

THE VISUAL BEGINNER SERIES

Claude for Beginners

A visual, hands-on guide to chat,
Projects, Artifacts and everyday work



FREE SAMPLE - THREE COMPLETE BEGINNER LESSONS

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Independent guide | Illustrated lessons + practice files

YOUR READING MAP

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FIELD NOTES

Start here

A practical first course for people who want to use Claude with judgment.

You do not need to program to begin this book. You need a computer, an internet connection for Claude, and the willingness to inspect an answer before using it. The lessons move from one useful conversation to a complete fictional workshop launch pack. Each chapter introduces a skill, shows a worked example and gives you a check that you can perform yourself.

The goal is beginner competence across ordinary knowledge work: drafting, learning, organizing material, reading files, comparing evidence, checking numbers and building a small reusable tool. Claude Code appears later as an optional bridge. This is not a developer reference, a certification, or a promise that AI can perform every task on your behalf.

KEEP IN MIND / Edition and independence

Edition 1.0. Official documentation reviewed on 13 October 2026. Independent publication by Gianluca Raponi; not affiliated with or endorsed by Anthropic. Claude access is separate from this book. Feature availability, limits and interfaces can change.

What is included

The companion folder contains a fictional organizer brief, venue notes, expressions-of-interest data, copyable prompts and a local interactive checklist. A reference answer pack and validation record let you compare your work with explicit criteria. All participant records and event details are synthetic. Do not mistake them for a real event, a real survey or a market study.

How examples are labeled

Label	What it means
Try this prompt	An original instruction for you to run and adapt.
Authored example / reference	An editorial teaching example, not a transcript recorded from Claude.
Verified calculation	A result checked against the supplied synthetic inputs.
Your turn	A practice task; compare with its answer or acceptance criteria.
Feature note	Product behavior summarized from a linked official source.

AI assisted the writing, code and artwork of this publication. The production checks cover document structure, numerical fixtures and the supplied local code; they do not establish that every prompt produces the same response in every Claude account. AI responses vary. Evaluate your output against the criteria rather than looking for an identical sentence.

Choose a route

If you want to...	Read and do...
Get one useful result today	Chapters 1-4, then save your inspected draft.
Work with your own documents	Chapters 5-7; use the synthetic files first.
Write, learn and make charts	Chapters 8-9.
Build a small reusable aid	Chapters 10-11; keep it local first.
Try coding without losing control	Optional Chapter 12.
Complete a project	Chapter 13, using the companion and answer pack.
Keep improving	Chapter 14 and the troubleshooting appendix.

Read a chapter with Claude open beside it. Predict what a useful answer should contain, run the prompt, inspect the result and record one correction. If a feature is missing, use the text-only fallback or continue with lessons that fit your account.

CHAPTER 01

Know what you are asking Claude to do

Turn a vague intention into a small, reviewable task before you choose a feature.

By the end: Choose a suitable kind of task and a useful output. / Separate the material you provide from assumptions Claude might add. / Define a check that lets you decide whether the result is usable.

Source notes: [CORE01](#); [CORE03](#); [CORE04](#); [CORE07](#); [CORE09](#); [CORE14](#)

Typing Help me get organized could produce a schedule, a filing system or a list of questions. Each might be useful, but you have not yet decided which would help. Your first skill is choosing a piece of work small enough to describe and inspect.

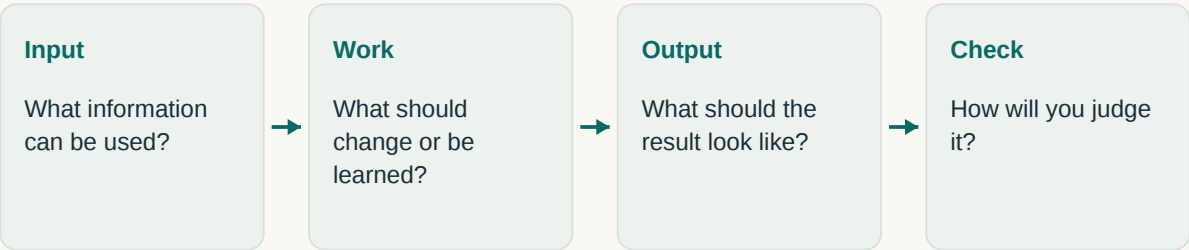
Claude is an AI assistant you can use through a browser or an app. It produces responses from the information available to it and can use enabled tools for some tasks. For learning, keep two questions separate: What do I need? and Which capabilities are available here? You can begin with a simple conversation even when a more elaborate feature is unavailable.

Name the job before choosing the feature

Useful beginner tasks usually have a visible input and a visible result. You might turn rough notes into a short message, extract decisions from meeting minutes, compare two provided documents or make a checklist from a procedure. A request such as improve my business is much harder to judge. Narrow it to a result you can review now: identify the three unclear steps in this customer instruction.

Decide whether you want Claude to transform, explain, investigate or act. Transforming supplied text gives you something to compare against the original. Explaining introduces examples and interpretations that need judgment. Investigating requires evidence beyond the conversation. Acting changes something outside the draft, such as a file or an account. These are different jobs even when all four begin with ordinary language.

FIGURE / A task you can inspect



An original planning diagram. Every task should have an explicit review step.

Your immediate need	A useful starting point	A question to ask yourself
Rewrite supplied notes	A normal chat	Which facts must remain unchanged?
Work repeatedly with the same material	A project, if available	Which files and instructions should stay together?
Make a reusable visual or document	An artifact or downloadable file	What must I inspect before sharing it?
Check information that may have changed	Web search	Which source would settle the question?

Treat this map as a choice of starting points, not a ladder of sophistication. A plain text answer can be the best result. A complex interactive output adds things to test: buttons, calculations, links and display behavior. Features also vary with your plan, account settings and the ongoing interface rollout. Choose the simplest available format that makes the work easy to check.

Distinguish the input, the instruction and the unknown

The input is material you want Claude to work on. The instruction says what to do with it. An unknown is something the material does not establish. If those categories become blurred, polished language can conceal an invented detail. A date absent from your notes is still absent after someone turns the notes into an attractive announcement.

For your first tasks, make the boundary explicit: use only the supplied information, label missing details and ask before filling them in. That boundary is an instruction to guide the work, not a guarantee. You still compare the output with the source. If the result mentions a

refund policy that you never provided, remove it or obtain the actual policy before using the text.

TRY THIS PROMPT / A small task brief

I need a draft reminder for a fictional reading group.

Use only these notes: the group will discuss the first two chapters; members should bring one question; attendance is optional; the meeting time has not been confirmed.

Output: a friendly message under 80 words.

Do not invent a time, location or booking process.

After the message, list any information I should confirm before sending it.

REFERENCE / AUTHORED EXAMPLE / Authored example of a useful result

Draft: For our next reading-group discussion, please read the first two chapters and bring one question you would like to explore. Joining is optional. I will share the confirmed meeting details when they are available.

Confirm before sending: the meeting time and location. If members need to respond, confirm how they should do that.

Why it works: the draft keeps the supplied requirements, and the unknown details remain separate.

Notice what this example does not try to prove. It is not evidence that the message will increase attendance. It demonstrates a smaller achievement: the draft communicates the known instructions without turning missing information into fact. That is a realistic acceptance standard for this task. You can make the tone warmer later without weakening that standard.

Define done in a way you can test

A good acceptance check is observable. Three bullets, no new dates and a clearly marked open question are observable. Make it excellent is not. For a summary, the check might be that every action has an owner supported by the notes. For a comparison, it might be that each difference has a source location. For a spreadsheet, it might be a total that you independently recalculate.

Match review effort to the consequence. A private brainstorming list may need a quick read. Instructions for other people deserve a line-by-line check. A calculation affecting a payment needs independent verification. Keep the result as a draft until it passes the appropriate check.

YOUR TURN / Turn an ambition into a task

Rewrite this request: Help me plan a successful community event. Specify one input you will provide, one output, two boundaries and two acceptance checks. Keep the task small enough to complete without accessing accounts or contacting anyone. Then identify one important question that should remain unanswered until a person supplies the information.

REFERENCE / AUTHORED EXAMPLE / One acceptable solution

Input: a fictional list of venue requirements and available equipment. Output: a one-page setup checklist. Boundaries: use only the list; do not book anything or invent equipment. Checks: every requirement appears once, and every missing item is marked unconfirmed. Open question: who is responsible for obtaining the missing equipment? Different answers are valid if the output and checks are equally concrete.

KEEP IN MIND / If the response feels generic

Look for a missing input or an unclear decision. Add the actual notes and name the result you will use. Instead of asking for more detail, say which part needs detail and how you will check it. If a feature is missing, request the same result as plain text.

CHAPTER 02

Your first useful conversation

Complete one small piece of work through briefing, clarification, revision and a final check.

By the end: Start a conversation with a self-contained brief. / Use a clarification and revision loop without losing facts. / Save a reviewed result in an available format.

Source notes: [CORE01](#); [CORE03](#)

This chapter takes one task from a rough brief to a usable draft. The example is a reminder for a fictional reading group. You will practice making decisions, checking what changed and keeping unresolved details visible. The sample replies are authored teaching examples, not records of a Claude session. Your result may use different words and still meet the same checks.

The result will become an email draft for human review. Sending is outside the task, so you can focus on content without connecting an account or granting contact access. Use the fictional details below instead of anyone's personal information.

Step 1: Open a clean conversation

Open Claude in your browser or app and start a new conversation. Look for the action that creates a chat or task; labels differ between interfaces. The text exercise needs no paid feature. If a model selector appears, keep the available default.

Give Claude the complete brief in one message. A fresh conversation makes it easier to see which details came from your input. It is not a promise that all personalization is absent: account settings may still influence the experience. For this exercise, explicitly restrict the factual content to the brief and inspect the result against that brief.

TRY THIS PROMPT / Paste this original practice brief

Help me prepare an email draft for a fictional reading group. Do not send anything.

Facts:

- Group name: Maple Corner Reading Club.
- Meeting date: 20 November 2026.
- Start time: not yet confirmed.
- Discussion: chapters 1 and 2 of the book we already chose.
- Members should bring one discussion question.
- Joining is optional.

First, identify any missing information that matters for the draft. Ask no more than two clarification questions. Do not invent facts. Wait for my answers before writing the email.

Step 2: Answer the questions that matter

Useful clarification reduces a real uncertainty. The start time matters because recipients may need to plan around it. A request for your favorite writing style might be less useful at this stage. If Claude asks many questions, answer the essential ones and explicitly postpone the rest. You are allowed to simplify the task; you do not have to complete a long questionnaire to receive a short draft.

REFERENCE / AUTHORED EXAMPLE / Authored clarification example

Two relevant questions: What time should members arrive? Should the draft include a meeting location or leave it unconfirmed?

Practice reply: The start time is 18:30. The location is still unconfirmed. Write a short planning reminder now, with a clear sentence saying that I will confirm the location later. Use a friendly, ordinary tone and no more than 120 words.

Those answers add one confirmed fact and one limitation. The time can appear directly; the location must remain explicitly unknown. Reject an invented room name even if it makes the message feel more complete.

REFERENCE / AUTHORED EXAMPLE / Authored first draft

Subject: Maple Corner Reading Club - 20 November

Hello everyone,

Our next Maple Corner Reading Club meeting is planned for 20 November 2026 at 18:30. We will discuss chapters 1 and 2 of our chosen book. Please bring one question you would like the group to explore.

Joining is optional. I will confirm the meeting location in a later message.

Best,

[Your name]

Step 3: Revise one thing, then compare

Read the draft as both writer and recipient. As writer, confirm that it respects your notes. As recipient, look for what you would need to know next. In this case, the uncertainty is already disclosed. You can now shorten the message without asking Claude to rethink the entire task. A bounded edit makes unwanted changes easier to spot.

TRY THIS PROMPT / Make a controlled revision

Shorten the draft to no more than 80 words, excluding the subject line.

Keep the group name, date, start time, reading assignment, discussion question and optional attendance.

Keep the location explicitly unconfirmed.

Do not add a reply deadline, attendance link or new activity.

Return the revised subject and email, followed by a checklist of the facts you preserved.

REFERENCE / AUTHORED EXAMPLE / Authored revised draft

Subject: Reading Club reminder - 20 November

Hello everyone,

Maple Corner Reading Club meets on 20 November 2026 at 18:30 to discuss chapters 1 and 2. Please bring one discussion question. Joining is optional. I will confirm the location in a later message.

Best,

[Your name]

Preserved facts: group name; date; start time; chapters; discussion question; optional attendance; unconfirmed location.

A checklist written by Claude can help you review, but it does not replace the comparison. Find each fact in the actual draft. If the checklist says optional attendance but the message says everyone must attend, the message fails. Also look for additions: a plausible subject line is fine, while a new deadline changes the facts and requires your approval.

FIGURE / The conversation loop**Brief**

Supply facts and the result needed.

Clarify

Resolve important missing details.

Draft

Produce something inspectable.

Check

Compare with the brief.

Revise

Change one bounded aspect.

Use another loop only when a specific check fails or you deliberately change the goal.

Step 4: Save the reviewed version

When the text passes your checks, copy it into your chosen document or email draft. Keep the unresolved location visible. If file creation is enabled, you can request a downloadable document containing only the approved text. Otherwise, copying plain text is a complete solution. Open any exported file and check that the content, line breaks and placeholder survived.

YOUR TURN / Correct the plan without introducing drift

Continue the practice conversation. The organizer changes the meeting to 21 November 2026 at 17:00. Ask for a revision that changes only those two facts. Then ask for the approved email as plain text or a downloadable document. Do not send it. Compare the final result with the prior version.

REFERENCE / AUTHORED EXAMPLE / Acceptance checklist

The result passes if the date is 21 November 2026, the start time is 17:00, and the old values no longer appear. The reading assignment, discussion question, optional attendance and unconfirmed location remain unchanged. No booking link, reply deadline, room name or additional activity has appeared. Any exported file opens and contains the same reviewed text.

KEEP IN MIND / If Claude skips clarification or changes extra details

Point to the specific mismatch: You drafted before I answered; ask only the two missing-detail questions now. For revision drift, paste the last approved version and list the exact allowed changes. Starting a fresh chat with that compact brief is also a useful recovery.

CHAPTER 03

Give Claude a brief it can use

Turn a vague request into a small agreement about what a useful answer must contain.

By the end: Separate the task, source material and constraints. / Write a request with an observable definition of success. / Improve one weak prompt without turning it into a wall of instructions.

Source notes: [R01](#)

A useful prompt starts before you type. Decide what you need to have when the conversation ends: a comparison table, a draft email, a list of missing facts or a plan you can carry out. 'Help me with my event' names a subject. 'Extract the unresolved decisions from this event brief into a three-column table' names a deliverable. That small change makes both the response and your review easier.

You do not need a special vocabulary or a pretend expert persona. Giving Claude a job title can establish a viewpoint, but it does not supply evidence, grant qualifications or tell it what your particular audience needs. A request to 'act as the world's best organizer' still leaves the budget, date and success criteria unknown. Supply the pieces of the task that another person would need.

The five-part brief

The framework in this book uses five parts: outcome, inputs, boundaries, format and checks. They are a drafting aid, not a required command language. Use the parts that solve a real ambiguity. A spelling correction may need one sentence. Comparing three conflicting venue offers needs more structure.

Part	Question to answer	Example
Outcome	What should exist at the end?	A short list of decisions still needed.
Inputs	What should the answer rely on?	The event brief and three venue notes.
Boundaries	What must stay true?	Do not choose a date from conflicting notes.
Format	How will I use the answer?	Table: issue, evidence, question.
Checks	How will I recognize success?	Every issue has a source and a next question.

FIGURE / A brief has a job for every layer

OUTCOME	Name the deliverable.
INPUTS	Supply the material.
BOUNDARIES	State limits and unknowns.
FORMAT	Show the shape.
CHECKS	Define what passes.

This is an original teaching framework, not a required Claude syntax.

A complete prompt you can try

Start with a small fictional request. Here the learner wants to prepare an invitation, but the input does not say when the session happens or where it will take place. A fluent invitation that invents those details would be less useful than a short list of questions. The prompt makes that distinction explicit.

TRY THIS PROMPT / Practice 3A: find what is missing

I need to prepare an invitation for a free beginner workshop.

Source note:

"We will welcome 24 participants. Bring a laptop if you have one. We will provide printed worksheets. The venue and start time are not yet confirmed."

First produce a table with three columns:

1. Fact we can use
2. Missing detail
3. Question for the organizer

Use only the source note. Do not invent a date, address, booking link or equipment requirement. Keep confirmed facts separate from missing details. End with the three most important questions.

An acceptable answer identifies the audience and participant limit as confirmed, treats bringing a laptop as optional, and leaves the venue and start time unresolved. It should also notice that the date is absent, not quietly assume that the workshop is next Saturday. There are several valid ways to arrange the table. The test is whether the answer preserves meaning and makes the missing information actionable.

REFERENCE / AUTHORED EXAMPLE / Authored reference excerpt

Confirmed: free beginner workshop; capacity 24 participants; printed worksheets provided; laptop optional. Missing: date, start time, venue and registration method. Questions: What date is approved? What venue and start time are confirmed? How should participants reserve a place?

Make constraints concrete

'Make it professional' allows many interpretations. Try replacing it with observable requirements: write to a first-time attendee; use everyday words; include the confirmed date once; keep the draft below 150 words; avoid promises about outcomes. A tone request can still help, but a reader and a use case give it substance.

Separate hard constraints from preferences. A room limit is a hard constraint. A friendly tone is a preference. If you put twenty preferences into a prompt and never identify the hard limit, you make it harder to judge which errors matter. In a follow-up, ask for a check against the hard constraints before you polish style.

Constraints can conflict. A request for a comprehensive explanation in exactly three words is impossible to satisfy meaningfully. If a task has a genuine trade-off, let Claude expose it: 'If

these requirements cannot all be met, explain the conflict and propose two options before drafting.' You still decide which requirement to relax.

Use examples to show shape, not to smuggle in facts

A short example can define a format more clearly than several abstract instructions. Suppose you want action items. Give one invented row: 'Confirm room access | Organizer | Before publication | Pending.' Label it as a formatting example. Otherwise Claude may copy its owner, deadline or status into a real plan.

TRY THIS PROMPT / Practice 3B: specify a reusable output

Convert the following notes into an action table. Use columns Action, Owner, Due date and Status. Example of format only: Confirm room access | Organizer | Before publication | Pending. Do not treat the example as a real action. If an owner or date is not in the notes, write Unassigned or Unconfirmed. Notes: [paste the actual notes here].

The bracketed text is an instruction to you to insert material. It is not a magic variable. Replace it before sending. For a repeated task, save the prompt with clearly marked placeholders and keep the actual event facts in a separate brief. This reduces the chance of reusing last month's address by accident.

When a short prompt is enough

Longer is not automatically better. If you ask 'Rewrite this sentence in plain English without changing its meaning' and paste one sentence, adding a role, a scoring system and three pages of background is usually unnecessary. Add detail when you can name the ambiguity it resolves. Remove instructions that only repeat a preference already stated.

A practical way to improve a prompt is to compare two versions on the same small input. Keep the input fixed and change one requirement. If the second version preserves an important fact that the first missed, you have evidence that the change helped this task. You do not yet have a universal rule or a percentage improvement for all tasks.

YOUR TURN / Your turn: repair a vague request

Rewrite this request using the five-part brief: 'Write something exciting to get people to our event.' Use the small workshop note above. Your prompt must prevent invented dates and addresses, preserve the optional laptop instruction and ask for missing essentials before a final invitation.

REFERENCE / AUTHORED EXAMPLE / What a strong answer contains

A named deliverable, such as an invitation draft; the workshop note as its source; a request to ask about the missing date, place, time and registration method; optional wording for the laptop; a clear audience and length preference. 'Make it amazing' is not a substitute for any of these.

KEEP IN MIND / If Claude still invents details

Point to one specific unsupported claim and request a correction against the source. Do not merely say 'be accurate.' If the input is long, first ask for an evidence table, check it yourself, and only then ask for the draft.

FIELD NOTES

Continue with the complete course

Build on the skills you have just practiced.

The complete guide continues with controlled revisions, source files, Projects, research, writing, learning, checked charts, Artifacts, tool permissions and an optional first step with Claude Code. The capstone combines the skills into a complete fictional workshop launch pack.

The full companion includes starter sources, a synthetic CSV dataset, reference answers, copyable prompts and a local interactive checklist. Worked responses are authored teaching examples; readers run their own prompts and judge the output against explicit checks.

KEEP IN MIND / Independent publication

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Sources and further reading

Official product references reviewed 13 October 2026. Instructions, interfaces and availability may change. Sources S01-S07 are fictional teaching documents supplied in the practice pack, not web sources. The practice material and teaching frameworks are original editorial content.

CORE01 / Get started with Claude

<https://support.claude.com/en/articles/8114491-get-started-with-claude>

CORE03 / Create and edit files with Claude

<https://support.claude.com/en/articles/12111783-create-and-edit-files-with-claude>

CORE04 / What are projects?

<https://support.claude.com/en/articles/9517075-what-are-projects>

CORE07 / What are artifacts and how do I use them?

<https://support.claude.com/en/articles/17153992-what-are-artifacts-and-how-do-i-use-them>

CORE09 / Enable and use web search

<https://support.claude.com/en/articles/10684626-enable-and-use-web-search>

CORE14 / Claude Cowork and chat are one Claude

<https://support.claude.com/en/articles/16761823-claude-cowork-and-chat-are-one-claude>

R01 / My prompt isn't giving me a helpful answer

<https://support.claude.com/en/articles/7996857-my-prompt-isn-t-giving-me-a-helpful-answer>