CLAUDE ARCHITECT IN 30 DAYS · DAY 5

Getting JSON you can trust.

Asking nicely for JSON isn't a contract. A schema is.

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THE PROBLEM

“Reply in JSON” works until it doesn’t.

One extra sentence or a missing field, and your parser throws in production.

THE FIX

Give Claude a schema.

Structured outputs hold the response to your JSON schema, so it always parses.

ON THE REQUEST

One setting on the same call.

```
output_config
  format: your JSON schema
```

FOR TOOLS

For tool calls: strict: true.

Claude’s tool inputs then match the tool’s input schema exactly.

SHAPE, NOT TRUTH

Valid JSON can still be wrong.

A schema guarantees the shape, not the facts. Check the values your code acts on.

BEFORE YOU PARSE

Check stop_reason first.

- refusal: no answer to parse
- max_tokens: answer was cut off
- end_turn: safe to parse

THE OLD TRICK

Prefilling the reply no longer works.

Current Claude models reject a prefilled assistant turn. Use a schema instead.

TRY THIS TODAY

Find one place you parse Claude's text by hand.

Replace it with a schema, then delete the retry-on-bad-JSON code around it.

Day 6: what goes in the context window

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