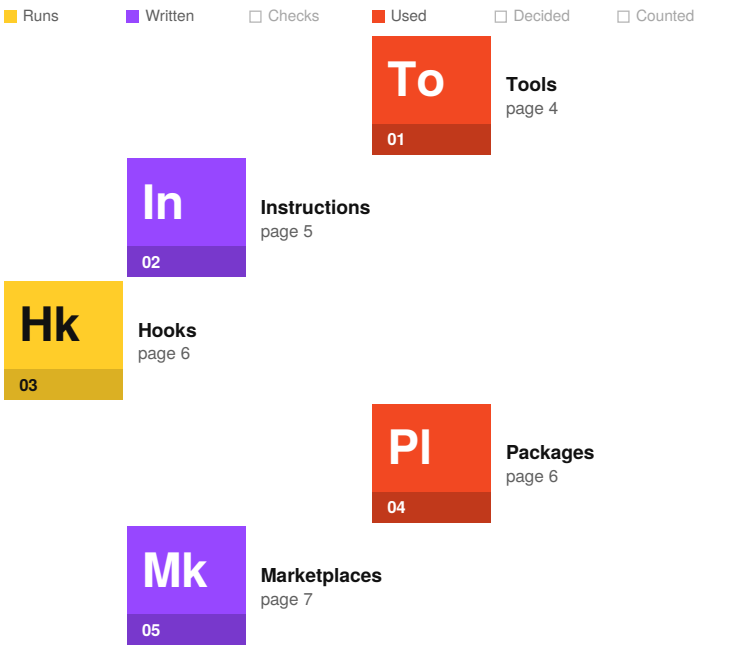
Plugins, Connectors, and Marketplaces

A pocket-sized guide to the names for things you add to a coding agent or AI app.



My friend has a lot of questions.

friend@accidental.info · October 2026 · Version 0.3.0

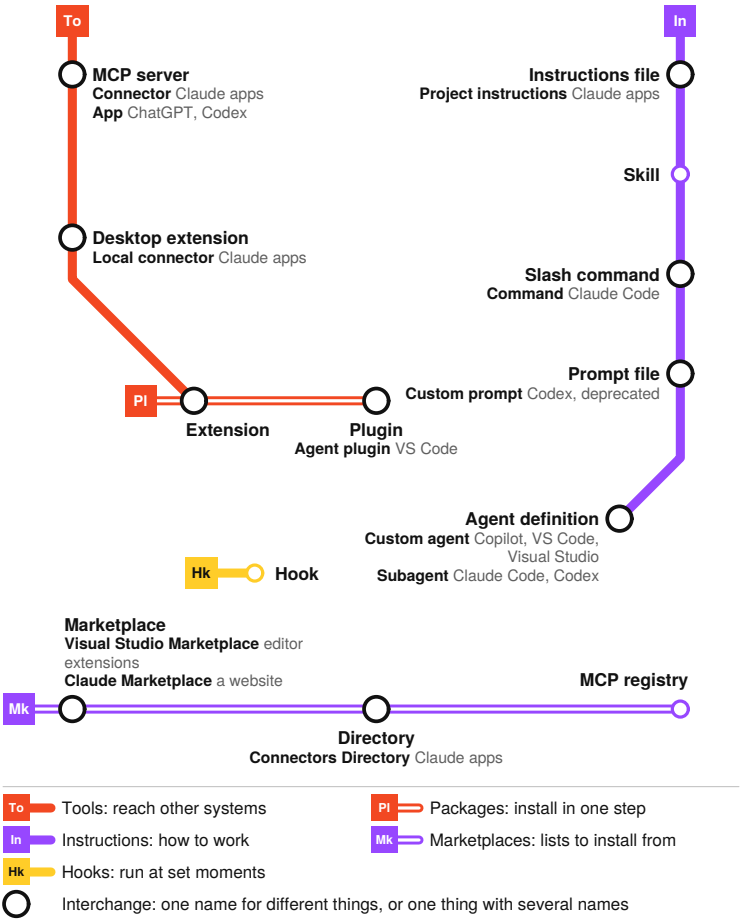
What are all these things?

Every product lets you add things to a coding agent or AI app, but each product uses its own names and the same word can mean different things. Every one of them is one of five kinds of thing: tools, instructions, hooks, packages and marketplaces.

Claude apps means claude.ai and the Claude Desktop app. An Accidental Guide to: Agents, Harnesses, Skills, and Tools explains the basic terms.

The map

Each colored line is one kind of thing, and each stop is a name you'll see.



To Tools: reach other systems

In Instructions: how to work

Hk Hooks: run at set moments

Interchange: one name for different things, or one thing with several names

Pl Packages: install in one step

Mk Marketplaces: lists to install from

Tip. Find a new word on its line, then check the product because names can overlap.

Tools

To
01

What

Most tools you add come from MCP servers, which some products call connectors, apps or extensions. See An Accidental Guide to: Agents, Harnesses, Skills, and Tools.

So what

One MCP server works in all these products, so ask for one when the agent needs a new system. See An Accidental Guide to: Model Context Protocol.

Names

To **MCP server**	A program that gives the agent tools
To **Connector**	What Claude apps call an MCP server. OpenAI says app.
To **Desktop extension**	A local MCP server in one file, for Claude Desktop
Extension	A tool module in Copilot CLI, or a VS Code add-on that adds tools

Confused with

In **Instructions**
A tool reaches another system. Instructions say when to use it.

Instructions

In
02

What

Instructions tell the agent how to work. An instructions file loads every session. See An Accidental Guide to: Agents, Harnesses, Skills, and Tools.

So what

Put rules in an instructions file. Steps for one kind of task go in a skill, which loads only when a task needs it. See An Accidental Guide to: Agent Skills.

Names

In **Instructions file**	Read every session, such as `AGENTS.md` or `CLAUDE.md`. Claude apps say project instructions.
In **Skill**	Loaded when the task matches or when you type `/name`
In **Prompt file**	A saved prompt you run with `/name`
In **Custom agent**	Sets up a sub-agent. Claude Code and Codex say subagent.

Confused with

Hk **Hooks**
Instructions guide the model. A hook runs every time, even if the model skips an instruction.

Hooks

Hk
03

What

A hook is a command the harness runs at a set moment, such as after every edit. The model does not choose whether it runs.

So what

Use a hook for anything that must happen every time. A check before each commit is one example.

Names

Hk **Hook**	A command the harness runs on an event
Hk **Hook**	In Claude apps, only inside a plugin, in Cowork

Confused with

To **Tools**
A tool runs when the model calls it. A hook runs when its event happens.

Packages

Pl
04

What

A plugin is a package of skills, agent definitions, hooks and MCP servers. You install it in one step.

So what

Copilot CLI, VS Code and Codex read Claude Code's plugin files. Each loads only the parts it supports.

Names

Pl **Plugin**	A folder of agent parts installed as one package
Pl **Agent plugin**	VS Code's name for a plugin
Extension	An add-on for the VS Code or Visual Studio editor
IDE extension	Claude Code or Codex itself, inside the editor

Confused with

Mk **Marketplaces**
A plugin is a package you install. A marketplace tells your product where to find it.

Marketplaces

Mk 05

What

A plugin marketplace is a `marketplace.json` catalog in a Git repository. Add it, then install plugins by name.

So what

Anyone can publish a marketplace, so adding one means trusting whoever runs it. Anthropic reviews the plugins in its directory, but not ones added from a marketplace.

Names

Mk **Marketplace**	A list of plugins kept in a Git repository
Mk **Directory**	A list the company reviews, such as the Connectors Directory
Mk **MCP registry**	GitHub's list of MCP servers
Mk **Visual Studio Marketplace**	The store for VS Code and Visual Studio extensions

Confused with

Mk **Visual Studio Marketplace**

The Visual Studio Marketplace is a store for editor extensions, and Claude Marketplace is a website. Neither one is a plugin marketplace.

Which product uses which word

These are the words each product uses, and what they mean there, as of October 2026. No means the product's documentation doesn't use the word.

Word	Claude Code	Claude apps	Copilot CLI	VS Code	Visual Studio	Codex
To **MCP server**	yes	as connector	yes	yes	yes	yes
To **Connector**	from claude.ai	MCP server	no	no	no	inside plugins
Extension	harness in an editor	local MCP server	tool module	editor add-on	editor add-on	harness in an editor
In **Instructions file**	`CLAUDE.md`	project instructions	yes	yes	yes	`AGENTS.md`
In **Prompt file**	merged into skills	no	no	Local harness only	yes	deprecated
In **Custom agent**	subagent	Cowork only	yes	yes	yes	subagent
Hk **Hook**	yes	Cowork only	yes	preview	no	yes
Pl **Plugin**	yes	yes	yes	agent plugin	no	not in the IDE
Mk **Marketplace**	plugin list	plugin list	plugin list	both kinds	extension store	plugin list

Each product has its own guide: An Accidental Guide to: Claude Code, An Accidental Guide to: Claude Desktop, 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 in October 2026.

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October 2026 · `code.visualstudio.com/docs/agent-customization/agent-plugins`

Microsoft, Use MCP servers to extend GitHub Copilot in Visual Studio
October 2026 · `learn.microsoft.com/en-us/visualstudio/ide/mcp-servers`

OpenAI, Plugins
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OpenAI, Plugin controls
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An Accidental Guide to…

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A pocket-sized guide to the names for things you add to a coding agent or AI app.
Written and reviewed by a person. AI does the grunt work. Set in TeX Gyre Heros and Newsreader.
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