

The Photo Trick

Eighteen things AI will do from a picture, so you can stop typing. Open Claude or ChatGPT on your phone, tap the camera, take the shot, paste the line. **The line matters more than the photo.** Crop out names and school logos first; the privacy note is on page two.

1 • The fridge at 5pm

KITCHEN

Shoot: the open fridge. One shelf at a time is fine.

"Dinner tonight from what you can see here. Thirty minutes or less. Tell me what is about to go bad so I use that first."

2 • The pantry shelf

KITCHEN

Shoot: doors open, whole shelf.

"Inventory this. Then give me five dinners that use only what is here plus milk, eggs, and butter."

3 • Grandma's recipe card

KITCHEN

Shoot: the card, grease stains and all.

"Type this out exactly as written. Then give me a version scaled for twelve people, with the shopping list."

4 • The takeout menu

KITCHEN

Shoot: the paper menu on the counter.

"Two adults and two kids, one of them will only eat plain food. Order under forty dollars. Tell me exactly what to say on the phone."

5 • Any form that came home

SCHOOL

Shoot: the whole page, front and back.

"What is this asking for, what does it cost, when is it due, and what goes in every blank? Check the back for anything I would miss."

6 • The supply list

SCHOOL

Shoot: the printed list.

"Sort this by store. Flag the oddly specific items that will be hard to find, and tell me which ones a generic version is fine for."

7 • The school year calendar

SCHOOL

Shoot: the wall calendar or the printout.

"Pull out every day school is closed or ends early between now and December. Give me the list with dates and day of the week."

8 • The slip you forgot

SCHOOL

Shoot: the signed slip in the backpack.

"What did I agree to and what do I need to send in on the day?"

9 • The beeping appliance

HOUSE

Shoot: the model number sticker, inside the door or on the back.

"This is beeping and flashing three times. What does that mean and what do I try before calling anyone?"

10 • The dying plant

HOUSE

Shoot: the whole plant, then the worst leaf up close.

"What is this plant, what is wrong with it, and what is the one thing I do this week?"

11 • The charger drawer

HOUSE

Shoot: the tangle, spread out flat.

"Identify each of these. Tell me which ones are obsolete and safe to throw out."

12 • The stain

HOUSE

Shoot: the stain, and the fabric care tag.

"This is dried and about a week old. Safe removal steps for this fabric, in order, starting with the gentlest."

13 • The homework page

KIDS

Shoot: the worksheet you do not remember how to do.

"Do not give the answers. Explain the method to me the way this curriculum teaches it, so I can walk a nine year old through it."

14 • The growth-spurt closet

KIDS

Shoot: the drawer or the closet rod.

"Estimate sizes from what is here. Tell me what to buy for fall and what will make it one more season."

15 • The rash, the bump, the thing

KIDS

Shoot: good light, something for scale. See the note on page two.

"What are the likely explanations, what would make this urgent, and what do I watch for over the next two days?"

16 • The parking sign

WORLD

Shoot: all of it, including the small print underneath.

"It is Tuesday, 3pm. Can I park here, and until when?"

17 • The eleven-ingredient label

WORLD

Shoot: the ingredient panel.

"Explain these in plain words. Flag anything a kid with a dairy allergy should avoid."

18 • The whiteboard at pickup

WORLD

Shoot: the whole flyer, slide, or board, straight on.

"Turn this into a clean list I can put in my calendar. Include dates, times, and what I have to bring."

The shape of a good line

Every prompt on page one does the same four things. Copy the pattern when you invent your own.

1 • Name the situation

"It is Tuesday, 3pm." "This is dried, about a week old." The photo shows the thing; you supply the moment.

2 • Say what you want back

A list, a plan, a translation, five options. Name the shape of the answer and that is the shape you get.

3 • Set the limit

Thirty minutes. Forty dollars. Only what is in the photo. The limit is what makes the answer fit your actual life.

4 • Say what to avoid

"Do not give the answers." "Nothing that needs a special trip." One exclusion saves three rounds of fixing.

Vague photo plus vague question gives you a vague answer. *The photo is rarely the problem.*

When the first answer is wrong

Do not start over. Say one of these.

"Only use what is actually visible in the photo."

"Too many options. Pick one and tell me why."

"You missed the back of the page. Look again."

"Assume I have none of the specialty items."

Privacy, the short version

Crop before you send. Names, addresses, student ID numbers, account numbers, the school logo, the teacher's last name. When you cannot crop it, say so in the line: "Ignore all names and identifying details in this image and do not repeat them back to me." For medical questions, a photo is a starting point for questions to ask, never a diagnosis. Call the doctor for anything that worries you.

Show it, then say it.

Typing is the slow way in. You have to describe the thing before you can ask about the thing, and describing it is most of the work. The camera skips that part.