

Claude

A Plain Language Guide

Prepared at the request of Dr. Muhsinah Morris



Use Claude for life, learning, and work.
Pick a tool. Give clear steps. Check the result.

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QUICK START

Start with one small job

Claude is an AI helper made by Anthropic. It can help you write, learn, plan, and make things. Start with a task you know well. Check what it gives you.

Your job	Start with	Example	Check
Write a note	Chat	Thank a helper.	Names and tone.
Plan a lesson	Chat or Project	Teach plant needs.	Facts and age fit.
Find new facts	Web search	Find museum hours.	The official site.
Make a handout	Docs artifact	A one-page guide.	Every page.
Do a long task	Cowork	Build an event pack.	Files and actions.

Tool facts: [3, 5, 7, 20]. Examples are starting tips, not promises.

Your first try

- 1. Open claude.ai or the official Claude app.
- 2. Sign in to your own account.
- 3. Type a clear request.
- 4. Read the answer. Ask for a small change. [18]

Try: “Help me plan a family game night. We have one hour. Use things we have at home. Give me five steps.”

Read apps on page 3, models on page 4, tools on pages 6-10, and safe use on page 11.

Choose where you work

Place	Good for	What to know
Web claude.ai	Start in a browser. No app install.	Some tasks still need the desktop app.
Desktop	Work with files and apps on a computer.	Mac and Windows. Linux is in beta.
Mobile	Ask, add photos, and check work on the go.	iPhone and Android. Some tools differ.

The apps have a free plan. Some features need a paid plan. Use official download links. Linux does not yet have every desktop feature. [18]

Four words to know

Model: The AI you pick, such as Sonnet.

Tool: A feature for a job, such as web search.

Effort: How much thought Claude puts in.

Permission: What you let Claude see or change.

Why your screen may look different

Claude is joining Chat and Cowork in one space. Some users still see both choices. Others just ask in any chat. This change rolls out by plan and account. [4]

Beta means it is still being tested. An admin runs a work account. A missing button may be a plan or work-account rule. It may not be your fault.

Pick a model for the job

Use only names in your menu. These four models are listed in current official guides. Start with Sonnet if you are not sure. [1]

Model	Try it for	Example
Haiku 5.5	Short, clear jobs. Uses less of your limit.	Pull dates from a short note.
Sonnet 5.5	Most daily writing, plans, and work with a few steps.	Make a lesson and a quiz.
Opus 5.5	Hard problems that need deep thought.	Find gaps across three long plans.
Fable 5.1	Long, complex jobs with many linked steps.	Build and check a large event pack.

Harder-working models may take longer and use more of your limit. A bigger model is not best for every small job. [1]

Check access and cost first

Free includes Haiku and Sonnet. Opus needs a paid plan. Pro access to Fable uses paid usage credits. Max and Team premium seats have special Fable limits. Work rules may limit choices. [17]

Open the model name by the send button. More models may show extra choices. Your work admin may limit models or effort. [2]

START WITH THE SHOWN DEFAULT

Set thought and effort

Open the model menu, then Effort. The menu marks a level as Default. Use that first. Higher effort can take more time and use your limit faster. [2]

Level	Plain meaning	A job to try
Low	A light pass.	Fix a short note.
Medium	Work through a few steps.	Plan a simple week.
High	A deeper pass.	Compare three options.
Extra high Also called xhigh	More thought for long, hard tasks.	Check a large work plan.
Max	The deepest effort offered.	Study a very hard problem.

Thinking is a separate setting

Some models have a Thinking or Extended switch. The four current models on page 4 keep thinking on in Claude. Older models may let you switch it off. [2]

Use only the levels your model offers. More thought does not add a missing tool or let Claude open a blocked file. You still need to check its work.

The example jobs are teaching tips. Effort is not a timer, image size, or promise of truth.

UPLOADS AND PROJECTS

Give Claude the right files

A Project keeps related chats, files, and rules in one place. Use one for a course, a family event, or a small business. Free accounts can have up to five Projects. [5]

Need	Use	Example	Limit
One file	Add files or photos	Explain a flyer.	Use a clear file.
Repeat work	Project	Keep lesson notes.	Keep files current.
A work style	Project rules	Use plain words.	Rules can be missed.

Add a file

Select +, then Add files or photos. Add the file. Say which part matters. You can add PDF, Word, text, data, and image files. Excel files need file creation and code tools enabled. [6]

Pictures inside files can be missed

Claude reads text from most document files. It may miss pictures inside them. PDFs of 100 pages or less support visual review. Longer PDFs are read as text. [6]

Try: “Use this flyer. List the date, place, cost, and sign-up steps. Tell me if you cannot read a word.”

Share only files you have the right to use. Remove private details that the task does not need.

ARTIFACTS AND FINISHED FILES

Make something you can use

An artifact is a piece of work Claude makes beside your chat. It can be a document, slides, a design, or a small tool. You can ask for changes. [7]

Your job	Start with	Ask for	Check
A class handout	Docs	Big text and one page.	Facts and layout.
A short talk	Slides	Six clear slides.	Words and order.
A flyer	Design	A bold date and place.	Text and image rights.
A practice quiz	Custom artifact	Five questions and feedback.	Each right answer.

Docs, Slides, and Design templates are on all plans. Dashboards are a paid-plan beta. Artifacts need cloud code and file creation enabled. Work admins may set limits. [7]

Ask for the format you need

“Make a one-page handout from my notes. Use large text. Give me an editable Word file and a PDF. Check that nothing is cut off.”

A file to download and a shared artifact link are not the same. Ask for the one you need. Open it before you send it to others. [7]

Check who can open a shared link. Keep private class, family, and client data out of public work.

Find facts and connect apps

Need	Tool	Example	Limit
A fresh fact	Web search	Check park hours.	Read the source.
A deep review	Research	Compare event sites.	Paid plans; uses more.
Your app data	Connector	Find a work file.	Needs access.

Ask Claude to search the web and give links. Some screens have a Web search switch under +. In the new Claude view, it searches when useful. Work accounts may need an admin to turn it on. [20]

Research looks in more places

Research runs a set of searches. It needs web search and a paid plan. Choose +, then Research when shown. It may use a different model from your chat. [8]

On mobile, Research searches the web only. To include connected apps, start Research on web or desktop. [8]

Connect only what you need

A connector links Claude to an app, such as email or a file drive. Review what it may read or change. Work admins may block tools. [9]

Research may use enabled connectors without asking each time. Turn off any source you do not want it to use. [8]

CHOOSE THE KIND OF VISUAL

Work with pictures and video

Your goal	Use	Know the limit
Read a photo	Upload the image.	Small text may be missed.
Explain a process	Ask for a chart or diagram.	Check each label and arrow.
Make a new photo	Use an image-making tool you trust.	Claude chat is not a photo generator.
Animate an idea	Claude Motion, if offered.	Team or Enterprise beta.

Claude can study uploaded images. It can also build diagrams with code. That is different from making a new photo or painted scene. A separate connected tool may add other image features. [9, 10]

What Claude Motion can do

Motion moves text, charts, shapes, and images. It can make a short animation and export an MP4 video file. It does not generate realistic footage or people. [11]

Motion is on by default for Team. An Enterprise owner must turn it on. It is not included in Free, Pro, or Max. [11, 17]

Try: “Make a 20-second animation about plant growth. Use three clear steps and large words. No flashing lights.”

A video script is not a movie file. Ask what tool will make the result. For a video you already have, share its written words or key still pictures if the upload tool will not take it.

Hand off work or build code

Choice	A good fit	Example
Cowork	Work with files, tools, and many steps.	Turn event notes into a plan and handouts.
Claude Code	Build or fix software. Read files, change code, and run tests.	Fix a broken form on your site.

Cowork: [3, 4]. Claude Code: [12, 13]. Both need the right access and a supported plan.

Cloud work and local files

Cloud means a remote computer does the work. New Pro and Max Cowork tasks run in the cloud. They can keep going when you close your laptop. Team and Enterprise cloud access has beta and admin limits. [4]

Local means on your computer. Cowork needs the desktop app open to reach local files or drive a browser. For local files, start on desktop or use a scheduled task. Give it only the folders it needs. [4]

Claude Code can run in two places

Claude Code can work on your computer, or in the cloud. Cloud sessions can work on code kept in GitHub. Do not assume a cloud task can see files on your laptop. [12, 13]

Ask: “Show your plan first. Work on a copy. Ask before you send, buy, delete, or publish. Show what changed.”

Keep control of your work

Check your plan before you pay

Free can help you learn the basics. Paid plans add tools and room to work. A paid plan is not endless use. Models, long files, Research, and many-step jobs can use more of your limit. [16, 17]

Read the current plan page. Check the full cost, any extra usage, and how to cancel. Features can differ by account, device, work rules, and supported region. [17, 19]

Use the right account

Keep work and personal files in the right accounts. On Free, Pro, and Max, check the setting for using your data to improve models. Work plans have different rules. [14, 15]

Team and Enterprise content is not used to train models by default. Sending feedback or choosing to share data may allow training use. No setting replaces your school or workplace rules. [15]

Make safe choices

- Do not paste passwords or private ID numbers.
- Use made-up names for class examples.
- Read permissions before you connect an app.
- Check the person and text before sending.
- Keep a backup before big file changes.

For health, legal, or money decisions, use qualified human help. Claude can help you prepare questions, but it can be wrong.

Use clear words and check

For a family

“Plan three low-cost dinners. We have rice, beans, and carrots. Use no nuts. Make a shopping list. Do not order anything.”

For a teacher

“Make a 15-minute lesson on the water cycle. Use plain words. Add one safe hands-on task. Give three check questions and the answers.”

For a small business

“Use this price list to draft a customer flyer. Keep every price exact. Use large text. Leave a blank space for the phone number. Do not publish it.”

When the result needs a fix

Problem	Say this
It is too hard to read.	Use short words and short sentences.
It missed a rule.	Keep what works. Fix this one part.
A tool is missing.	Tell me what access or tool is needed.
It says it is done.	Show the file or result. What is left?

Final check: Names. Dates. Facts. Math. Links. Layout.
A draft is not a sent message. A plan is not a booking.

Official sources

Checked 21 October 2026. Select a linked title to open the official page. The numbers match the notes in this guide.

[\[1\] Choosing the right Claude model](#)

Model families and task fit.

[\[2\] Change model effort and thinking settings](#)

The menu, Default, and thinking.

[\[3\] Get started with Claude Cowork](#)

Tasks, requirements, and paid access.

[\[4\] Cowork on web desktop and mobile](#)

Cloud work, local access, and rollout.

[\[5\] What are projects](#)

Project files, rules, and free limit.

[\[6\] Upload files to Claude](#)

File types and visual reading limits.

[\[7\] What are artifacts and how to use them](#)

Docs, Slides, Design, and settings.

[\[8\] Use Research on Claude](#)

Paid access and mobile source limits.

[\[9\] Use connectors with Claude](#)

App connections and permissions.

[\[10\] Can Claude produce images](#)

Image analysis and code-made visuals.

More sources and next steps

Checked 21 October 2026. Select a linked title to open the official page. The numbers match the notes in this guide.

[\[11\] Get started with Claude Motion](#)

Animation, MP4 export, and plan limits.

[\[12\] Claude Code overview](#)

Code tools and ways to use them.

[\[13\] Use Claude Code in the cloud](#)

Cloud sessions and GitHub files.

[\[14\] Consumer data and model training](#)

Privacy choices for personal plans.

[\[15\] Commercial data and model training](#)

Work-plan defaults and feedback.

[\[16\] Usage limit best practices](#)

What uses your plan limits.

[\[17\] Plans and pricing](#)

Access, Fable limits, and current costs.

[\[18\] Download Claude](#)

Official apps and device differences.

[\[19\] Where can I access Claude](#)

Where Claude is offered.

[\[20\] Enable and use web search](#)

Search controls, sources, and limits.

Start small. Keep what helps. Check before you share.

Product names belong to their owners. Screens and plan rules can change. Examples in this guide are original teaching examples, not guarantees.