

# Setting up and running Claude Cowork for the first time.

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That's enough theory for now! Let's start installing Cowork on your computer.

The entire setup process takes less than 5 minutes. After completing this lesson, you will have completed your first Cowork task – and you will understand exactly how safety measures work to prevent incidents.

## Step 1: Install Claude Desktop

If you have installed the Claude Desktop application, make sure it is updated to the latest version. Cowork is frequently updated with new features, and older versions may not have all the features we will discuss.

Download from [claude.ai/download](https://claude.ai/download) . The app is available for macOS and Windows.

Install it like any other app. Log in with your Claude account. You need a paid plan - at least Pro (\$20/month).

? **Quick check** : Which Claude packages include Cowork access?

**Answer** : The Pro, Max, Team, and Enterprise plans—the Free plan—do not include this feature.

## Step 2: Switch to Cowork mode

After opening the Claude Desktop application, look at the top of the screen. You will see a mode selector with two tabs: **Chat** and **Cowork**.

Click on **Cowork** . The interface will change – instead of a chat window, you'll see a task-focused layout. The label might be "Tasks" depending on your version.

That's it. You're now in Cowork mode.

## Step 3: Grant folder access permissions

Before Cowork can work with your files, you need to tell it which folder to use. Click on **Work in a folder** and select a folder.

**Important note** : Start with a secure folder. Don't specify it as your entire Documents folder right from the start. Good starting options:

1. A Downloads folder that you don't mind rearranging.
2. Create a new directory specifically for testing (e.g., ~/CoworkTest)
3. A project folder with the files you want to be sorted in.

Why start small? Remember that Reddit user whose company deleted 11GB of files after being asked to "clean up"? That happened because they granted broad access and gave vague instructions. We'll avoid both of those mistakes.

## Step 4: Run the first task

Enter a simple, specific task. This is a task that works very well on the first run:

Hãy xem qua th? m?c này và tóm t?t nh?ng gì có trong ?ó. Li?t kê các lo? i file, s? l??ng c?a m?i lo?i và t?ng kích th??c. ??ng thay ??i b?t c? ?i? u gì - ch? c?n báo cáo.

Note three things about this prompt:

1. Specific scope - "this folder" (not "my computer")
2. The result is clear - "list the file types, number, and total size"
3. Safety constraint - "don't change anything"

Press **Enter** . Cowork will create a plan, show the steps, and ask if you want to continue. Review the plan, approve it, and track its progress.

Your first task will be completed in less than a minute. You will receive a clear summary of your folder contents.

## Understanding the approval gateway

This is the most important safety feature. Cowork uses approval gateways—checkpoints where it pauses and requires your confirmation before taking any potentially harmful action.

Actions to trigger the approval portal:

1. Delete file
2. Edit important documents
3. Run the script or command
4. Accessing new folders exceeds the permissions you initially granted.

Actions that do not require approval:

1. Read file

2. Create a new file
3. Create a summary or report.

Imagine a new employee asks, "Hey, I'm going to delete these 50 duplicate files - do you agree?". You can approve, modify, or cancel.

## Let's try a real-world task!

Now that you've grasped the basics, let's try something practical. Choose one of the following:

For a cluttered **Downloads folder**:

S?p x?p các file trong th? m?c này vào nh?ng th? m?c con theo lo? i file: - PDF ? Documents/ - Hình ?nh (jpg, png) ? Images/ - B? ng tính (xlsx, csv) ? Data/ ?? nh?ng file b?n không ch?c ch?n v? cách s?p x?p vào th? m?c "Unsorted". Hãy cho tôi xem nh?ng gì b?n ? ã làm khi hoàn thành.

For the meeting notes folder:

??c t?t c? các file v?n b?n trong th? m?c này. T?o m?t file duy nh? t có tên "meeting-summary.md" v?i n?i dung sau: - Ngày c?a m?i cu?c h?p (t? tên file ho?c n?i dung) - Các quy?t ??nh quan tr?ng ?ã ???c ??a ra - Các m?c hành ??ng kèm ng?i ch?u trách nhi?m S?p x?p theo ngày, g?n ?ây nh?t tr ??c.

For scattered invoices:

Xem xét các file PDF trong th? m?c này. ??i v?i m?i hóa ??n, trích xu? t: Ngày, nhà cung c?p, s? ti?n và danh m?c (th?c ph?m, v?n chuy?n, v? n phòng ph?m, v.v.). T?o m?t b?ng tính có tên "expense-report.csv" v? i các c?t này.

Choose any file that matches your actual file. That's the bottom line - Cowork will handle your files.

## What should you do when things don't go smoothly?

Your first tasks may not be perfect. That's normal. Common initial problems include:

"I need access to." - Cowork will notify you if it needs access to a folder it can't otherwise access. Simply grant it access to the specific folder it needs.

Incomplete results - If the results are missing something, simply reiterate: "You missed the PDF files in the subfolder. Could you please add them?" This helps maintain context within the same session.

Unexpected changes - If something goes wrong, you can undo it. Cowork doesn't permanently delete files without approval. But check immediately instead of a few hours later.

Usage Limits - If you're using the Pro plan, you might encounter message limits on longer tasks. Cowork uses more tokens than regular chat. If this happens frequently, the Max plan will give you 5-20 times more capacity.

## Key points to remember

1. Download Claude Desktop, log in, click on the Cowork tab - you're in!
2. Start with a secure, controlled folder (not your entire drive).
3. Write specific tasks with clear expected outcomes and safety constraints.
4. Approval gateways protect you from harmful actions - please review them carefully.
5. Monitor the results within the same session if adjustments are needed.

### 1. Question 1:

What happens if Cowork is about to perform a harmful action, such as deleting a file?

1. A. It performs without being asked.
2. B. It sends you an email requesting approval.
3. C. It requires your approval before proceeding (approval portal)
4. D. It automatically creates backups.

EXPLAIN:

Cowork uses approval gateways for potentially harmful actions such as deleting files or modifying sensitive documents. You confirm before it executes.

### 2. Question 2:

Which program must always remain open while Cowork is running a task?

1. A. Your web browser
2. B. Claude Desktop Application
3. C. A terminal window
4. D. Nothing at all - it runs in the background.

EXPLAIN:

The Claude Desktop application must remain open while Cowork is performing its tasks. Closing the application will end your session and stop whatever Cowork is doing.

### 3. Question 3:

What is the first thing you should do when granting folder access to Cowork?

1. A. Grant full access to your hard drive for greater convenience.
2. B. Start with a secure, controlled folder such as the Downloads folder or a dedicated project folder.
3. C. Only use folders on the external hard drive.

4. D. Create a new user account on your computer.

EXPLAIN:

Starting with a controlled folder like Downloads will limit the scope of impact if something goes wrong. You can always expand access later once you've built trust.

Submit your work

## Training results

You have completed **0** questions.

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Review the lesson

You finished reading the article "**Setting up and running Claude Cework for the first time.**" edited by the [TipsMake](#) team. We hope this article has provided you with many useful tech tips and tricks. You can search for similar articles on tips and guides. Thank you for reading and for following us regularly.