

# Prompting for Impact

Using Copilot to Think, Not Just Code

# Who Am I?



- Staff Software Engineer @ Lean TECHniques
- Helping enhance teams with AI
- Blogging occasionally at [fullproductdev.com](https://fullproductdev.com)
- Tinkerer: music, woodworking, automations
- Rarely on social, usually building something instead



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# Agenda

- What is “Prompting for Impact”?
- Is This Just Prompt Engineering?
- How to Get More Out of GitHub Copilot Than Just Code
- Tooling
- Let’s Practice
- Final Thoughts
- Q&A
- Resources

# Assumptions

- We're going to be using GitHub Copilot
- Prompting is Non-Deterministic - and we want Deterministic-ish outcomes
- AI won't take your job, but a developer equipped with AI tools might
- Not all codebases are created equal, nor are LLMs

# Assumptions

- We won't be vibe coding



**Andrej Karpathy** ✓  
@karpathy



There's a new kind of coding I call "vibe coding", where you fully give in to the vibes, embrace exponentials, and forget that the code even exists. It's possible because the LLMs (e.g. Cursor Composer w Sonnet) are getting too good. Also I just talk to Composer with SuperWhisper so I barely even touch the keyboard. I ask for the dumbest things like "decrease the padding on the sidebar by half" because I'm too lazy to find it. I "Accept All" always, I don't read the diffs anymore. When I get error messages I just copy paste them in with no comment, usually that fixes it. The code grows beyond my usual comprehension, I'd have to really read through it for a while. Sometimes the LLMs can't fix a bug so I just work around it or ask for random changes until it goes away. It's not too bad for throwaway weekend projects, but still quite amusing. I'm building a project or webapp, but it's not really coding - I just see stuff, say stuff, run stuff, and copy paste stuff, and it mostly works.

6:17 PM · Feb 2, 2025 · **4.4M** Views

Image by [Austin Chan](#)



What is “Prompting for Impact”?

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Is This Just Prompt Engineering?

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# How to Get More Out of GitHub Copilot Than Just Code

Modes of Interaction with AI:

- Learning
  - Q&A
  - Role Play (Teacher/Student)
- Brainstorming
  - Rubber Ducking
  - Deep Research
- Impact
  - Combining Insight with Action
- More



# How to Get More Out of GitHub Copilot Than Just Code

## Typical Prompting:

- Write a function that does XYZ
- What does this code do?
- *Insert boring request with little to no context*

## Prompting for Impact:

- Discovery, Context Building, then Act
- As a PO/PM, explain why this code exists...
- *Build context around why, determine the what, let Copilot handle\* the how*


*\*A responsible developer OWNS the outputs and outcomes of the generated code. Do not blindly trust it. Verify it - with tests, and small, tightly-scoped changes.*

# How to Get More Out of GitHub Copilot Than Just Code

- Tools for a better experience:
  - Custom Instructions
  - Reusable Prompts
  - Chatmodes
  - [awesome-copilot](#) repo has great examples!
    - (Beast Mode!)

# Tooling

## Ways to use Copilot

- Online ([github.com/copilot](https://github.com/copilot))
  - VS Code (GitHub Copilot Extension)
  - JetBrains IDEs (Copilot Plugin)
  - Others
- 
- Latest Copilot Features

# Let's Practice

# Final Thoughts

- Utilizing custom instructions and chatmodes are a game changer
- Learning how to prompt better will increase mileage with Copilot
- There's always something new to learn, so make learning a habit
- Try seeing what an AI-first mentality does in your workflow
  - Ask, "Have I tried using AI to solve this problem?"
  - Or ask AI, "How might an expert \_\_\_\_ approach this problem?"
  - Or get meta, "Give me a prompt that accomplishes \_\_\_\_"
- Experiment, try new things, document and share it

Questions?

# Thanks!

Link to resources



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