DAY 30 · Part 3 · What It Can Do

Stuck on a problem: get just the answer, or the steps? — Study helper

Five-Minute AI Lessons · Oct 6, 2026

Problems you'll meet again: get the steps. Problems you won't: get the answer.

In a nutshell

1. When you ask AI about schoolwork, first decide **whether you want just the answer or the steps**. Ask the same question either way, and what comes back is completely different.

2. There's one rule for choosing — **will I have to do this on my own later?** If you'll have to do it yourself, get the steps. If you just need to know whether you got it right, get the answer.

3. Bonus: making AI go step by step helps AI solve better too. A 2022 study found that adding one line — **"Let's think step by step"** — made AI get a lot more math problems right.

In one picture

Getting the answer vs getting the steps

Just the answer

· Grading what you already solved
· Short stuff: simple math, word meanings
· Fast, but little sticks with you

→

Explain the steps

· When you'll solve it alone again
· A type you keep getting wrong
· Slower, but you'll use it next time

One question decides it: will I face this problem on my own later?

Key idea: problems you'll meet again, get the steps; ones you won't, get the answer

Experiment · Pick one

In this situation: answer or steps?

Just the answer

When this one fits

- ✓ You finished a math workbook and want...
- ✓ You're writing a science lab report a...
- ✓ Your Spanish reading has one word you...

Explain the steps

When this one fits

- ✓ You've gotten the same type of proble...
- ✓ Tomorrow you have a graded in-class a...
- ✓ You just can't get a feel for why qua...

The rule

How to choose

- ✓ There's one rule
- ✓ If you'll meet the problem again, get...
- ✓ If you won't, just get the answer

Here are six situations. For each one, pick whether it's better to get just the answer or have the steps explai...

Try it yourself in the web lesson · next-token.net/en/learn/day-30/

Quick check

Just three questions

Q1

What decides whether you get the answer or the steps?

① Whether I'll have to do this alone later
② How long the problem is
③ Which AI it is
④ How much time is left

Q2

You've gotten the same type wrong three times. What should you ask for?

① Just the right answer, fast
② To walk through it line by line
③ A different problem
④ Just grading

Q3

What should you do after getting the steps explained?

① Move to the next problem
② Copy it and hand it in
③ Solve it again, no peeking
④ Send it to a friend

Know the why, too

Q1

① If AI won't be there with you tomorrow, what you need isn't the answer — it's steps that stick in your head. But if you only need to grade something, the answer is enough.

Q2

② Getting it wrong three times is a sign that something in the middle is missing. Seeing the answer won't fill that gap.

Q3

③ Reading an explanation isn't the same as being able to solve it. Solve it once more without looking, and then it's yours.

Problems you'll meet again: get the steps.
Problems you won't: get the answer.

Tomorrow: Tables and data — the order for turning scattered info into a table, and a table into a graph.