermarks show up
- Wrong artistic styles emerge

Base Negative Template

Essential (~20 tokens):

worst quality, low quality, blurry, bad anatomy,
bad proportions, extra limbs, extra fingers,
cartoon, anime, 3d render, illustration, sketch,
text, watermark, signature

This covers the absolute minimum for photorealism.

Expanded Negative Template

Comprehensive (~45 tokens):

worst quality, low quality, bad quality, blurry,
out of focus, poorly drawn, deformed, disfigured,
bad anatomy, bad proportions, bad hands, bad feet,
extra limbs, extra fingers, missing fingers,
fused fingers, mutated hands,
cartoon, anime, 3d render, illustration, sketch,
painting, cel shading, 2d, flat colors,
text, watermark, signature, username, patreon logo,
multiple views, comic, panels, split screen,
monochrome, greyscale, oversaturated

Negative Categories

1. Quality Control

worst quality, low quality, bad quality,
blurry, out of focus, poorly drawn

2. Anatomical Fixes

bad anatomy, bad proportions, deformed, disfigured,
bad hands, bad face, bad feet,
extra limbs, extra fingers, missing fingers,
fused fingers, mutated hands, malformed hands,
extra toes, missing toes

3. Style Exclusions (CRITICAL for realism)

cartoon, anime, illustration, sketch, painting,
cel shading, 2d, flat colors, manga style,
comic, 3d render, cgi, digital art

4. Unwanted Elements

text, watermark, signature, username,
artist name, patreon logo, twitter username,
copyright, logo, text overlay

5. Format Issues

multiple views, comic panels, split screen,
panel layout, page layout

6. Color Issues

monochrome, greyscale (unless you want B&W),
oversaturated, undersaturated, washed out

Dynamic Negatives by Subject

For portraits:

Base negative +
bad face, asymmetric eyes, weird eyes,
bad skin, skin blemishes (if you want perfect skin)

For full body:

Base negative +
bad legs, bad feet, extra toes,
anatomical error, wrong proportions

For hands visible:

Base negative +
(bad hands:1.4), (extra fingers:1.5),
(fused fingers:1.3), mutated hands

Token-Optimized Negative

If you're near the 77-token limit in your positive prompt, use this minimal negative (~15 tokens):

worst quality, low quality, blurry, bad anatomy,
extra fingers, cartoon, anime, sketch,
text, watermark

What NOT to Put in Negatives

Don't contradict your positive:

Positive: detailed face
Negative: detailed face ← DON'T!

Don't use vague terms:

bad, ugly, poor ← Too vague

Use specific tags instead:

bad anatomy, bad proportions, deformed

Don't overload (>50 tags):

More negatives $\neq$ better results. The model gets confused.

Character-Specific Negatives

For female characters:

masculine features, facial hair, muscular (unless desired)

For male characters:

feminine features, makeup, long eyelashes (unless desired)

For elderly:

young, youthful, smooth skin (unless desired)

Prompt Weighting

Syntax

In ComfyUI, you can emphasize or de-emphasize tags:

Increase emphasis:

(tag:1.2) → 20% more emphasis

(tag:1.5) → 50% more emphasis

(tag:2.0) → 100% more emphasis (strong)

Decrease emphasis:

(tag:0.8) → 20% less emphasis

(tag:0.5) → 50% less emphasis

Group weighting:

(multiple, tags, here:1.3)

Safe Ranges

Recommended:

- Positive: 0.8 - 1.5
- Negative: 1.0 - 1.5

Avoid:

- 2.0 (causes distortion)
- <0.5 (minimal effect)

Strategic Weighting

Critical elements (1.2-1.3):

(photorealistic:1.2), (realistic skin:1.3),
(detailed face:1.2)

Moderate emphasis (1.1-1.2):

(blue eyes:1.1), (long hair:1.1)

De-emphasize (0.7-0.9):

(background:0.8), (blurred:0.7)

Weighted Negatives

For persistent issues:

Critical problems (1.3-1.5):
(extra fingers:1.4), (bad anatomy:1.3),
(deformed:1.3)

Standard negatives (1.0):
cartoon, anime, sketch, text

When to Use Weighting

Use weighting when:

- A specific feature isn't strong enough
- An unwanted feature keeps appearing
- You need to balance conflicting concepts

Don't overuse:

- Too many weighted tags = unpredictable results
- Start with unweighted, add weights only if needed

Practical Examples

Emphasize realism:

(photorealistic:1.2), (realistic skin:1.3), lifelike

Fix persistent hand issues:

Negative: (bad hands:1.4), (extra fingers:1.5)

Balance subject vs background:

1girl, detailed face, (background:0.7)

Complete Prompt Examples

Example 1: Professional Portrait

Positive:

masterpiece, best quality, ultra-detailed, realistic skin, highres,
1girl, professional headshot,
photorealistic, lifelike, photo_(medium),
caucasian woman, 28 years old, confident expression,
shoulder-length brown wavy hair, green eyes, natural makeup,
subtle smile, looking at viewer,
wearing black blazer, white shirt, simple necklace,
neutral grey background, studio lighting, soft lighting,
portrait, upper body, eye level,
professional photography, sharp focus, shallow depth of field,
newest

Negative:

worst quality, low quality, blurry, out of focus,
bad anatomy, bad proportions, deformed, extra fingers, bad hands,
cartoon, anime, 3d render, illustration, sketch,
multiple views, text, watermark, signature,
oversaturated, harsh lighting

Example 2: Outdoor Fashion

Positive:

masterpiece, best quality, amazing quality, ultra-detailed, realistic skin,
1girl, editorial photography,
photorealistic, realistic, lifelike, photo_(medium),
fashion model, early 20s, asian, confident pose,
long straight black hair, striking features,
wearing elegant white dress, flowing fabric,
standing in flower field, wildflowers, meadow,
golden hour lighting, warm tones, sunset light,
full body, three-quarter view, from slightly below,
dramatic lighting, rim lighting, backlit,
shallow depth of field, bokeh background,
professional photography, cinematic,
newest, very aesthetic

Negative:

worst quality, low quality, bad quality, blurry,
bad anatomy, bad proportions, deformed,
extra fingers, bad hands, bad feet,
cartoon, anime, 3d, illustration, sketch,
flat lighting, overcast,
multiple views, text, watermark, signature,
indoors, urban, city

Example 3: Dramatic Male Portrait

Positive:

masterpiece, best quality, ultra-detailed, realistic skin, highres,
1boy, dramatic portrait,
photorealistic, realistic, lifelike, natural lighting,
man, mid 30s, rugged appearance, intense gaze,
short dark hair, stubble beard, blue eyes, weathered skin,
wearing dark leather jacket, black t-shirt,
sitting in dimly lit bar, neon signs in background,
serious expression, looking at viewer,
close-up, eye level,
side lighting, dramatic lighting, rim lighting, low key lighting,
chiaroscuro, deep shadows, moody atmosphere,
shallow depth of field, bokeh background,
cinematic photography, film noir,
35mm film, kodak portra, subtle film grain,
newest

Negative:

worst quality, low quality, blurry,
bad anatomy, bad proportions, deformed, bad hands,
cartoon, anime, 3d render, illustration,
clean shaven, young, pretty boy,
bright lighting, flat lighting, high key,
text, watermark, signature,
multiple views, smile, happy

Example 4: Candid Street Photo

Positive:

best quality, realistic, photorealistic, realistic skin,
1girl, candid street photography,
amateur photography, snapshot aesthetic,
woman, late 20s, casual style, natural expression,
messy bun hair, sunglasses on head, genuine smile,
wearing denim jacket, white t-shirt, jeans, sneakers,
walking on city street, carrying coffee cup,
urban background, blurred pedestrians, street scene, bokeh,
medium shot, from side, three-quarter view,
natural lighting, afternoon sun, soft shadows,
shallow depth of field, realistic colors,
iphone photo, natural imperfections, slight motion blur,
newest

Negative:

low quality, worst quality, bad quality, blurry,
bad anatomy, deformed, extra fingers,
cartoon, anime, 3d, illustration,
posed, studio, professional photography,
perfect, flawless, airbrushed,
dramatic lighting, harsh lighting,
text, watermark, signature,
oversaturated

Example 5: Beach Lifestyle

Positive:

masterpiece, best quality, ultra-detailed, realistic skin, highres,
1girl, lifestyle photography,
photorealistic, realistic, lifelike, natural lighting,
young woman, mid 20s, caucasian, relaxed happy expression,
long blonde wavy hair, blue eyes, sun-kissed skin, freckles,
wearing white summer dress, barefoot, straw sun hat,
standing on beach, ocean in background, waves, blue sky,
gentle smile, looking away, wind in hair,
golden hour, warm sunlight, soft lighting, warm tones,
full body, slight low angle, from side,
shallow depth of field, bokeh water background,
professional photography, bright and airy,
natural colors, coastal aesthetic,
newest, very aesthetic

Negative:

worst quality, low quality, blurry,
bad anatomy, bad proportions, deformed,
extra fingers, bad hands, bad feet,
cartoon, anime, 3d, illustration, sketch,
dark, gloomy, overcast, grey sky,
indoor, urban, city,
flat lighting, harsh shadows,
oversaturated, neon colors,
text, watermark, signature

Example 6: Black and White Portrait

Positive:

masterpiece, best quality, ultra-detailed, realistic skin,
1girl, fine art photography,
photorealistic, realistic, black and white photography,
woman, 30 years old, contemplative expression,
elegant features, classic beauty,
simple black dress, minimal jewelry,
serious expression, looking away, thoughtful,
dark background, dramatic shadows,
portrait, close-up, slight side view,
side lighting, Rembrandt lighting, chiaroscuro,
deep shadows, high contrast, dramatic,
monochrome, greyscale, black and white,
fine art photography, artistic photography,
sharp focus, detailed,
classic photography, timeless,
newest

Negative:

low quality, worst quality, blurry,
bad anatomy, deformed, extra fingers,
cartoon, anime, illustration, 3d,
color, colored, vibrant, colorful,
flat lighting, bright, high key,
busy background, cluttered,
smile, happy, cheerful,
text, watermark, signature

Best Practices

Prompt Construction Checklist

Before writing:

- ☐ Plan your token budget (75 max)
- ☐ Decide on subject count
- ☐ Choose realism level
- ☐ Plan framing/composition

Quality tags:

- ☐ Include 2-3 quality tags (masterpiece, best quality)
- ☐ Add realistic skin for photorealism
- ☐ Consider adding highres or ultra-detailed

Subject:

- ☐ ALWAYS specify subject count (1girl, 1boy, etc.)
- ☐ Place subject count near beginning
- ☐ Define age/identity clearly
- ☐ Describe key features (hair, eyes, face)

Realism:

- ☐ Include at least 3 realism tags
- ☐ Use photorealistic OR realistic OR lifelike
- ☐ Add realistic skin
- ☐ Consider photo_(medium)

Description:

- ☐ Describe from general to specific
- ☐ Use Danbooru tag structure
- ☐ Separate tags with commas
- ☐ Avoid sentences/natural language in tag section

Composition:

- ☐ Specify framing (portrait, full body, etc.)
- ☐ Define camera angle if relevant
- ☐ Add depth of field for portraits

Lighting:

- ☐ Specify light quality (soft, dramatic, etc.)
- ☐ Add light direction if important
- ☐ Consider time of day for outdoor

Background:

- ☐ Choose complexity level
- ☐ Be specific or use "blurred background"
- ☐ Consider depth (foreground, background)

Negative:

- ☐ Include base negative template
- ☐ Add style exclusions (anime, cartoon, 3d)
- ☐ Add anatomical fixes if needed
- ☐ Include text/watermark exclusion

Final check:

- ☐ Count tokens (must be ≤ 75)
- ☐ Remove redundant tags
- ☐ Optimize wording
- ☐ Check for contradictions

Token Optimization Tips

1. Remove redundancy:

Before: masterpiece, best quality, highest quality, amazing quality
After: masterpiece, best quality
Saved: ~3 tokens

2. Choose compact alternatives:

Before: long_hair (3 tokens)
After: long hair (2 tokens)
Saved: 1 token per occurrence

3. Combine related concepts:

Before: woman, 28 years old, caucasian, fair skin
After: caucasian woman 28 years old
Saved: ~2 tokens

4. Prioritize ruthlessly:

Essential: quality, subject count, realism, core features
Nice-to-have: minor details, subtle modifiers
If tight on tokens: cut nice-to-have first

5. Use abbreviations where clear:

photo_(medium) → photo medium (if clear from context)

Tag Order Optimization

Front-load important tags:

✓ Good:

masterpiece, best quality, 1girl, photorealistic, realistic skin,
long brown hair, blue eyes, [less important details]

X Bad:

standing, looking at viewer, smile, masterpiece, best quality,
1girl, photorealistic, [core features after filler]

The model reads tags in order. Put critical tags first!

Balancing Specificity

Too vague:

woman, attractive, nice clothes, somewhere pretty

Result: Unpredictable, model makes random choices

Too specific:

exactly 167cm tall woman, precisely 27.5 years old,
wearing Chanel Spring 2023 Collection dress in Pantone 18-1664,
standing at 45.2 degree angle...

Result: Over-constrained, may ignore details

Just right:

woman, late 20s, athletic build, long brown hair,
wearing elegant white dress, standing in park,
golden hour lighting

Result: Clear direction with room for natural variation

Natural Language vs Tags

Use Danbooru tags for:

- Subject count (1girl, 2boys)
- Quality (masterpiece, best quality)
- Common features (long hair, blue eyes)
- Composition (portrait, full body)
- Common actions (standing, sitting)

Use natural language for:

- Specific details (28 years old, shoulder-length)
- Complex descriptions (weathered skin, intense gaze)
- Uncommon concepts (not in Danbooru vocabulary)
- Nuanced expressions (subtle smile, contemplative)

Hybrid approach works best:

1girl, photorealistic, realistic skin,
woman 28 years old, shoulder-length brown wavy hair,
wearing black blazer white shirt,
subtle smile confident expression,
portrait, upper body, soft lighting

Mix of Danbooru tags + natural descriptors

Common Mistakes

Critical Mistakes to Avoid

Mistake 1: Forgetting Subject Count

✗ Wrong:

masterpiece, best quality, photorealistic,
woman, long hair, standing in park

✓ Correct:

masterpiece, best quality, 1girl, photorealistic,
woman, long hair, standing in park

Mistake 2: Insufficient Realism Tags

✗ Wrong:

masterpiece, best quality, 1girl, realistic,
woman, blue eyes, portrait

✓ Correct:

masterpiece, best quality, 1girl,
photorealistic, realistic skin, lifelike, photo_(medium),
woman, blue eyes, portrait

Mistake 3: Exceeding 77 Tokens

✖ Wrong:

[85 tokens of detailed description]

Result: Last 10 tokens ignored

✓ Correct:

[70 tokens, carefully prioritized]

Result: All tags processed

Mistake 4: Using Pony Tags

✖ Wrong:

score_9, score_8_up, rating_explicit,

source_anime, masterpiece...

✓ Correct:

masterpiece, best quality, highres,

realistic skin...

Mistake 5: Weak Negative Prompts

✖ Wrong:

Negative: low quality, blurry

✓ Correct:

Negative: worst quality, low quality, blurry,

bad anatomy, extra fingers, cartoon, anime,

3d, illustration, text, watermark

Mistake 6: Contradictory Tags

✖ Wrong:

Positive: detailed face

Negative: detailed face

✓ Correct:

Positive: detailed face

Negative: bad face, deformed face

Mistake 7: Over-Weighting

✖ Wrong:

(photorealistic:2.5), (realistic:3.0),
(detailed:2.8)

✓ Correct:

(photorealistic:1.2), (realistic skin:1.3),
detailed

Mistake 8: Vague Descriptions

✖ Wrong:

pretty woman, nice clothes, good lighting

✓ Correct:

woman 28 years old, shoulder-length brown hair,
wearing black blazer white shirt,
soft studio lighting

Mistake 9: Ignoring Tag Order

✖ Wrong:

standing, smile, looking away, outdoors, dress,
masterpiece, 1girl, photorealistic

✓ Correct:

masterpiece, best quality, 1girl,
photorealistic, realistic skin,
wearing dress, standing outdoors, smile

Mistake 10: Stacking Too Many Quality Tags

✖ Wrong:

masterpiece, best quality, highest quality,
ultra quality, amazing quality, exceptional quality,
superior quality, premium quality, perfect quality

✓ Correct:

masterpiece, best quality, ultra-detailed

What NOT to Do

Don't:

- ❌ Skip subject count
- ❌ Use only 1-2 realism tags
- ❌ Put important tags at the end
- ❌ Exceed 77 tokens
- ❌ Use Pony-specific tags
- ❌ Forget negative prompts
- ❌ Use weights >2.0
- ❌ Write in sentences instead of tags
- ❌ Use only vague descriptions
- ❌ Contradict positive in negative

Do:

- ✅ Always specify subject count
- ✅ Use 3+ strong realism tags
- ✅ Front-load critical tags
- ✅ Stay within 75 tokens
- ✅ Use Danbooru tags
- ✅ Include comprehensive negatives
- ✅ Use weights 0.8-1.5 range
- ✅ Use comma-separated tags
- ✅ Be specific and clear
- ✅ Keep positive and negative consistent

Conclusion

Key Takeaways

1. **Subject count is THE most critical tag** - always specify (1girl, 1boy, etc.)
2. **Stay within 77 tokens** - your prompt is truncated after token 77
3. **Danbooru tags work best** - the model was trained on them
4. **Realism requires explicit tags** - use photorealistic, realistic skin, photo_(medium)
5. **Tag order matters** - front-load important tags
6. **Negative prompts are essential** - especially for excluding anime/cartoon style
7. **Balance specificity** - not too vague, not over-constrained
8. **Use hybrid approach** - Danbooru tags + natural language
9. **Optimize token usage** - remove redundancy, use compact alternatives
10. **Test and iterate** - prompting is an art, practice makes perfect

The Universal Prompt Template

Use this as your starting point:

[QUALITY: 2-3 tags] → [SUBJECT_COUNT: critical!] →
[REALISM: 3-5 tags] → [PHYSICAL: age, hair, eyes, etc.] →
[CLOTHING: outfit description] → [ACTION: pose, expression] →
[SETTING: background, environment] → [COMPOSITION: framing, angle] →
[LIGHTING: quality, direction] → [STYLE: photography style] →
[newest]

Total: ~65-70 tokens (leaving buffer)

Negative Prompt Template

Use this as your base negative:

worst quality, low quality, blurry, bad anatomy,
bad proportions, extra fingers, bad hands,
cartoon, anime, 3d render, illustration, sketch,
text, watermark, signature

Expand as needed for specific issues.

Practice Exercise

Try writing prompts for these scenarios:

1. Professional business headshot
2. Casual outdoor portrait
3. Dramatic fashion photography
4. Candid street photo
5. Beach lifestyle shot

For each:

- Count your tokens (≤ 75)
- Include all essential elements
- Write matching negative prompt
- Check against best practices

Resources

Danbooru Tag Database:

- <https://danbooru.donmai.us/>
- Search tags to check frequency
- Browse tag groups for ideas

Model Page:

- <https://civitai.com/models/1412827/illustrious-realism-by-klaabu>

Community:

- Discord: <https://discord.gg/WeqYRZudhW>
- Civitai forums and comments

Guide Version: 1.0

Focus: Prompt Engineering Only

Model: Illustrious Realism by klaabu v1.0

Last Updated: February 2026

License: Educational resource for the AI art community

End of Prompt Engineering Guide

Illustrious Realism Enhanced Sections

Complete Prompt Examples with Safe Variations

Example 1: Professional Editorial Portrait

Base Prompt:

A photorealistic cinematic portrait of a confident young woman with short copper-red pixie hair and soft freckles, standing on a modern Milan rooftop at golden hour, warm rim light outlining her face, shot on a 50mm lens with shallow depth of field, realistic skin texture, professional photography, masterpiece, best quality

Negative:

low quality, worst quality, lowres, blurry, bad anatomy, bad hands, extra fingers, cartoon, anime, illustration, 3d render, plastic skin, waxy skin, text, watermark

Safe Variations:

1. Change location:

- "Milan rooftop" → "Paris balcony" / "New York terrace" / "Barcelona rooftop"
- Effect: Different architectural background, maintains composition

2. Change time of day:

- "golden hour" → "blue hour twilight" / "morning light" / "afternoon sun"
- Effect: Different mood, color temperature

3. Change lens:

- "50mm" → "85mm portrait lens" / "35mm"
- 85mm = tighter, more compression
- 35mm = more environment visible

4. Change hair:

- "copper-red pixie" → "long dark wavy hair" / "shoulder-length blonde"
- Maintain structure, change attribute

5. Change expression:

- "confident" → "serene" / "thoughtful" / "warm and inviting"
- Effect: Emotional tone shift

Why This Works:

- Clear subject and setting
- Specific camera language
- Coherent lighting
- Professional photography terms
- Realistic skin emphasis

Token Management: ~55 tokens (room for customization)

Example 2: Lifestyle Natural Portrait

Base Prompt:

A natural lifestyle photograph of a woman with long dark hair walking through a European city street at dusk, relaxed posture, warm streetlight glow, shot on a 35mm lens with soft background blur, realistic skin, natural lighting, photorealistic, best quality

Negative:

worst quality, low quality, blurry, bad anatomy, extra fingers, bad hands, cartoon, anime, 3d, illustration, posed, staged, watermark, text

Safe Variations:

1. **Change action:**

- "walking through" → "standing on" / "sitting at cafe" / "browsing shop window"
- Maintain lifestyle feel

2. **Change setting:**

- "European city street" → "busy urban market" / "quiet park path" / "coastal boardwalk"
- Effect: Different environment, same documentary feel

3. **Change time:**

- "at dusk" → "morning light" / "midday" / "late afternoon"
- Effect: Different lighting quality

4. **Change camera:**

- "35mm" → "50mm" / "24mm"
- Effect: Tighter or wider environmental context

5. **Add atmosphere:**

- Add: "soft atmospheric haze" / "gentle breeze in hair" / "autumn atmosphere"
- Effect: Enhanced mood

Why This Works:

- Documentary/lifestyle authenticity
- Natural action described
- Environmental context
- Appropriate lens choice
- Casual, unposed feel

Token Management: ~48 tokens (efficient)

Example 3: Studio Fashion Portrait

Base Prompt:

A high-end studio fashion portrait of a woman with natural makeup and softly styled hair, wearing elegant black fitted dress, neutral cream background, soft diffused lighting from above, shot on an 85mm portrait lens, minimal shadows, realistic skin texture, professional editorial photography, masterpiece, best quality

Negative:

low quality, worst quality, blurry, bad anatomy, bad hands, extra fingers, cartoon, anime, illustration, plastic skin, waxy skin, busy background, cluttered, casual clothing, watermark, text

Safe Variations:

1. Change outfit:

- "black fitted dress" → "white silk blouse" / "charcoal blazer" / "designer gown"
- Maintain elegance level

2. Change background:

- "neutral cream" → "soft gray" / "white seamless" / "matte black"
- Effect: Different editorial mood

3. Change lighting:

- "diffused from above" → "three-point lighting" / "Rembrandt lighting" / "beauty lighting"
- Effect: Different shadow quality

4. Change framing:

- Add: "upper body framing" / "headshot portrait" / "full body editorial"
- Effect: Different composition

5. Change styling:

- "natural makeup" → "dramatic makeup" / "minimal makeup" / "editorial bold makeup"
- Effect: Different fashion mood

Why This Works:

- Clean studio control
- Professional lighting specified
- Fashion editorial tone
- Premium quality markers
- Controlled environment reduces variables

Token Management: ~60 tokens

Example 4: Golden Hour Outdoor

Base Prompt:

A photorealistic outdoor portrait of a woman with shoulder-length brown wavy hair, wearing casual white cotton dress, standing in natural park setting at golden hour, warm sunset light from behind creating soft rim light, gentle smile, shot on 50mm lens, shallow depth of field, softly blurred nature background, realistic skin, natural lighting, professional photography, best quality

Negative:

worst quality, low quality, blurry, bad anatomy, extra fingers, bad hands, cartoon, anime, illustration, 3d, indoor, studio, harsh lighting, overexposed, plastic skin, watermark, text

Safe Variations:

1. Change setting:

- "natural park" → "beach at sunset" / "forest clearing" / "meadow field"
- Maintain outdoor natural feel

2. Change outfit:

- "white cotton dress" → "flowing silk dress" / "casual jeans and top" / "summer linen"
- Match to setting

3. Change lighting angle:

- "from behind" → "from the side" / "soft frontal" / "dramatic backlit"
- Effect: Different highlight placement

4. Change hair:

- "shoulder-length brown wavy" → "long blonde straight" / "short auburn curly"
- Maintain natural styling

5. Change expression:

- "gentle smile" → "thoughtful gaze" / "serene calm expression" / "warm genuine smile"
- Effect: Emotional tone

Why This Works:

- Golden hour guarantees good light
- Natural outdoor setting
- Backlighting creates depth
- Casual, authentic feel
- Shallow DoF isolates subject

Example 5: Moody Cinematic Portrait

Base Prompt:

A moody cinematic portrait of a woman in a dimly lit environment, soft directional light illuminating face from the left, dramatic shadow contrast, wearing dark leather jacket, short dark hair, intense focused gaze looking at viewer, shot on 85mm lens with f/1.4, strong bokeh background, realistic skin texture, low-key lighting, film noir atmosphere, professional photography, masterpiece, best quality

Negative:

worst quality, low quality, blurry, bad anatomy, bad hands, extra fingers, cartoon, anime, illustration, bright lighting, flat lighting, cheerful, happy, oversaturated, colorful, plastic skin, watermark, text

Safe Variations:

1. Change lighting mood:

- "dimly lit" → "candlelit" / "neon-lit urban night" / "moonlit interior"
- Maintain low-key mood

2. Change clothing:

- "dark leather jacket" → "black turtleneck" / "dark coat" / "charcoal blazer"
- Keep dark, moody palette

3. Change expression:

- "intense focused" → "contemplative thoughtful" / "mysterious enigmatic" / "confident assured"
- Maintain serious tone

4. Change background:

- Add: "urban night background" / "dark interior space" / "industrial setting"
- Enhance noir atmosphere

5. Adjust lighting:

- "from the left" → "rim light from behind" / "single spotlight" / "window light"
- Maintain dramatic quality

Why This Works:

- Low-key lighting specified
- Dramatic mood clear
- Film noir aesthetic
- Strong photography language
- Coherent dark palette

Token Management: ~70 tokens

Example 6: Athletic Lifestyle Portrait

Base Prompt:

A lifestyle editorial photograph of a woman wearing form-fitting athletic top and leggings, athletic build with natural proportions, after workout with subtle skin sheen, relaxed confident posture, modern gym environment softly blurred background, natural window light from the side, shot on 50mm lens, shallow depth of field, realistic skin texture, professional photography, photorealistic, best quality

Negative:

worst quality, low quality, blurry, bad anatomy, bad hands, extra fingers, cartoon, anime, illustration, plastic skin, glossy skin (overdone), posed, artificial, watermark, text, oversaturated

Safe Variations:

1. **Change setting:** "gym environment" → "outdoor track" / "yoga studio" / "urban park"
2. **Change outfit:** "athletic top and leggings" → "sports bra and shorts" / "running gear"
3. **Change time:** "after workout" → "pre-workout fresh" / "mid-training"
4. **Change lighting:** "window light" → "soft overhead lighting" / "outdoor natural light"
5. **Change pose:** "relaxed confident" → "stretching naturally" / "standing at ease"

Why This Works:

- Athletic context justifies subtle sheen
- Natural proportions emphasized
- Lifestyle editorial tone
- Not overly posed
- Realistic athletic aesthetic

Best Practices & Common Mistakes

The 10 Commandments of Photorealistic Prompting

1. **Always specify subject count first**
 - 1girl, 1boy, 2girls, etc.
 - Most critical tag after quality
2. **Use photography language, not programmer logic**
 - Think: "shot on 85mm lens"
 - Not: "RENDER_MODE: 85"
3. **Describe lighting explicitly**
 - Never assume "good lighting"
 - Always specify quality and direction
4. **Stay within 75 usable tokens**
 - Count carefully
 - Optimize ruthlessly
5. **Include realism primers every time**
 - photorealistic, realistic skin, natural lighting
 - Minimum 3 realism tags
6. **Balance realism with description**
 - Don't just spam "photorealistic" x10
 - Describe what makes it realistic
7. **Use natural imperfections**
 - "natural skin imperfections"
 - "subtle asymmetry"
 - Perfection looks fake
8. **Specify camera perspective**
 - Eye level, from above, from below
 - Prevents floating subjects
9. **Match environment to lighting**
 - Outdoor = natural light
 - Studio = controlled lighting
 - No contradictions
10. **Use comprehensive negative prompts**
 - Don't skip negatives
 - They're as important as positives

Common Mistakes (Expanded)

Mistake 1: Forgetting Subject Count (CRITICAL)

Problem:

masterpiece, best quality, photorealistic,
woman with long hair standing in park

Why it's bad: Model randomly decides number of subjects

Solution:

masterpiece, best quality, 1girl, photorealistic,
woman with long hair standing in park

Safe variations:

- 1girl → solo (emphasizes single person)
- Add to negative: "multiple people, extra people"

Mistake 2: Token Limit Exceeded

Problem:

[85-token prompt with last 10 tokens being critical camera and lighting info]

Why it's bad: Last 10 tokens are completely ignored

Solution:

Count tokens before generating
Move critical info to front
Optimize and compress

How to check: Count major elements, estimate ~1-1.5 tokens per word

Mistake 3: Contradictory Lighting

Problem:

outdoor scene, bright midday sun, soft moonlight,
candlelight, studio lighting

Why it's bad: Model tries to reconcile impossible lighting

Solution:

outdoor scene, bright midday sun, harsh shadows
OR
indoor scene, soft candlelight, warm intimate atmosphere

Choose ONE coherent lighting scheme

Mistake 4: Over-Specifying Anatomy

Problem:

woman with perfectly symmetrical face, exactly 5 fingers on each hand,
32 teeth visible, nose exactly 4.2cm long, eyes precisely 6.4cm apart

Why it's bad: Over-constrains, looks artificial, model can't match

Solution:

woman with natural facial features, balanced proportions,
hands relaxed at sides, natural expression

Describe naturally, not mechanically

Mistake 5: Mixing Incompatible Styles

Problem:

photorealistic portrait, anime style, cartoon colors,
illustration aesthetic, painted look

Why it's bad: Model confused between realism and stylization

Solution:

photorealistic portrait, realistic skin, natural lighting,
professional photography

OR

anime style portrait, cel shading, illustration

Pick ONE aesthetic and commit

Mistake 6: Weak Realism Enforcement

Problem:

masterpiece, best quality,
woman, blue eyes, standing, park

Why it's bad: No realism tags = anime-style output

Solution:

masterpiece, best quality, photorealistic, realistic skin,
natural lighting, photo_(medium),
woman, blue eyes, standing, park

Mistake 7: No Camera Language

Problem:

woman portrait, good photography, high quality

Why it's bad: No lens, no perspective, no framing control

Solution:

woman portrait, shot on 85mm portrait lens,
shallow depth of field, eye-level perspective,
professional photography

Mistake 8: Ignoring Negative Prompts

Problem:

Positive: [perfect prompt]

Negative: [empty or minimal]

Why it's bad: Allows anime drift, bad anatomy, artifacts

Solution:

Always include comprehensive negative:

worst quality, low quality, blurry, bad anatomy, extra fingers,
cartoon, anime, illustration, plastic skin, watermark

Mistake 9: Quality Tag Spam

Problem:

masterpiece, best quality, highest quality, amazing quality,
exceptional quality, superior quality, perfect quality,
ultra quality, mega quality, hyper quality, premium quality

Why it's bad: Wastes tokens, diminishing returns, can harm output

Solution:

masterpiece, best quality, ultra detailed

3 quality tags maximum

Mistake 10: Complex Hand Poses

Problem:

hands performing intricate gesture, fingers splayed in complex position,
detailed finger articulation

Why it's bad: Hands are the #1 failure point

Solution:

hands relaxed at sides

OR hands in pockets

OR arms crossed

OR hand on hip

Simple, safe hand positions

The Pre-Generation Checklist

Before clicking generate, verify:

- ☐ Subject count specified (1girl, 1boy, etc.)
 - ☐ At least 3 realism tags (photorealistic, realistic skin, natural lighting)
 - ☐ Camera language included (lens, perspective)
 - ☐ Lighting described (quality, direction)
 - ☐ Token count ≤ 75
 - ☐ No contradictions (lighting, style, time of day)
 - ☐ Negative prompt comprehensive (minimum 20 tokens)
 - ☐ Physical description logical and natural
 - ☐ Environment matches lighting
 - ☐ No quality tag spam (max 3-4)
 - ☐ Hand positions safe (if visible)
 - ☐ One-sentence test passed (coherent narrative)
-

Advanced Techniques

The Modular Prompt System

Create reusable blocks for consistency:

Block Library Example

Subject Block A:

a young woman with natural makeup, softly styled hair,
calm confident expression

Subject Block B:

a mature woman with distinguished features, elegant styling,
composed thoughtful demeanor

Environment Block A:

standing on a modern rooftop terrace at golden hour,
softly blurred city skyline in background

Environment Block B:

in a professional studio setting, neutral backdrop,
clean minimal background

Lighting Block A:

warm directional sunlight from the side,
subtle rim light outlining silhouette

Lighting Block B:

soft diffused studio lighting from above,
minimal shadows, even illumination

Camera Block A:

shot on 50mm lens with shallow depth of field,
cinematic framing, eye-level perspective

Camera Block B:

shot on 85mm portrait lens f/1.8,
tight portrait framing, gentle bokeh

Quality Block:

photorealistic, realistic skin, professional photography,
masterpiece, best quality

Usage: Combine ONE block from each category

[Subject A] + [Environment A] + [Lighting A] + [Camera A] + [Quality]

Benefit:

- Consistent quality across series
 - Easy variations
 - Tested combinations
 - Modular flexibility
-

Progressive Prompt Refinement

Technique for complex scenes:

Stage 1: Core Structure (40 tokens)

1girl, photorealistic, realistic skin,
woman in her late 20s, long dark hair,
wearing elegant black dress,
standing on rooftop at sunset,
professional photography, best quality

Stage 2: Add Camera (10 tokens)

+ shot on 85mm lens f/1.8, shallow depth of field

Stage 3: Enhance Lighting (10 tokens)

+ warm golden hour light, rim lighting, soft glow

Stage 4: Refine Details (10 tokens)

+ natural skin texture, confident expression,
gentle smile

Final: 70 tokens, well-balanced, all elements covered

The A/B Testing Method

For finding optimal variations:

Base Prompt:

[Your standard prompt]

Test Variable 1: Lighting

- Version A: "golden hour lighting"
- Version B: "soft studio lighting"
- Version C: "dramatic side lighting"

Keep: CFG, steps, seed (if possible), everything else identical

Compare: Which lighting works best for this subject?

Iterate: Test next variable (lens, framing, etc.)

Build Library: Document what works for different scenarios

Seasonal/Time-Based Adaptation

Summer outdoor:

bright summer day, warm sunlight, lush green environment,
vibrant natural colors, clear blue sky

Autumn outdoor:

autumn afternoon, warm fall colors, golden leaves,
soft overcast light, cool crisp atmosphere

Winter outdoor:

winter scene, cool blue tones, soft diffused winter light,
cold atmosphere, muted natural colors

Morning:

early morning light, fresh atmosphere, soft warm dawn glow,
gentle morning sun, awakening mood

Evening:

evening atmosphere, golden hour sunset, warm fading light,
long shadows, romantic mood

Ethnicity-Sensitive Prompting

General principle: Describe features, not stereotypes

Instead of:

asian woman

Use:

woman with asian features, dark hair, almond-shaped eyes

Instead of:

african woman

Use:

woman with dark skin, natural textured hair, warm skin tones

Why: More descriptive, less reliant on potentially biased training data

One-Sentence Master Prompts (Extended Collection)

Collection 1: Editorial Portraits

1. A photorealistic cinematic portrait of a confident woman with short copper hair standing on a Milan rooftop at golden hour, warm rim light, shot on 50mm f/1.8.
2. A high-fashion editorial portrait of a woman with elegant styling in a minimalist modern space, soft architectural lighting, shot on 85mm lens, clean aesthetic.
3. A moody cinematic portrait of a woman in dim lighting with dramatic side illumination, film noir atmosphere, shot on 85mm f/1.4, strong bokeh.
4. A serene fine-art portrait of a woman with natural features in soft window light, contemplative expression, shot on 50mm lens, gentle shadows.
5. A confident professional portrait of a woman in business attire with controlled studio lighting, neutral background, shot on 85mm portrait lens.

Collection 2: Lifestyle Photography

- 1. A natural lifestyle photograph of a woman walking through a European city street at dusk, warm streetlight glow, shot on 35mm lens, relaxed candid moment.
- 2. A casual outdoor portrait of a woman in a sunlit park setting, golden hour light filtering through trees, shot on 50mm lens, authentic natural expression.
- 3. A documentary-style photograph of a woman at an outdoor cafe, afternoon light, genuine interaction, shot on 35mm lens, photojournalistic aesthetic.
- 4. A lifestyle editorial image of a woman on a coastal path, windswept hair, natural seaside lighting, shot on 50mm lens, environmental context.
- 5. A candid lifestyle portrait of a woman in her home environment, natural window light, comfortable authentic moment, shot on 35mm lens, intimate framing.

Collection 3: Studio Fashion

- 1. A clean studio fashion portrait of a woman with minimalist styling, soft diffused overhead lighting, neutral backdrop, shot on 85mm lens, editorial quality.
- 2. A high-end beauty portrait with perfect lighting, flawless makeup, controlled studio environment, shot on 100mm macro lens, commercial quality.
- 3. A dramatic studio portrait with theatrical lighting, elegant styling, deep shadows, shot on 85mm lens f/1.4, fashion editorial mood.
- 4. A bright airy studio portrait with high-key lighting, white seamless background, fresh clean aesthetic, shot on 50mm lens, commercial photography.
- 5. A sophisticated studio fashion portrait with three-point lighting, designer clothing, professional styling, shot on 85mm portrait lens, magazine quality.

Quick Reference Cards

Photography Lens Quick Reference

Lens	Effect	Use Case
24mm	Wide, distortion	Environmental, architecture
35mm	Natural wide	Lifestyle, storytelling
50mm	Natural perspective	Versatile, portraits
85mm	Compression, flattering	Portrait classic
135mm	Strong compression	Fashion, isolation

Aperture Quick Reference

Aperture	Effect	Use Case
f/1.2-1.4	Extreme bokeh	Intimate portraits
f/1.8-2.0	Strong bokeh	Standard portraits
f/2.8	Balanced DoF	Fashion full-body
f/4-5.6	Moderate focus	Groups, context
f/8-11	Deep focus	Landscapes, architecture

Lighting Quick Reference

Lighting	Effect	Use Case
Golden hour	Warm, flattering	Outdoor portraits
Soft studio	Even, professional	Studio fashion
Rembrandt	Dramatic, artistic	Portrait art
Backlighting	Rim light, separation	Cinematic
Window light	Natural, directional	Indoor lifestyle

Time of Day Quick Reference

Time	Color Temperature	Mood
Dawn	Cool → warm	Fresh, hopeful
Morning	Neutral warm	Natural, clear
Midday	Neutral	Bright, harsh
Golden hour	Warm orange	Romantic, dreamy
Blue hour	Cool blue	Moody, ethereal
Night	Mixed/cool	Dramatic, urban



Troubleshooting Decision Tree

START: Is the output photorealistic?

- └─ NO → Are realism tags present?
 - └─ NO → ADD: photorealistic, realistic skin, natural lighting
 - └─ YES → Is anime/cartoon in negative?
 - └─ NO → ADD to negative: (anime:1.3), (cartoon:1.3)
 - └─ YES → Lower CFG to 3.5-4.0
- └─ YES → Are there anatomical issues?
 - └─ YES → Hands broken?
 - └─ YES → Use safe hand poses (hands at sides, in pockets)
 - └─ ADD negative: (bad hands:1.4), (extra fingers:1.5)
 - └─ NO → Face distorted?
 - └─ YES → ADD: realistic facial features, natural proportions
 - └─ NO → Body proportions wrong?
 - └─ YES → ADD: natural proportions, balanced stance
 - └─ NO → Is lighting good?
 - └─ NO → Specify lighting: quality, direction, color temperature
 - └─ YES → Is composition good?
 - └─ NO → Add camera language: lens, framing, perspective
 - └─ YES → OUTPUT IS GOOD ✓

Final Wisdom: The Three Truths of Photorealistic Prompting

Truth 1: Clarity Beats Complexity

One perfect sentence > 200 random tags

A well-structured 60-token prompt outperforms a chaotic 75-token spam.

Example:

Better:

A photorealistic portrait of a woman with elegant features standing on a rooftop at sunset, warm golden hour light, shot on 85mm lens, shallow depth of field.

Worse:

masterpiece best quality ultra detailed hyper realistic perfect amazing exceptional woman beautiful gorgeous stunning pretty lovely attractive rooftop city urban sunset evening dusk twilight golden magic hour light lighting illumination lens camera photo photograph picture image...

Truth 2: Photography Logic Anchors Reality

Think like a photographer, not a programmer

Ask yourself:

- Where is my camera?
- What lens am I using?
- Where is my light source?
- What time of day is it?
- What is the environment?

If you can answer these, your prompt has **physical coherence**.

Truth 3: Imperfection Creates Realism

Perfect = Fake Natural imperfections = Real

Don't write:

perfect flawless skin, ideal proportions, absolute symmetry

Write:

realistic skin with natural texture, subtle imperfections,
natural proportions, authentic features

The model is trying to simulate reality - help it by acknowledging that reality isn't perfect.

Guide Version: 2.0 Enhanced **Focus:** Prompt Engineering with Photography Mastery

Model: Illustrious Realism by klaabu v1.0

Last Updated: February 2026

Additional Features in v2.0:

- Complete examples with safe variations
- One-sentence master prompt philosophy
- Modular prompt block system
- Photography lens/aperture/lighting quick references
- Extended troubleshooting decision tree
- Enhanced best practices with detailed explanations

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