

ANNOUNCEMENT

Shipping PPL: A License for the Age of PromptWare ØS



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Dec 13, 2025 · 3 mins read



“Where is the GPL for Prompts?”

Last week, I wrote [From GPL to Prompts](#) to highlight a growing problem: **English is becoming source code**, but our open source licenses are stuck in the era of C and Java.

I asked the question. Today, I am sharing the answer.

We are releasing the [Public Prompt License \(PPL\)](#), a new family of open-source licenses designed specifically for the AI-Native era.

The PromptWare ØS Trigger

As we were building [PromptWare ØS](#)—our operating system for AI co-founders—we hit a wall. We wanted to share our “kernel” prompts and “skills” libraries as true open source.

But when we looked at the existing options, they didn’t fit:

- **MIT** is great, but it doesn’t define what “source” means for an agent.
- **AGPL** is powerful, but ambiguous. If you talk to my agent over an API, do I have to send you the Python wrapper or the System Prompt?
- **SSPL** pioneered solving the cloud gap with bold scope—claiming the entire “Service Stack” to ensure complete freedom. While we deeply respect this approach, its rejection by the Open Source Initiative (OSI) limits adoption in some ecosystems we want to serve.

We needed something that protected the **soul** of the agent (the prompts) while being pragmatic about OSI approval and ecosystem adoption.

Enter PPL v0.1

So we drafted the **Public Prompt License (PPL)**.

It is not just a text file; it is a “Legal Spec” for AI agents.

The Core Innovation: “Prompt Source”

The heart of PPL is a rigorous definition of [Prompt Source](#). It explicitly includes:

- System Prompts & Personas
- Tool Descriptions & Schemas
- Routing Logic & Orchestration
- Knowledge Structure (like PromptWare ØS’s bootloaders)

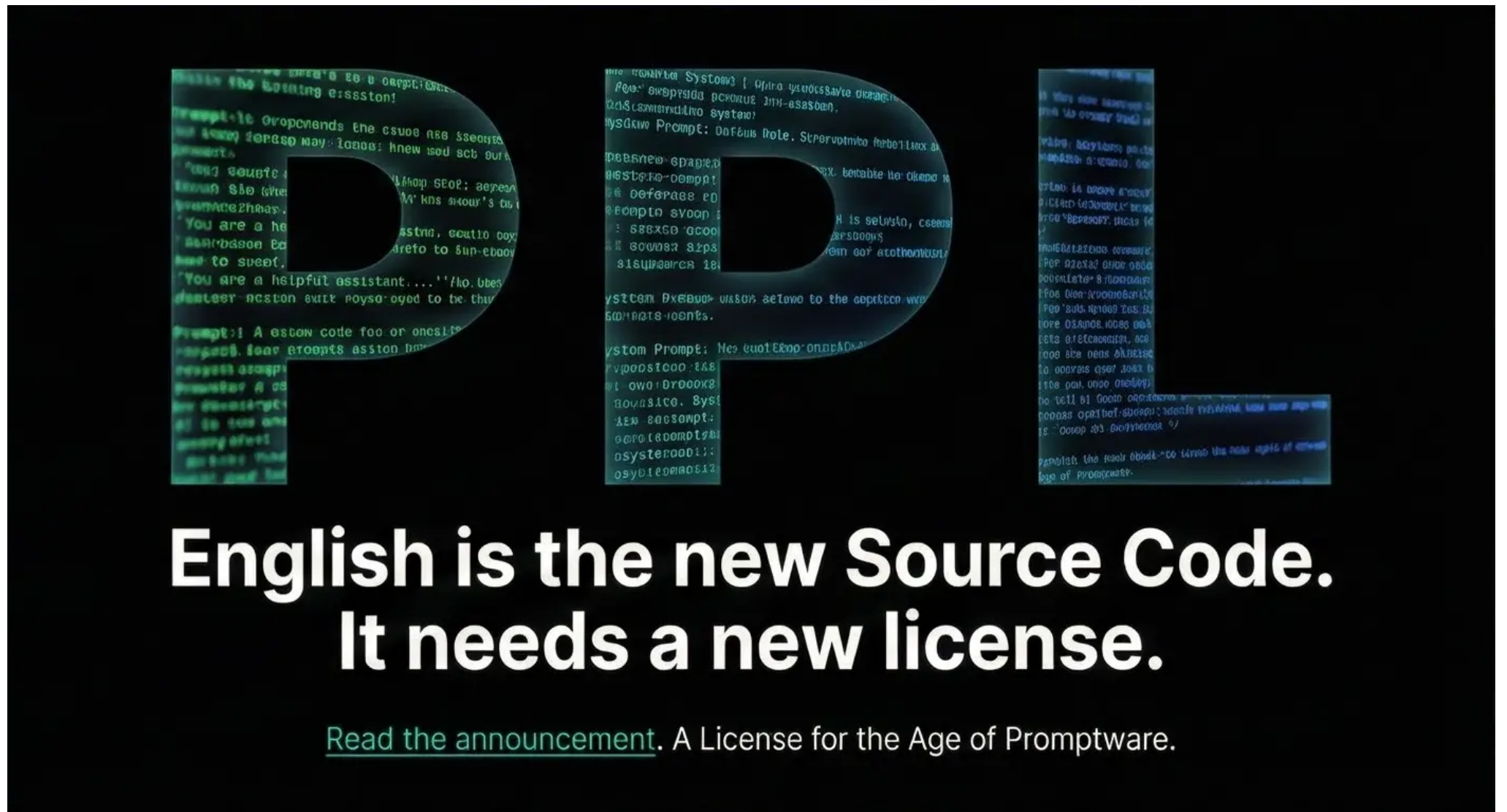
Crucially, it explicitly **excludes** the underlying inference engine (vLLM, Ollama), the OS, and the hardware.

This is our **Infrastructure Exclusion**. SSPL took the maximalist approach—ensuring complete freedom by requiring disclosure of the entire service stack. PPL takes a surgical approach: we protect the *cognitive logic* (the prompts) while being pragmatic about OSI approval. Both philosophies have merit; we chose the path that balances idealism with ecosystem adoption.

The Three Variants

We created a family of three licenses to match the software ecosystem:

1. **PPL-M (MIT-style):** For the builders. Use these prompts anywhere, even in closed products. Just keep the credit.
2. **PPL-A (Apache-style):** For the enterprise. Includes patent grants for prompting techniques and clear attribution.
3. **PPL-S (Service-style):** For the commons. If you run this agent as a service, you must share the prompts. This ensures that the *knowledge* embedded in our agents remains open.



Why Not SSPL?

We considered SSPL carefully. MongoDB’s Server Side Public License embodies an important open-source principle—preventing cloud giants from freeloading on the commons without contributing back.

But we chose a different path for two reasons:

1. **OSI Approval:** We want PPL to be recognized as OSI-approved open source, which means working within their definition, even if we don’t entirely agree with all aspects of it.
2. **Scope Precision:** For AI agents, we need a definition that’s surgically precise about what “Prompt Source” means. SSPL’s broad “Service Stack” definition works for databases; we needed something tailored for cognitive systems.

This doesn’t mean SSPL is wrong. It means we’re optimizing for different constraints.

An Invitation to Pilot

This is not just legal theory. We are applying PPL to **PromptWare ØS (PromptWare OS)** and our internal Ship.Fail projects starting today.

We are releasing PPL as **Draft 0.1 (Request for Comment)**. We know it isn’t perfect yet. That is why we need you.

We invite you to:

- 1. **Read the Spec:** Visit the [project page](#) or check out the [DEFINITIONS.md](#) in the repo.
- 2. **Pilot it:** If you are building an agent, try adding **PPL -M** or **PPL -S** to your repo.
- 3. **Break it:** Tell us where the definitions fail.

The future of open source isn’t just about code anymore. It’s about the prompts that steer our world.

Let’s build that commons together.

 [Visit the Project Page](#)

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