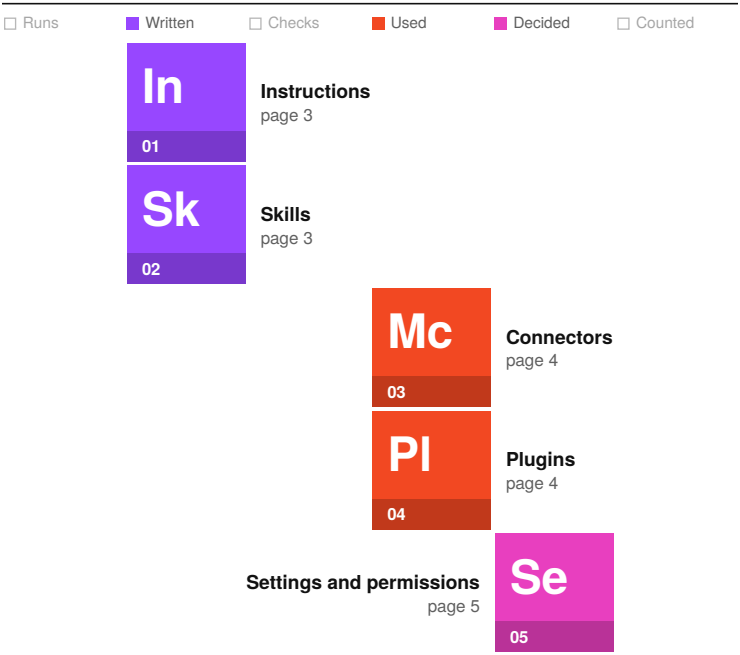
Claude Desktop

A pocket-sized guide to where Claude Desktop keeps its settings, as of October 2026.



My friend has a lot of questions.

What can you set up in Claude Desktop?

In Claude Desktop you can tell Claude how to answer you, save the steps for tasks you repeat, connect Claude to the apps you use, and choose what Claude may do without asking. Most of these settings belong to your Claude account and also apply on claude.ai.

You'll find them in Settings and in Customize, in the left sidebar. An Accidental Guide to: Agents, Harnesses, Skills, and Tools explains the basics.

Instructions	What you want Claude to know in every chat, or in one project.
Skills	Saved steps Claude follows for one kind of task.
Connectors	An MCP server you add so Claude can reach another app or service.
Plugins	A package of skills, connectors and sub-agents.
Settings and permissions	Your preferences, and how much Claude may do before it asks.

Instructions

In
01

Identify by Settings > General, or a project's page.

What **Instructions are text you write for Claude to follow, in all your chats or in one project.** An Accidental Guide to: Agents, Harnesses, Skills, and Tools explains instructions.

So what Put a preference you always want in Settings, and one for a single piece of work in that project.

Field marks

Works in
Web, desktop, mobile.

Confused with **Memory**
Memory is what Claude picks up from your chats, in Settings > Memory. Instructions are what you write yourself.

Skills

Sk
02

Identify by Customize > Skills.

What **A skill is a saved set of steps for one kind of task, which Claude follows when that task comes up.** An Accidental Guide to: Agent Skills explains skills.

So what **You explain a task once instead of in every chat.** Skills need Code execution, in Settings > Capabilities.

Field marks

Works in
Web, desktop and Claude Code.

Confused with In **Instructions**
Instructions apply to every chat. A skill's steps apply only to its kind of task.

Connectors

Mc 03

Identify by Customize > Connectors, or the + button in the message box.

What **A connector is an MCP server on the internet, usually for a service you sign in to.** An Accidental Guide to: Model Context Protocol explains MCP servers.

So what For each of a connector's tools you choose Always allow, Needs approval or Blocked.

Field marks

Works in
Web, desktop, mobile.

Confused with **Desktop extension**
A desktop extension is a local MCP server in a .mcpb file, installed in Settings > Extensions. Extensions work only on this computer.

Plugins

Pl 04

Identify by Customize > Plugins, on the Discover tab.

What **A plugin is a package of skills, connectors and sub-agents, saved to your account.** An Accidental Guide to: Plugins, Connectors, and Marketplaces explains plugins.

So what **One install sets up what you need for a role.** Plugins need a paid plan, and your organization may install some for you.

Field marks

Works in
Chat, Cowork and Claude Code.

Confused with Sk **Skills**
A skill is one set of steps. A plugin can hold several skills, plus connectors and sub-agents.

Settings and permissions

Se
05

Identify by Settings, under your initials, and the permission setting in the message box.

What **Settings holds your account's preferences, such as General, Capabilities and Memory.** Extensions and Developer apply to this computer only.

So what **The permission setting decides how much Claude does without asking.** The default is Manual.

Field marks

Works in
Account and computer.

Confused with **Customize**
Customize is where you add skills, connectors and plugins. Settings is where you set preferences and permissions.

Where things live

Most things live in your Claude account and show up wherever you sign in. A few live on this computer only.

What	Lives in	Where to find it
In **Instructions**	Account	Settings > General, and each project's page
Memory	Account	Settings > Memory
Sk **Skills**	Account	Customize > Skills
Mc **Connectors**	Account	Customize > Connectors, then a connector for its tool permissions
Pl **Plugins**	Account	Customize > Plugins
Code execution	Account	Settings > Capabilities
Folder access	Computer	Settings, under Trusted folders
Desktop extensions	Computer	Settings > Extensions
Local MCP servers	Computer	Settings > Developer > Edit Config macOS: `~/Library/Application Support/Claude/claude_desktop_config.json` Windows: `%APPDATA%\Claude\claude_desktop_config.json`
Code tab	Computer	`~/.claude/settings.json` and `~/.claude/skills`, the same files Claude Code uses

Chats and Cowork use what's in Customize. The Code tab reads `~/.claude`, as Claude Code does. See An Accidental Guide to: Claude Code.

Tip. After you edit `claude_desktop_config.json`, quit Claude Desktop completely and open it again.

Your account or your organization?

On Free, Pro and Max plans you set everything yourself. On Team and Enterprise plans, an owner sets limits in Organization settings.

Setting	You	An owner, in Organization settings
Sk **Skills**	Turn on or upload	Plugins & skills: turn skills on, add skills for everyone, stop people creating skills
Mc **Connectors**	Add and sign in	Connectors: add for the team, set limits nobody can override
Pl **Plugins**	Add from Discover	Add marketplaces, require plugins
Desktop extensions	Install allowed ones	Connectors, Desktop tab: the allowlist
Memory	Turn on or off	Capabilities: allow memory

On computers your company manages, IT can set the desktop app's options in `com.anthropic.claudefordesktop` on macOS or `HKLM\SOFTWARE\Policies\Claude` on Windows.

Same thing elsewhere

Coding tools keep the same kinds of things in their own files.

In Claude Desktop	Elsewhere
In **Instructions**	`CLAUDE.md` in Claude Code. `AGENTS.md` in Codex, Copilot CLI and VS Code.
Sk **Skills**	A folder with a `SKILL.md` file, under `~/.claude/skills` in Claude Code. Codex, Copilot CLI and VS Code have skills too.
Mc **Connectors**	MCP servers: `.mcp.json` in Claude Code, `~/.codex/config.toml` in Codex, the User or Workspace group in VS Code
Pl **Plugins**	Plugins in all four
Se **Settings and permissions**	`~/.claude/settings.json` in Claude Code, `approval_policy` and `sandbox_mode` in `~/.codex/config.toml`

See An Accidental Guide to: Claude Code, An Accidental Guide to: GitHub Copilot CLI, An Accidental Guide to: OpenAI Codex and An Accidental Guide to: VS Code and Visual Studio.

Sources

These public sources were checked on 22 October 2026. The Anthropic Help Center articles, listed first, are at support.claude.com/en/articles/ and their number.

Use connectors · `11176164`

Desktop and web connectors · `11725091`

Local MCP servers on Claude Desktop · `10949351`

Desktop extension allowlist · `12592343`

Enterprise configuration for Claude Desktop · `12622667`

Use skills in Claude · `12512180`

Use plugins in Claude · `13837440`

Personalization features · `10185728`

Cowork and chat are one Claude · `16761823`

Create and manage projects · `9519177`

Chat search and memory · `11817273`

Anthropic, Claude Code on desktop
`code.claude.com/docs/en/desktop`

Model Context Protocol, Connect to local MCP servers
`modelcontextprotocol.io/docs/develop/connect-local-servers`

OpenAI, Codex config basics
`learn.chatgpt.com/docs/config-file/config-basic`

OpenAI, Codex `AGENTS.md`
`learn.chatgpt.com/docs/agent-configuration/agents-md`

GitHub, Copilot customization cheat sheet
`docs.github.com/en/copilot/reference/customization-cheat-sheet`

Visual Studio Code, Agent customization overview
`code.visualstudio.com/docs/agent-customization/overview`

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An Accidental Guide to…

Claude Desktop

A pocket-sized guide to where Claude Desktop keeps its settings, as of October 2026.
Written and reviewed by a person. AI does the grunt work. Set in TeX Gyre Heros and Newsreader.
Leave a star: `accidental.info/star`

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