NeuraGrowth

Claude MCP Setup Guide: No Terminal Required

Connect powerful AI tools to Claude Desktop without writing a single line of code.

NEURAGROWTH.CO

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The Problem With How Claude Works Out of the Box

Clause Desktop is already useful. You can write, summarize, brainstorm, and analyze. But by default, Claude lives in a box. It cannot see your Notion pages, search the live web, remember things between conversations, or touch your Google Drive files.

That box has a door. It is called the **Model Context Protocol**, or MCP.

What MCP Actually Is

MCP is a standard that lets Claude connect to external tools and data sources. Think of it like a USB port. Claude is the laptop. MCP is the port. The tools you plug in - Notion, Brave Search, Google Drive, a memory system - are the USB devices.

When you connect an MCP server to Claude, you are giving Claude a new capability. Connect the Brave Search server and Claude can retrieve live search results mid-conversation. Connect the Notion server and Claude can read and write your actual Notion pages. Connect the Memory server and Claude starts remembering facts you tell it across sessions.

None of this requires you to write code. It does require a small amount of configuration - and that is what this guide is for.

Why Every Other MCP Guide Loses Non-Technical Readers

Most MCP tutorials were written by developers for developers. They assume:

- You are comfortable opening a terminal window
- You understand what `npm install` means
- You can read and hand-edit a JSON config file
- You know what a file path looks like and how to construct one
- You are not afraid of an error message

If none of those apply to you, every guide you have found so far has probably sent you down a rabbit hole that ended in frustration.

This guide takes a different path entirely.

The GUI-First Approach

Instead of the terminal, we use three tools that require zero command-line knowledge:

1. **Claude Desktop settings panel** - the built-in interface inside the Claude app where MCP servers are registered
2. **Smithery.ai** - a web directory with one-click MCP server installs
3. **MCP Toggle** - a standalone app that gives you a clean dashboard to enable, disable, and manage all your MCP servers from a single interface

These three tools cover the entire workflow: discovering servers, installing them, and managing them day-to-day.

Who This Guide Is For

This guide was written specifically for people who:

- Use Claude Desktop regularly for real work (writing, research, operations, content, admin)
- Want Claude to connect to the tools they already use
- Have never opened a terminal or do not want to
- May have tried an MCP setup guide before and given up

You do not need a computer science background. You do not need to know what JSON is. You just need to be able to click, copy, and paste.

What You Will Have By the End

By the time you finish this guide, you will have:

- A working understanding of what MCP does in plain English

- Four MCP servers installed and connected to Claude Desktop: Notion, Brave Search, Memory, and Google Drive
- MCP Toggle installed as your permanent management hub
- A troubleshooting process you can follow when something stops working
- A glossary of 20 MCP terms you can refer back to anytime

Let's start.

WHAT IS MCP AND WHY SHOULD YOU CARE

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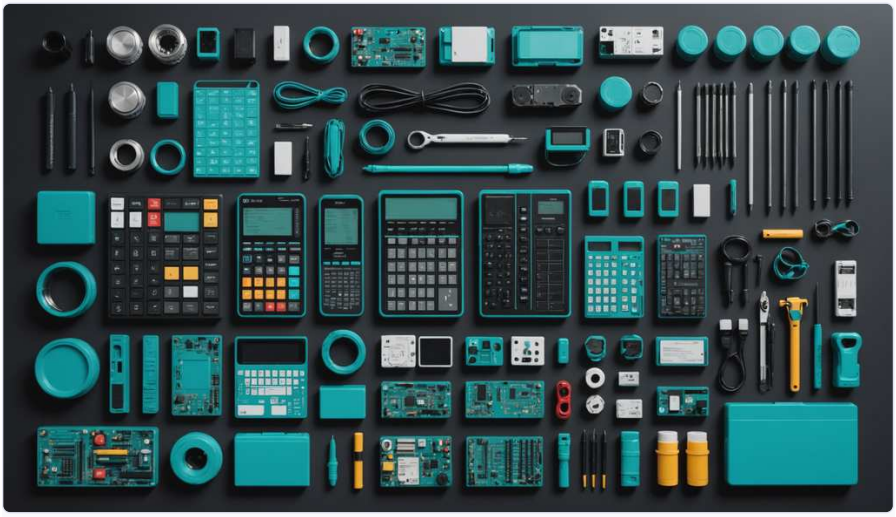
Before You Begin: What You Need to Have Ready



The Short Checklist

Before installing anything, confirm you have the following. Each item takes under five minutes to set up if you do not already have it.

Item	Why It Is Needed	Where to Get It
Claude Desktop app (Mac or Windows)	MCP servers connect through the desktop app, not the browser	claude.ai/download
A Claude Pro or Team subscription	MCP features are not available on the free tier	claude.ai/settings
A Smithery.ai account	Used to browse and install MCP servers with one click	smithery.ai
MCP Toggle app installed	Your central management dashboard for all MCP servers	mcptoggle.com
A Notion account (free is fine)	Required for the Notion MCP server in Chapter 5	notion.so
A Google account	Required for the Google Drive MCP server in Chapter 7	accounts.google.com

Installing Claude Desktop

If you are using Claude in a browser tab, that is Claude Web. The MCP features in this guide require **Claude Desktop**, which is a separate download.

1. Go to `claude.ai/download`
2. Download the version for your operating system (Mac or Windows)
3. Open the installer and follow the prompts
4. Sign in with your existing Claude account

Once installed, Claude Desktop looks nearly identical to the web version. The difference is that it has a settings panel where MCP servers can be connected.

Confirming Your Claude Subscription Level

MCP server connections require a **Claude Pro** subscription (individual) or a **Claude Team** account. The free tier does not support MCP.

To check: 1. Open Claude Desktop 2. Click your profile icon in the bottom-left corner 3. Select "Settings" 4. Look for a "Plan" or "Subscription" label

If it shows "Free", you will need to upgrade before any MCP server will connect successfully.

Installing MCP Toggle

MCP Toggle is a lightweight app that sits between you and Claude's configuration files. Instead of manually editing JSON (the developer approach), MCP Toggle gives you a visual dashboard where you can toggle servers on and off, add new ones, and see what is currently active.

1. Go to `mcptoggle.com`
2. Download the version for your operating system
3. Install it like any other app (drag to Applications on Mac, run the .exe on Windows)
4. Open MCP Toggle - it will automatically detect your Claude Desktop installation

What MCP Toggle Detects Automatically

When you first open MCP Toggle, it scans for: - Your existing Claude Desktop config file location - Any MCP servers already registered (there will be none if this is your first time) - Your operating system's relevant application data folders

You do not need to point it at anything manually. If Claude Desktop is installed, MCP Toggle finds it.

A Note on Operating System Differences

This guide covers both Mac and Windows. Where the steps differ, both versions are shown side by side. The core experience is identical - the only differences are folder locations and keyboard shortcuts, which are noted in context.

Mac-specific note

On Mac, Claude Desktop stores its configuration in `~/Library/Application Support/Claude/`. You will never need to navigate there directly - MCP Toggle handles it - but it is useful to know it exists.

Windows-specific note

On Windows, the equivalent location is `%APPDATA%\Claude\`. Again, MCP Toggle handles navigation, but knowing the location helps if you ever need to back up your config.

Before Moving On

Do a quick sanity check before continuing:

- [ ] Claude Desktop is installed and you can sign in
- [ ] Your Claude subscription is Pro or Team
- [ ] Smithery.ai account is created
- [ ] MCP Toggle is installed and has detected Claude Desktop
- [ ] You have a Notion account and a Google account ready

If all five are checked, you are ready to understand how MCP servers are structured before installing your first one.

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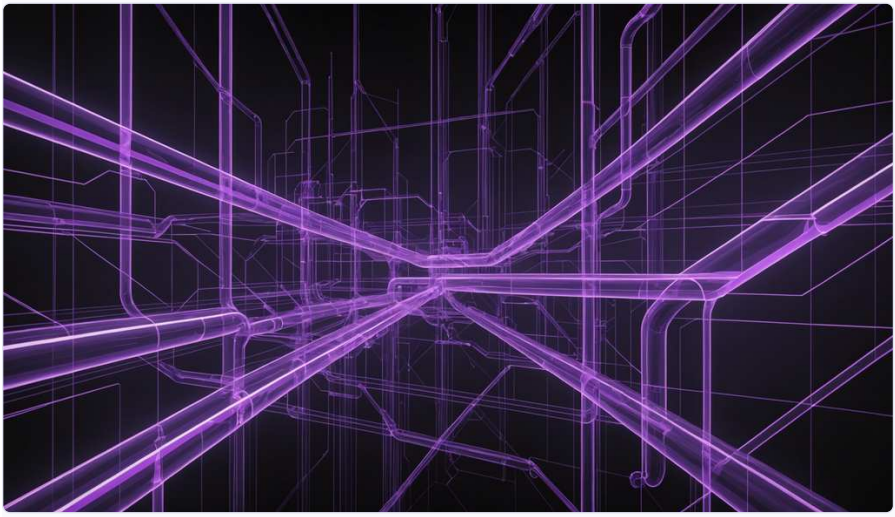
How MCP Servers Actually Work: A Plain-English Explainer



Forget Everything You Have Read About JSON and npm

Most explanations of how MCP servers work are written in terms that only make sense if you already understand software development. This section gives you a complete mental model using plain language and analogies.

You do not need to understand the technical implementation. You need to understand the shape of the system well enough to install servers confidently and diagnose problems when they arise.

The Restaurant Analogy

Imagine Claude is a chef. Normally, the chef can only work with ingredients already in the kitchen. If you want the chef to use fresh produce from a specific farm, someone has to set up a delivery relationship with that farm.

An **MCP server** is that delivery relationship. It is a small piece of software that runs on your computer in the background. It knows how to talk to a specific external service - Notion, Google Drive, a web search engine - and it knows how to translate Claude's requests into the format that service understands.

When you install an MCP server and connect it to Claude Desktop: 1. The MCP server starts running quietly in the background when you open Claude 2. Claude gains awareness that this server exists and what it can do 3. When you ask Claude to do something that requires that tool, Claude talks to the server 4. The server talks to the external service (Notion, Google Drive, etc.) on your behalf 5. The result comes back to Claude, which uses it to answer you

You never see steps 2 through 4 happening. From your perspective, you just asked Claude to pull up your Notion page, and it did.

The Three Types of MCP Servers You Will Use

1. Data Retrieval Servers

These let Claude read from sources outside your conversation. Examples: Brave Search (reads live web results), Google Drive (reads your files), Notion (reads your pages and databases).