BUILD WITH AI

The Free Starter Guide

Learn to use an AI assistant.
Step by step. In plain words.

Three steps: Chat, Cowork, Code.
15 minutes a day.

By TLO AI, the AI division of TLO Web Designs
tlowebdesigns.com

Free guide. Independent: not affiliated with, endorsed by or sponsored by Anthropic.

Start here

This guide teaches you to use **Claude**. Claude is an AI assistant made by a company called Anthropic. You type to it, and it writes back.

You do not need to know anything about computers. You only need to follow the steps and try each one.

There are three levels. Learn them in this order:

Level	What it means
1. Chat	You ask. It answers. Like texting a very fast helper.
2. Cowork	You give it a whole job. It works through the steps and hands you the result.
3. Code	It builds small tools for you, and you check that they work.

3 RULES BEFORE YOU START

1. It can be wrong. It sounds sure even when it is wrong. Always check anything important.

2. Keep private things private. Never type passwords, bank numbers or other people's private details.

3. You decide what goes out. Read everything before you send, post or use it.

Prefer to watch first? A 40-second video introduces this guide. Watch it at tlowebdesigns.com/free-ai-guide

How to use this guide

- Do one step a day. Each step takes about 15 minutes.
- Use real work from your own life, not made-up examples.
- Menus and buttons change. If something looks different, look in Anthropic's official help pages.

STEP 1 · CHAT

Set it up once

Most people just start typing. Then the AI knows nothing about them, so the answers are plain and general.

Fix that in two minutes. Tell it two things about yourself, one time.

A. Tell it how to behave

AI wants to please you. If your idea is weak, it may still say "Great idea!" This rule makes it honest.

COPY THIS. PASTE IT INTO YOUR PROFILE OR PREFERENCES SETTINGS

```
You are my strategic partner, not my cheerleader. Your only loyalty is to accuracy, clarity, and results. Never start with praise like "Great question!" If my idea has problems, tell me directly and explain why. Then give me a better idea.
```

B. Tell it who you are

COPY THIS. PASTE IT INTO CLAUDE'S MEMORY OR YOUR PROJECT INSTRUCTIONS

```
Remember this about me: My name is [your name]. I work as [your job or business] in [your city]. My main goal right now is [your goal]. The people I help are [who they are]. Keep all advice simple, practical, and free of jargon.
```

TRY IT NOW (5 MINUTES)

1. Open Claude and find your settings. Look for "Profile" or "Preferences".
2. Paste box A. Fill in the brackets in box B and save it.
3. Ask a question you asked before. Is the answer better?

STEP 2 · CHAT

Ask better questions

A one-line question gets a general answer. Give it four things instead:

Part	What to tell it	Example
Role	Who should it be?	Act as a friendly business coach.
Context	What is your situation?	I run a small cleaning company with 3 workers.
Task	What do you want done?	Write a short email to a customer who stopped replying.
Format	How should it look?	Under 100 words. Friendly. No big words.

Or let the AI ask you

When you do not know what to say, make it interview you first. This one trick improves almost every answer.

COPY THIS. PASTE IT INTO CLAUDE

```
I want to [your goal]. Before you write anything, ask me the 5 most important questions you need to know. Wait for my answers.
```

One more line that saves you

Add this to any request where facts matter:

COPY THIS. PASTE IT INTO CLAUDE

```
Do not make up facts, names, numbers or quotes. If something is missing, put it in [square brackets].
```

TRY IT NOW (5 MINUTES)

1. Pick one real task: an email, a short description, a plan.
2. Ask for it using Role, Context, Task, Format.
3. Now try the interview prompt on the same task. Which answer is better?

STEP 3 · CHAT

Check the answer

The AI writes smoothly. A right answer and a wrong answer look exactly the same. So you have to check.

Ask these three questions

- **"How could I check this?"**
- **"Show me the official source and the link."** Then open the link yourself.
- **"What could be wrong about this answer?"**

Spot "fluff"

Fluff is writing that sounds helpful but tells you nothing. Two quick tests:

Test	How it works
The swap test	Swap in a totally different business. Does the sentence still work? Then it is fluff.
The Monday test	What could you do on Monday because of this? If you cannot name a first step, it is not finished.

The fix for fluff is almost always the same: give it something real. Paste in the real page, the real numbers, the real notes.

A REAL STORY

We asked an AI a rule question about a business listing. It sounded right, and one part was wrong. We only caught it because we asked: "Did you actually research this?" The honest answer was no. Now we ask for the source *first*.

TRY IT NOW (5 MINUTES)

1. Ask the AI a question where the answer matters to you.
2. Then ask: "Show me the official source and the link."
3. Open the link. Does it say the same thing?

STEP 4 · COWORK

Give it a whole job

Chat is for questions. Cowork is for **jobs**. You describe the result you want. The AI makes a plan, does the steps, and hands you the finished work.

Good first jobs: turn messy notes into a clean page, summarize a folder of documents, or compare two versions of a file.

Write the job in 5 lines

Line	What to write
Goal	What do you want at the end?
Use only	Which files or notes can it use?
Do not	What must it never do?
Finished means	How will you know it is done?
Save it as	Where should the result go?

COPY THIS. PASTE IT INTO CLAUDE

```
Goal: [what I want]. Use only: [these files or notes]. Do not: [what it must not do]. Finished means: [how I will know]. Save the result as a NEW file. Do not change or delete any file that already exists. Before you start, tell me your plan in a few lines and wait for my OK.
```

STAY SAFE

Use a **copy** of your files the first few times. Put only the files it needs in one folder. Keep passwords and private records out. Say yes to each step until you trust it. Never let it send, post or delete anything without you saying yes.

TRY IT NOW (5 MINUTES)

1. Make a small folder with copies of 3 documents. Nothing private.
2. Use the prompt above to ask for a one-page summary.
3. Read its plan first. Then check 3 facts in the summary against the originals.

STEP 5 · CODE

Build a small tool

Claude Code builds things. A form. A report. A small program. You do **not** need to know how to code. You need to do two things: **describe clearly** and **check carefully**.

Three habits that make it work

Habit	In plain words
1. Say what it must NOT do	The AI loves adding extras. Tell it what to leave out.
2. Start tiny	Build the smallest version that works. Then add more.
3. Make it prove it works	Ask it to test the tool and show you the results. If you cannot check it, do not use it.

COPY THIS. PASTE IT INTO CLAUDE CODE

```
I want to build [a simple tool, e.g. a list of my customers I can search]. Interview me about how it should work. Then write a short plan in a file called PLAN.md. Include a part called "What this does NOT do." Wait for my OK before you build anything.
```

COPY THIS. PASTE IT INTO CLAUDE CODE, AFTER THE PLAN IS APPROVED

```
Build only the smallest working version. Then test it with real examples and show me what happened. If something fails, fix the real cause. Do not hide errors.
```

A REAL STORY

We built a tool that looked finished. It had a neat folder and clear files. When we finally ran it, it had **never worked once**: fourteen hidden problems. Reading the files showed none of them. Running it showed all of them in one afternoon. Now nothing is "done" until it has run on real examples.

YOUR PLAN

15 minutes a day

You get good at this by doing a little every day. Here are four weeks:

Week	Do this
Week 1 Chat	Do Steps 1 to 3. Pick 3 real jobs you repeat. Run each one and write down what you had to fix.
Week 2 Chat, better	Make one Project for one job. Save your 5 best prompts in one document. Check every important answer.
Week 3 Cowork	Do Step 4 on a copy of your files. Try one new job each day. Always read the plan first.
Week 4 Code	Do Step 5. Build one tiny tool. Make it prove it works.

You are getting good when

- You tell it who you are and what you want without thinking about it.
- You always ask "How could I check this?"
- You have saved prompts instead of starting from a blank page.
- You read everything before it goes out.
- You never call something done until it has been tested.

Keep a mistakes list

Every time the AI gets something wrong, write one line: what happened and the rule that would stop it next time. That list becomes your own playbook, and it is the fastest way to improve.

Words you will see

Word	Plain meaning
Prompt	What you type to tell the AI what you want.
Project	A folder inside Claude that keeps your files, rules and chats for one job.
Memory	Things Claude remembers about you between chats. You can read, change or delete them.
Artifact	A document or tool Claude makes in a panel next to the chat.
Connector	A safe link between Claude and an app you use, like email or a calendar.
Context	Everything the AI can see right now. It is limited, so keep chats focused.

Where to learn more

Anthropic's official help pages are the best place to check what is new. For Claude Code, start at **code.claude.com/docs**. Features change often. When this guide and the official pages disagree, trust the official pages.

PLEASE READ

This is an independent guide. It is not affiliated with, endorsed by or sponsored by Anthropic. It does not promise any result. AI can be wrong, so check anything important before you use it. Never share passwords, bank details or other people's private information with any tool.

Made by TLO AI, the AI division of TLO Web Designs. tlowebdesigns.com