

The Comeback Plan

How one parent used AI to build a 10 week return to work curriculum, and the exact method to build your own, whatever your job is.

15 minutes a day

Four prompts

Any industry

Nothing proprietary

When you've been out of work, the thing that keeps you up at night usually isn't skill. You still know how to do the job. What went missing is **context**. This guide gives you four prompts that turn that gap into a curriculum you can finish in fifteen minutes a day, plus the real example we built it from.

START HERE

The problem nobody names

Parental leave, caregiving, illness, redundancy, a move. However you got here, the fear isn't that you've forgotten how to work. It's the reorg you missed. The tool everyone now uses. The three acronyms in the first meeting. The strategy deck that landed while you were doing 3am feeds.

You can't fix that with a confidence quote on a Sunday night. You fix it with a curriculum. And now you can build one in an evening.

THE CORE IDEA

Treat your return like onboarding you get to design yourself. Fifteen minutes a day, starting weeks before day one, sequenced so each thing you learn makes the next thing make sense.

PART ONE · THE PROOF

What we actually built

A ten week roadmap for a Senior Project Manager returning to a global pharmaceutical company. Built

with AI in a single evening, then run daily on a phone.

15

MINUTES
PER DAY

39

LESSONS
TOTAL

9

APPLICATION
FRIDAYS

10

WEEKS, ENDING
DAY BEFORE RETURN

Eight modules, each answering a question the previous one raises.

MODULE	THE QUESTION IT ANSWERS
1 · The company	Who do I actually work for, and how does it make money?
2 · The industry	What are the rules of the game everyone here already knows?
3 · My organisation	Where does my department sit, and what value is it meant to create?
4 · My craft, in context	How is my job done here, under these constraints?
5 · The tools	What's changed in how the work gets done while I was away?
6 · My partners	Who do I depend on, and what do they care about?
7 · My presence	How do I show up credibly from week one?
8 · My landing plan	What exactly do I do on day one, day 30, day 90?

WHY THE ORDER MATTERS

Company, then industry, then organisation, then craft, then tools, then partners, then presence, then landing plan. Learning your craft first is the instinct, and it's the wrong one. Craft only makes sense once you know the constraints it operates inside.

PART ONE · THE PROOF

The seven design choices that make it stick

Anyone can ask AI for a study plan. These are the decisions that turn a study plan into something you'll actually finish.

01 Fifteen minutes, not two hours

A plan you can do while the baby naps is a plan you'll still be doing in week eight. Ambition is the enemy here.

02 One page, one idea, ten fixed parts

Every lesson has the identical shape: topic, visual anchor, five takeaways, two or three acronyms, why it matters to me, a real named example, one tool takeaway, three review questions, one question to ask at work, optional deep dive. Fixed format means zero decision making at 7am.

03 Monday to Thursday you learn, Friday you use it

Application Fridays: a simulated meeting, a teach back in your own words, an acronym recall. Learning you've never spoken out loud isn't learning yet.

04 Fortnightly confidence checks, five questions, always the same five

Progress you can feel beats progress you can only count. Same questions every fortnight, so you watch your own answers get better.

05 Living resources that accumulate

A running acronym dictionary. A company playbook. A prompt library. A first 90 days plan. By the end you're not holding memories, you're holding a reference pack you can open on day one.

06 Permission to miss a day, written into the plan

Missed Tuesday? Don't backfill. Skip to today's lesson. Fridays absorb catch up if you want them to. The plan survives a gap. Most plans die on the guilt, not the gap.

07 Nothing proprietary, ever

The daily fifteen minutes runs on your own device, on public information only. Anything needing the company intranet gets batched into one short list for when you're actually logged in. This isn't just a rule you follow, it's a rule you build into the prompt.

"The goal isn't to know everything by day one. It's to walk in knowing what questions to ask, and who to ask them of."

PART TWO · THE HOW-TO

Before you prompt, answer these six

Write your answers somewhere first. Every prompt that follows is only as good as these.

#	QUESTION	YOUR ANSWER
1	What's the exact job title and organisation you're returning to?	
2	How long have you been out, and what changed while you were gone?	
3	What's your real daily window? Be honest, not aspirational.	
4	What's your first day back, and how many weekdays until then?	

5 What's the one meeting you're most afraid of being lost in?

6 What would "I'm ready" actually feel like? Name five signs.

ON QUESTION FIVE

This one does more work than the rest combined. It tells the AI what to optimise the whole curriculum for. "I'm afraid of the quarterly budget review" produces a completely different plan than "I'm afraid of the daily standup."

PART TWO · THE HOW-TO

Four prompts, in order

Paste these into any AI chat tool. Run them in sequence in the same conversation, because each one builds on the last.

Prompt 1 · Build the map

PASTE AND FILL THE BRACKETS

I'm returning to work as a [JOB TITLE] at [ORGANISATION / TYPE OF ORGANISATION] after [LENGTH] away on [REASON]. My first day back is [DATE]. I have [NUMBER] weekdays between now and then, and realistically [15] minutes a day.

Build me a module map, 6 to 8 modules, that takes me from understanding the organisation, to the industry it operates in, to my own department, to my craft in that specific context, to the tools and technology that have changed, to the teams I depend on, to how I show up credibly, to a concrete first 90 days plan.

Sequence them so each module answers a question the previous one raises. Tell me the logic of the order before you give me the modules. Then allocate the lessons across my available weekdays, and leave every Friday free for application rather than new content.

Prompt 2 · Lock the daily format

PASTE AFTER PROMPT 1

Now design the anatomy of a single daily lesson. It must fit on one page and take 15 minutes. Use exactly this ten part structure every single day, no exceptions:

- 1 · Topic, one line, one idea
- 2 · A visual anchor, a diagram, map, timeline or table
- 3 · Five takeaways, the whole lesson if I only have three minutes
- 4 · Two or three acronyms, introduced slowly, revisited often
- 5 · Why it matters to me specifically, through the lens of a [JOB TITLE]
- 6 · A real named example, actual products, actual teams, actual places
- 7 · One tool or AI takeaway I can use immediately
- 8 · Three review questions, answered at the start of tomorrow's lesson
- 9 · One safe, non proprietary question I could ask a colleague or look up internally
- 10 · An optional five minute deep dive, only if I have appetite

Confirm the format back to me, then hold it for every lesson from here.

Prompt 3 · Set the rules

PASTE AFTER PROMPT 2

Three rules for this whole curriculum.

One: use only publicly available information. Never ask me for anything confidential about my employer, and never assume internal detail. If something can only be known internally, put it in a separate list of things for me to look up when I'm logged in.

Two: Mondays to Thursdays are new lessons. Fridays are application only, so a simulated meeting I'd realistically sit in, a teach back where I explain the week in my own words, and an acronym recall. Every second Friday, ask me the same five confidence questions so I can track my own answers improving.

Three: if I miss a day, tell me to skip to today rather than backfill. Build that in now so I don't quit in week three.

Prompt 4 · Run it daily

YOUR EVERY MORNING PROMPT

Lesson [N], please. Start by answering yesterday's three review questions before we begin.

ONE EXTRA MOVE

Ask for a set of living resources: an acronym dictionary, a company playbook, a template pack, a prompt library, all issued at the end of each module and growing as you go. It turns 10 weeks of reading into one document you can actually open on day one.

PART TWO · THE HOW-TO

What this looks like in other jobs

The skeleton never changes. Only the contents of each module do.

RETURNING AS	MODULE 2 BECOMES	MODULE 5 BECOMES
Nurse	Care model, current clinical guidelines, funding pressures	New charting system, e-prescribing, triage tools
Teacher	Curriculum changes, assessment reform, safeguarding updates	The new LMS, AI policy for student work
Accountant	Regulatory changes, reporting standards, audit climate	ERP updates, automation in close processes
Software engineer	Where the industry moved, what got deprecated	The current AI assisted dev workflow
Retail or ops manager	Consumer shift, supply chain reality, margin pressure	The scheduling and inventory stack
Marketer	Channel shifts, privacy changes, attribution reality	The AI content and analytics stack

IF YOU'RE GOING SOMEWHERE NEW, NOT BACK

Same eight modules, but make module 1 about the specific company you're interviewing with, and move module 8 to the front as an interview prep block. The sequencing logic holds either way.

PART TWO · THE HOW-TO

Your five confidence questions

Every second Friday, answer these out loud. Not in your head, out loud, to a partner, a mirror, a voice

memo. Write the date beside each and watch them change.

01 Can you explain what your organisation does, in two minutes, to someone outside it?

02 Can you describe where your team sits and how it creates value?

03 Could you follow most of a meeting in your field without getting lost?

04 Could you give a confident update to a senior person right now?

05 Could you start a new assignment tomorrow?

BEFORE YOU START

Four guardrails

KEEP IT PUBLIC

Never paste anything confidential about your employer into a consumer AI tool. Public strategy, published annual reports, industry basics, all fine. Internal documents, client names, colleague details, not fine, ever.

VERIFY ANYTHING THAT MATTERS

AI gets details wrong. Anything you'd say out loud in a meeting, a number, a date, a regulation, a product name, check it against the actual source before you repeat it.

YOUR DEVICE, YOUR TIME

Do the daily fifteen on your own phone or laptop, in your own hours. Batch anything needing the work intranet into one short list for a day you're genuinely logged in.

FIFTEEN MINUTES IS THE CEILING

If you find yourself planning a two hour version, you've already started designing the plan you'll abandon. Small and finished beats ambitious and dead.

You're not behind. You're out of context, and context is the one thing that can be rebuilt in fifteen minutes a day.