

A beginner's guide to Claude: what you can do in your first week

From setting up an account to Projects, file uploads and Artifacts: the basics, plus 6 practical first-week tasks with copy-and-paste prompts.

burakozerweb.com/en/resources/claude-beginners-guide

Claude is an AI assistant made by Anthropic. If you have used ChatGPT, it will feel familiar at first glance: you type into a box and get an answer. But what makes Claude really useful shows up once you learn to use a few features properly. In this guide you will set up your account, get to know the features a beginner should use, and work through six practical first-week tasks with copy-and-paste prompts.

What you need

- An email address or a Google account
- A real document you want to work on (a long PDF, a report or a draft contract)
- A few pieces of your own writing (emails, posts, blog articles)
- Optionally, a small spreadsheet file (CSV or Excel)



Claude

A strong assistant for long documents, careful writing and coding work.

[Open the tool: claude.ai](https://claude.ai)

What Claude is good at, and how it differs from ChatGPT

There is no single answer to which one is "better"; both are strong and fairly close. In practice, the difference is which one feels more comfortable for a given job. Roughly:

Job	Claude	ChatGPT
Reading and summarising long documents	Very strong; comfortable with long PDFs	Strong
Writing natural text that sounds less "AI"	A common reason people choose it	Good, sometimes more formulaic
Following long, detailed instructions	Strong	Strong
Generating images	Not its main focus	A strong option
Building small tools, pages or visual outputs	With Artifacts in a side panel	With Canvas and code execution

My suggestion: think of them not as rivals but as two colleagues with different strengths. Giving both the same task and comparing the results is the quickest way to see which suits you.

Set up your account and first settings

1. Go to **claude.ai** and sign up with your email or Google account. You can start on the free plan; there are also desktop and mobile apps.
2. **Fill in your profile preferences in Settings.** Write what you want Claude to know about you there (your job, what you usually use it for, which language you want answers in). Claude takes this into account in every chat.
3. **Check your privacy settings.** The Privacy section of Settings has an option that lets your chats be used to improve the models. Decide deliberately whether it should be on or off.

Features a beginner should know

Projects

Think of a project as a folder for a specific piece of work. You upload documents and write instructions into it, and every chat you open in that project knows them. That way you do not have to retype "this is my job, this is my audience" every time. The number of projects is limited on the free plan, so start with one for the work you do most often.

File and PDF uploads

You can upload PDFs, Word documents, text files, images and spreadsheets to a chat. Because Claude can read long documents in one go, it is especially useful for long texts like reports, draft contracts or lecture notes.

Artifacts

When Claude produces a longer, standalone piece of content (a document, a table, a chart, a small web tool), it shows it in a separate panel next to the chat. This is called an Artifact. You see the

content there, ask for changes in the chat, and share it if you want. It is the easiest way to build small tools without knowing how to code.

Styles

Styles let you choose how answers are written: there are presets such as more formal, more concise or more explanatory. You can also create a custom style by giving examples of your own writing. You usually find the style option in the tools menu below the message box.

Memory and web search

Claude's memory can carry what it learns from earlier chats into later ones; you can turn it on or off in settings and see what it remembers. With web search on, it can look things up online for questions that need current information and show its sources. What is included can vary by plan, so check which of these are switched on in your settings.

Coming from ChatGPT?

Claude's memory settings include an option to import memory from other assistants. If you have worked in ChatGPT for a long time, bringing that context over makes it feel less like starting from zero.

6 practical tasks for your first week

One task a day is enough. Fill in the square brackets with your own details.

1. Summarise a long document and verify it

Upload a PDF and use the prompt below. The key is the last line: asking Claude to show where each claim appears in the document makes it easy to check the summary.

PROMPT 1

The document I uploaded is a [report / contract / set of lecture notes]. I am reading it as [your role] in order to [goal: make a decision / present it / study for an exam].

1. Summarise the document in 5 bullet points.
2. List the 3 points that matter most for me and why.
3. List anything that looks unclear or contradictory.

For each point, name the relevant section or page and add a short quote. Do not add anything that is not in the document.

Once you have the summary, find at least two of the quotes in the document yourself. If they check out, you can trust the summary more.

2. Write in your own voice

First teach Claude how you write, then have it write. This two-step method works much better than simply saying "write like me".

PROMPT 2

Below are 3 pieces I wrote. First analyse my writing style: sentence length, tone, phrases I use often, things I avoid. Write this up as a short bullet-point "style guide". Then, following that guide, write a [format: email / post / short article] about [topic].

Text 1: [text]

Text 2: [text]

Text 3: [text]

If you like the style guide it produces, save it in a project's instructions or as your own style, so you never have to explain it again.

3. Analyse a spreadsheet

Upload a CSV or Excel file with sales, budget or survey data.

PROMPT 3

The file I uploaded is [describe it: monthly sales / survey results]. First briefly describe the columns and any problems you see in the data (missing values, inconsistencies). Then answer these questions: [question 1], [question 2], [question 3]. Create a chart that shows the most important finding. For every number, explain in one sentence how it was calculated.

Calculate one or two of the results yourself in Excel and compare. If the numbers match, you can trust the analysis.

4. Build a simple tool

You do not need to know how to code. Describe what you want and let Claude build it as an Artifact.

PROMPT 4

Build me a simple [tool: weekly budget calculator / content calendar / flashcard app] as an Artifact. The user will enter [inputs] and the tool will show [what it calculates or displays]. Keep the interface clean and make sure it looks good on a phone.

The first version is usually rough. Small fixes like "add this button" or "simplify the colours" get it into usable shape in two or three rounds.

5. Learn a new topic

PROMPT 5

Teach me [topic]. My level: [complete beginner / I know the basics]. First explain the topic in 5 sentences using an everyday analogy. Then explain the 5 core concepts I need to know, each with an example. Finally, ask me 3 questions to check whether I understood, and wait for my answers.

6. Set up your first project

At the end of the week, create a project for the work you do most often and add this to its instructions:

PROMPT 6

This project is for [your work / topic]. I am [who you are] and my audience is [who]. The documents I uploaded are the core information for this work; rely on them first when answering. Write briefly and clearly. Say when you are unsure, and if information is missing, ask first.

Privacy: think before you upload

Think twice before uploading ID numbers, health information, bank details, your clients' personal data or your company's confidential documents. If needed, remove names and numbers before uploading. If you work with company data, check your company's AI policy first. Claude's answers on legal, health or financial matters are no substitute for an expert.

Common mistakes

1. Doing everything in one long chat. When the topic changes, open a new chat or switch to the relevant project.
2. Using summaries without checking them. Claude can make mistakes too; asking for quotes and checking a point or two yourself catches them.
3. Leaving projects empty. A project with no documents and no instructions is no different from a normal chat.
4. Giving up on the first version of an Artifact. Ask for small, specific fixes instead of a full rewrite.
5. Using Claude with exactly the same habits as ChatGPT. Long document uploads and Projects are where Claude stands out most; make sure you try them.

Next step

At the end of your first week, note which task saved you the most time and make it part of your weekly routine. To get better at writing prompts, [browse the other guides and prompt sets](#); most of those patterns work just as well in Claude. To hear about new guides, [join the newsletter](#).

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