

M A V E R I C K A I

THE COMPLETE GUIDE TO CLAUDE

Chat, Cowork, Code, and Design explained in plain English

Claude Chat - Writing, brainstorming, and problem-solving

Claude Cowork - File management, browser control, and scheduled tasks

Claude Code - Build websites, apps, and automations with plain English

Claude Design - Pitch decks, mockups, 3D prototypes, and interfaces

2026 Edition

Which Claude Should You Use?

Claude is not just one tool. It is four different products, each built for a different type of work. They all run on the same AI model, but they give you different levels of control and automation. Here is the quick breakdown before we go deep on each one.

	Chat	Cowork	Code	Design
Best For	Writing, ideas, conversation	Task automation, file management	Building software and apps	Visual design and prototypes
Skill Needed	None	None	None	None
Platform	Web, mobile, desktop	Desktop app only	Terminal / IDE	Web (claude.ai)
Free Tier	Yes (limited)	No (Pro+)	No (Pro+)	No (Pro+)
Automation	No	Yes	Yes	No
File Access	Upload only	Full computer access	Full project access	Upload + web capture

TIP

All four products are powerful on their own, but they become even more powerful when used together. For example, you can design a prototype in Claude Design, hand it off to Claude Code to build it, and use Claude Cowork to manage the project files and schedule follow-ups.

The bottom line: If you are new to Claude, start with Claude Chat. Once you are comfortable, move to Cowork for automation, Code for building, and Design for visuals.

1. Claude Chat

Claude Chat is the conversational interface available at claude.ai and in the mobile and desktop apps. This is the starting point for most people. You type a message, Claude responds. Think of it as your personal AI assistant for writing, brainstorming, working through problems, getting ideas, and creating documents.

Where to Access It

Claude Chat is available on the web at claude.ai, on iOS and Android mobile apps, and in the Claude desktop app for macOS and Windows. The free tier gives you limited daily messages. Pro (\$20/month) and Max plans give you significantly more usage and access to the latest models.

Key Features

Projects

Projects are saved workspaces where you upload files and set custom instructions once, and every new chat in that project starts with full context. This is perfect for recurring work. For example, you could create a project called "Blog Writing" with your brand voice guide uploaded, and every conversation in that project will already know your tone and style. Free users can have up to five projects.

Artifacts

When Claude generates substantial standalone content like code, documents, diagrams, or interactive components, a side panel opens with a live preview. You can edit, iterate, and export artifacts as various file types including .docx, .pptx, .xlsx, and .pdf. This means you can ask Claude to write a full report and get a downloadable Word document right in the chat.

Memory

Claude remembers relevant context from your conversations and carries it across sessions. It will tell you when it is using a memory so nothing feels hidden. You can view and edit your memories at Settings > Capabilities > Memory. If you want a conversation that leaves no trace, use Temporary Chat mode.

Extended Thinking

For complex problems, Claude can show its reasoning process step by step before giving you a final answer. This is useful for math, logic, coding problems, and any situation where you want to see how Claude arrived at its conclusion.

TIP

Use Projects for anything you work on repeatedly. Upload your brand guidelines, product docs, or reference materials once, and every conversation in that project starts with full context. This saves you from re-explaining your situation every time.

What You Can Do with Claude Chat

Write blog posts, emails, social media captions, and marketing copy. Brainstorm ideas and strategies. Analyze documents, spreadsheets, and PDFs you upload. Summarize long articles or research papers. Get help with math, coding questions, and technical problems. Draft and refine business proposals. Translate content between languages. Create outlines for presentations and reports.

BEST FOR

Anyone who wants a smart conversational AI for writing, research, analysis, and brainstorming. If you have never used Claude before, this is where you start.

2. Claude Cowork

Claude Cowork is basically Claude Chat, except it actually goes off and does the work for you. Instead of just giving you an answer, Cowork takes action. It can access the files on your computer, manage your emails, organize your documents, and you can even schedule tasks for it to run while you are away. This is where Claude stops being an assistant you talk to and becomes an assistant that works for you.

Requirements

Cowork requires the Claude desktop app on macOS or Windows. It is not available on the web or mobile. You need a paid plan (Pro, Max, Team, or Enterprise) to use it. Cowork went to general availability in April 2026 after public betas on macOS in January and Windows in February.

File and Folder Access

When you start a Cowork session, you can give Claude access to a folder on your computer. It can then read, edit, create, and organize files in that folder. This is what makes it so different from regular Chat. You can say "organize the files in my Downloads folder by type" and Claude will actually do it. It can create Word documents, spreadsheets, PDFs, and presentations directly on your machine.

Claude in Chrome (Browser Extension)

There is a Chrome extension called Claude in Chrome that gives Claude direct access to your browser. Once installed, Claude can see what is on your screen, click buttons, fill in forms, navigate between pages, and extract data from websites. This is where it gets really powerful for things like email management, research, and web-based workflows.

HOW TO SET IT UP

1. Install the Claude in Chrome extension from the Chrome Web Store.
2. Open the Claude desktop app and start a Cowork session.
3. Claude will detect the extension and connect to your browser automatically.
4. Ask Claude to do something in your browser, like "check my Gmail for unread emails."

Scheduled Tasks

This is one of the most underrated features. You can schedule Claude to run tasks on a recurring basis without you being there. Write a prompt once, set a schedule (daily, weekly, monthly), and Claude will execute it automatically. Some examples: "Every morning at 8am, summarize my unread emails." "Every Monday, compile a report of last week's analytics." "Every day at 6pm, organize any new files in my Downloads folder."

TIP

Scheduled tasks are the closest thing to having a real employee. Start with something simple like a daily email summary, and then build up to more complex automations as you get comfortable.

MCP Connectors

MCP (Model Context Protocol) connectors let Claude plug into external tools and services. Think of them as plug-and-play integrations. There are connectors for Gmail, Google Drive, Slack, Notion, GitHub, and many more. You can also add custom MCP connectors for things like the Meta Ads API. Go to Settings > Customize > Connectors to browse and add them.

Skills and Plugins

Cowork comes with pre-built Skills for creating Excel spreadsheets, PowerPoint presentations, Word documents, and PDFs. It also supports installable plugins that add specialized capabilities. You can browse available plugins and install them directly from the Cowork interface.

BEST FOR

People who want Claude to actually do the work, not just tell them how. File management, email handling, browser automation, and recurring tasks that run on autopilot.

3. Claude Code

Claude Code is for building websites, apps, browser extensions, automations, and anything else that involves writing software. It is a coding agent, which means it writes, tests, and fixes code completely on its own. But here is the key part: you can literally just talk to it in plain English. You do not need to know how to code at all. You describe what you want, and it builds it.

How It Works

Claude Code runs in your terminal (the command line on your computer). You open a terminal window, navigate to a project folder, type "claude" to start it, and then just describe what you want in plain English. Claude reads your entire codebase, plans an approach across multiple files, executes the changes, runs tests, and iterates on failures. It asks for your permission before making changes, so you always stay in control.

Installation

Claude Code requires a paid Claude plan (Pro or Max). It works on macOS, Windows (via WSL2), and Linux. The installation takes under a minute. Once installed, you authenticate with your Claude account and you are ready to go.

QUICK INSTALL

Open your terminal and run:

```
npm install -g @anthropic-ai/claude-code
```

Then navigate to any project folder and type **claude** to start.

What You Can Build

The range of things you can build with Claude Code is enormous. Here are some examples that do not require any prior coding knowledge:

- >> **Websites** Landing pages, portfolios, blogs, and full web applications.
- >> **Mobile Apps** iOS and Android apps using React Native or other frameworks.
- >> **Browser Extensions** Chrome extensions that add features to your browser.
- >> **Automations** Scripts that automate repetitive tasks on your computer.
- >> **APIs and Backends** Server-side code that powers your apps and services.
- >> **Data Tools** Dashboards, scrapers, and data analysis pipelines.

Agent Teams

Claude Code can coordinate multiple agents working in parallel. An orchestrator dispatches worker agents that message each other, share results, and converge on a solution. One agent refactors the data layer, another updates tests, a third reviews the pull request. This is useful for larger projects where multiple things need to happen at once.

Memory and Learning

Claude Code stores project-specific context in a `.claude/` directory inside your project. Things like coding conventions, architecture decisions, and frequently used patterns get saved there. This means Claude gets better at working on your project over time because it remembers how your codebase is structured and what your preferences are.

TIP

You do not need to be a developer to use Claude Code. Just describe what you want in plain English. Say things like "build me a landing page for a fitness coaching business with a sign-up form" and Claude will create the entire thing from scratch.

IMPORTANT

Claude Code asks for permission before modifying files or running commands. Always review what it is about to do before approving. This keeps you in control and prevents unexpected changes.

BEST FOR

Anyone who wants to build software without writing code. Websites, apps, automations, browser extensions, and tools. You describe it in English, Claude builds it.

4. Claude Design

Claude Design is your creative partner. It can make pitch decks, mockups, 3D designs, app interfaces, marketing collateral, and interactive prototypes. You describe what you want, and it creates it. No design background required. It launched on April 17, 2026 as a research preview and runs on Claude Opus 4.7, the most capable vision model.

Where to Find It

Claude Design lives inside claude.ai. Look for the palette icon in the left-hand navigation sidebar. The interface has chat on the left and a live canvas on the right. You describe what you need, Claude generates a first version, and then you refine through conversation, inline comments, direct edits, or custom adjustment sliders.

What You Can Create

- >> **Pitch Decks** Go from a rough outline to a complete, on-brand presentation deck in minutes.
- >> **App Mockups** Realistic wireframes and interactive prototypes for mobile and web apps.
- >> **Marketing Materials** One-pagers, social graphics, flyers, and promotional visuals.
- >> **3D Prototypes** Code-powered prototypes with voice, video, shaders, and 3D elements.
- >> **Design Systems** Claude can read your codebase and build a design system using your brand colors, typography, and components automatically.
- >> **UI Explorations** Generate multiple visual directions and compare them side by side.

How to Refine Your Designs

Everything Claude Design outputs is live HTML, so it is actually clickable and interactive. You can comment inline on specific elements, edit text directly on the canvas, or use adjustment sliders to tweak spacing, color, and layout in real time. Then ask Claude to apply your changes across the full design. You can also upload images, documents, or point Claude at your website using the web capture tool to grab elements directly.

Exporting Your Work

Claude Design gives you multiple export options. You can share designs as an internal URL within your organization, save as a folder of files, or export to Canva, PDF, PPTX, or standalone HTML. The export to PPTX is great for pitch decks you need to present. The standalone HTML export is perfect for interactive prototypes you want to share with stakeholders.

Hand Off to Claude Code

This is where the ecosystem comes together. From the top-right menu, click "Hand off to Claude Code." This sends your design directly to Claude Code, which can then build the actual working version of what you designed. This is the fastest way to go from prototype to production code without manually re-implementing the design.

TIP

Start with a text description and let Claude generate the first version. It is faster to refine something that exists than to try to describe every detail upfront. Get a rough draft, then iterate.

BEST FOR

Non-designers who need professional visuals. Pitch decks, app mockups, marketing materials, and interactive prototypes. No Figma or Photoshop skills required.

Using All Four Together

All four Claude products are powerful on their own, but they are most powerful when used together. Here are some real workflows that show how they connect:

Workflow 1: Launch a Product Landing Page

Step 1 (Chat): Brainstorm your positioning, messaging, and target audience with Claude Chat. Upload competitor examples and ask Claude to help you differentiate.

Step 2 (Design): Open Claude Design and describe the landing page layout. Get a clickable prototype you can test and refine.

Step 3 (Code): Hand off the design to Claude Code. It builds the actual working page with responsive CSS, forms, and animations.

Step 4 (Cowork): Use Cowork to monitor the page's analytics and schedule a weekly report.

Workflow 2: Build a Content Machine

Step 1 (Chat): Use Claude Chat to plan your content strategy, generate topic ideas, and outline your first batch of posts.

Step 2 (Cowork): Schedule Claude to draft a new blog post every Monday morning and save it to a specific folder on your computer. Set up another scheduled task to repurpose each post into social media captions.

Step 3 (Design): Create branded social media graphics for each post in Claude Design.

Workflow 3: Client Pitch Deck

Step 1 (Chat): Upload the client's brief and brainstorm the deck structure with Claude Chat.

Step 2 (Design): Build the pitch deck in Claude Design with your brand colors and layout.

Step 3 (Cowork): Export the deck as a PPTX and have Cowork email it to the client.

TIP

You do not need to use all four at once. Start with Chat, add Cowork when you want automation, bring in Code when you need to build something, and use Design when you need visuals. Layer them in as your needs grow.

Pricing Quick Reference

Plan	Price	Chat	Cowork	Code	Design
Free	\$0	Limited	No	No	No
Pro	\$20/mo	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Max	\$100/mo	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Team	\$30/user	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

The free plan gives you limited access to Claude Chat only. For Cowork, Code, and Design, you need at least the Pro plan at \$20/month. The Max plan at \$100/month gives you significantly more usage and priority access to the latest models. Team plans are \$30 per user per month and include admin controls and collaboration features.

TIP

If you are just getting started, the Pro plan at \$20/month is the sweet spot. It unlocks all four products and gives you enough usage to explore everything Claude can do.

IMPORTANT

Pricing may change. Check claude.ai/pricing for the latest information.

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