✦ A FREE AI WORKFLOW, MADE EASY

Turn any reference into your edit with ~~one prompt.~~

Sorting footage used to be the most boring part of editing: scrubbing through hundreds of clips just to find the right moments. Now I give **Claude** a reference video I love and my raw clips folder. It studies the reference, goes through every single clip, finds my version of each moment and builds the edit in the same order, with the same feel. My last one took about 15 minutes, from around 315 clips I never watched. Every box marked **My prompt** is one you can copy. Change the bits in [brackets] to fit your shoot.

WHAT YOU GET

- **Any video as your template:** a reel on Instagram, a video on Pinterest, a brand film you admire. If you love how it's cut, Claude can rebuild it with your footage.
- **No more sorting footage:** Claude goes through every clip in your folder, so you don't have to watch a single second of raw.
- **Shot by shot, in the same order:** each moment in the reference gets matched to your best take, with the same timing and pace.
- **Even the tricky bits:** if the reference opens with a photo grid, Claude builds one from your final pictures.
- **A shot list you can check:** every reference shot next to the clip Claude picked, so swapping one is a single sentence.

How it works: Claude pulls still frames from the reference and from every one of your clips with FFmpeg (free and open source), looks at them, then cuts and exports the edit, all on your own computer.

WHAT YOU NEED (ONE TIME)

- **Claude Code** or the **Claude desktop app** (Code tab), so Claude can open your folders.
- **FFmpeg** on your computer. Step 1 shows how to check.
- **Your reference video** saved as a file (MP4 or MOV).
- **Your raw clips folder**, plus your edited photos if the reference uses stills.

STEP 1

Check your setup

Open your terminal and run this line:

> IN YOUR TERMINAL
>
> ```
> ffmpeg -version
> ```

If it says "command not found", install it (on a Mac with Homebrew: `brew install ffmpeg`), or just ask Claude: **"Install FFmpeg for me."** FFmpeg is what lets Claude open, read and cut your video files.

STEP 2

Set up one folder

Put everything for the edit in one place, so Claude knows exactly where to look:

> YOUR PROJECT FOLDER
>
> ```
> [My Edit]/
>   Reference.mp4        ← the video you want to copy
>   Raw clips/           ← every clip from your shoot, unsorted
>   Final pictures/      ← edited photos (only if the reference uses stills)
> ```

Then open that folder in Claude Code (or pick it as the folder in the Claude desktop app's Code tab).

No need to tidy: leave the clips exactly as they came off the card. Odd file names and hundreds of clips are fine; Claude goes through them all.

STEP 3

Give Claude the reference and your folder

This is the one prompt that does the whole job:

> MY PROMPT
>
> Recreate this reference video with my own footage. The reference is [Reference.mp4] and my raw clips are in [Raw clips]. First, study the reference shot by shot: what's in each shot, how long it lasts, the camera move and the overall pace. Then go through every clip in my folder (I haven't watched any of them), find my version of each moment and pick the best take. Build the edit in the same order, with the same timing and feel, and export it as a [vertical 1080×1920] MP4. Give me a shot list with each reference shot next to the clip you used.

What Claude does, step by step:

1. Breaks the reference into shots: what's in frame, how long each one lasts, how it moves and where it cuts.

2. Pulls frames from every clip in your folder and logs what's in each one, which takes are sharp and which moments are usable.
3. Matches each reference shot to your best clip and picks the exact in and out points.
4. Cuts the edit in the same order and rhythm as the reference, then exports it.
5. Reports back with the shot list, and flags any moment it couldn't find in your footage.

Then look: play the reference and your edit one after the other. Same structure, your shoot.

STEP 4 · THE MOST IMPORTANT TIP

Tell Claude about your shoot

Claude matches what it understands. One line about what you shot makes a bigger difference than anything else. Add whichever of these apply to your prompt in Step 3:

TELL CLAUDE	WHY IT MATTERS
What the shoot is	"A bridal shoot: lights, the photographer, jewellery, makeup." Naming the moments helps Claude find them fast in hundreds of clips.
What to keep in the edit	"Keep the original length", "cut to the beat of [song.mp3]", "use the same transitions". Tell it what matters most about the reference.
What must look right	"Only use sharp takes", "faces must be in focus", "no clips where I'm setting up the camera".
Stills in the reference	If the reference has a photo grid or still frames, point Claude at your edited photos: "use the pictures in [Final pictures]".
Which clips to skip	Test shots, behind-the-scenes or a whole sub-folder. Name them so Claude leaves them out.

Use the reference as a template, not as content: Claude copies its structure, order and pace. Every frame in your edit comes from your own footage.

STEP 5 · MY BUILD

How I made the edit in my reel

> MY PROMPT
>
> **Here's a reference I found on Pinterest and my raw clips folder. Recreate it shot by shot with my footage. It opens with a photo grid, so build that from my final pictures.**

- **Around 315 clips, none of them watched by me:** Claude went through every single one.
- **The photo grid first:** the reference opens with a grid, so Claude built one from my final pictures.
- **Then the same story, in the same order:** lights, the photographer, jewellery, makeup. Shot by shot, with the same overall feel.

- **About 15 minutes, start to finish:** on the left of my reel is the Pinterest reference, on the right is what Claude made.

The time depends on how many clips you have and how long they are; a big folder just means letting Claude work a little longer.

Takeaway: sorting footage used to be the most boring part of editing. Now it's the part I skip completely.

STEP 6

Keep talking to Claude

Once your first edit is ready, use whichever of these fits:

WHEN YOU WANT	MY PROMPT
Swap one shot	"Shot [5] doesn't feel right. Show me the 3 next-best clips for it with a frame from each, then use [the second one]."
Fill a missing moment	"There's no match for shot [8]. Use the closest clip you have, or hold the shot before it a little longer."
Fix the timing	"Make every shot the same length as in the reference, and cut on the beat of [song.mp3]."
Match the look	"Match the colour and contrast of my edit to the reference, but keep skin tones natural."
Make another version	"Use [New reference.mp4] as the template this time, with the same clips folder."

STEP 7

Show the reference and your edit side by side

The split-screen is what makes people stop scrolling: the reference on one side, your version on the other. Ask Claude to set it up:

> MY PROMPT
>
> **Make a split-screen video with the reference on the left and my edit on the right, playing in sync, shot for shot. Export it as a [vertical 1080×1920] MP4.**

When you post it: credit the creator of the reference. Their video is the template, your footage is the edit.

IF SOMETHING GOES WRONG

Quick fixes

WHAT YOU SEE	DO THIS
Claude can't open the videos	Check that FFmpeg is installed (Step 1), and that you opened the project folder in Claude.
It's taking a while	Normal with hundreds of clips. Let it run; Claude is checking every one of them.
It picked the wrong clip	"Shot [3] is the wrong moment. I need [the close-up of the necklace]. Find a better one."
The edit feels slower than the reference	"Match the shot lengths to the reference exactly, frame for frame."
The reference won't save as a file	Use the platform's own save option, or screen-record it. Claude only needs to see it.

✦ @AMANJAIN.JPEG

All my prompts, in one place

Copy them in this order. Change the bits in [brackets] to fit your shoot.

1. `ffmpeg -version`

   Step 1, in your terminal, once. If it's missing, ask Claude to install FFmpeg

2. Recreate this reference video with my own footage. The reference is [Reference.mp4] and my raw clips are in [Raw clips]. First, study the reference shot by shot: what's in each shot, how long it lasts, the camera move and the overall pace. Then go through every clip in my folder (I haven't watched any of them), find my version of each moment and pick the best take. Build the edit in the same order, with the same timing and feel, and export it as a [vertical 1080×1920] MP4. Give me a shot list with each reference shot next to the clip you used.

   Step 3, the main prompt. Add what you shot (Step 4)

3. The reference opens with a photo grid. Build the same grid from the pictures in [Final pictures], with the same layout and timing.

   Step 4, if your reference uses stills

4. Shot [5] doesn't feel right. Show me the 3 next-best clips for it with a frame from each, then use [the second one].

   Step 6, to swap a shot

5. Make every shot the same length as in the reference, and cut on the beat of [song.mp3].

   Step 6, to fix the timing

6. Match the colour and contrast of my edit to the reference, but keep skin tones natural.

   Step 6, to match the look

7. Make a split-screen video with the reference on the left and my edit on the right, playing in sync, shot for shot. Export it as a [vertical 1080×1920] MP4.

   Step 7, for your side-by-side

CREDITS

- **Claude:** Anthropic
- **FFmpeg:** ffmpeg.org, free and open source
- **Reference video:** found on Pinterest, all credit to its creator
- **The edit + side-by-side reel:** made by me with Claude, from my own raw clips

Now pick a video you love and make it yours tonight.

✦ If you try it, tag me, I'd love to see your version · @amanjain.jpeg · Questions? visualsmediaco@gmail.com