

Projects: The Folder That Makes ChatGPT And Claude Remember Your Work

Projects are the feature that stops you re-explaining the same business, the same job hunt or the same renovation in every new chat. Here is how they work in ChatGPT and Claude, the limits on every plan, the four projects almost everyone should have, and the one prompt that writes your project instructions for you.

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If you have ever pasted the same paragraph about your business into ChatGPT for the fifth time, this is the feature you were missing. A project is a folder inside ChatGPT or Claude that holds three things: instructions that apply to every chat inside it, files it can always read, and a memory of what happened in there. Open a chat inside the project and it already knows the price list, the tone, the kids' school schedule, whatever you put in. Close it and none of that leaks into your other chats.

It is free on both tools, it takes five minutes to set up, and once you have a couple of them you stop thinking of the AI as a chatbot and start thinking of it as a set of assistants who each know their job. Here's how it works in both, the limits that actually bite, and the four projects I would set up first.

THE PLAN · 15 MINUTES, 3 PROMPTS

- 1 Create the project and give it instructions
- 2 Load the files it should always know
- 3 Decide what it remembers
- 4 Set up the four projects everyone needs

CHATGPT

any plan. Free gets 5 files per project, Go and Plus 25, Pro 40. Works on web, phone and the desktop app.

CLAUDE

any plan. Free is capped at 5 projects. Files are unlimited but the whole set has to fit in Claude's working memory unless you are on a paid plan.

BEFORE YOU START

Ten minutes and the two or three documents you keep re-explaining.

1 Create the project and give it instructions

In ChatGPT, click New project in the left sidebar, name it, pick an icon and a colour, then open the three-dot menu in the top right of the project and choose Project settings to write the instructions. In Claude, click Projects in the left sidebar, then New Project, name it, and click Set project instructions. Instructions apply to every chat inside the project and beat your general custom instructions when they clash.

Do not write the instructions yourself. Let the AI interview you and write them, because it knows what it needs to know.

PROMPT 1 · COPY & PASTE

I am setting up a project for [WHAT THIS PROJECT IS FOR, e.g. my small bakery / my job hunt / our house renovation]. Interview me, one or two questions at a time, until you know enough to write the project instructions: who I am, what this project is for, who the audience is, the tone and format I want, the facts you must always get right, and the things you must never do or say. Then write the instructions in under 300 words, in plain language, as a list of rules, and show them to me to paste into the project.

Keep them short. Long, vague instructions get partly ignored on both tools, and a rule like "always give prices including tax" does more work than three paragraphs about your brand story.

MAVERICK'S TIP

Move your old chats in. In ChatGPT, drag a chat onto the project or open its menu and choose Move to project. In Claude you can move chats between projects too. The moved chat picks up the project's instructions and files from then on.

2 Load the files it should always know

In ChatGPT, open the project, find its sources area, choose Add source, and upload PDFs, spreadsheets, documents or images, or paste text straight in. In Claude, the knowledge panel is on the right side of the project page: click the plus to upload files, paste text, or pick Drive to add a Google Doc. Files stay in the project for as long as the project exists, which is the point, because files in a normal chat are forgotten within hours.

The files to add are the ones you keep re-explaining: your price list, your resume, the brand voice doc, the term calendar, the quotes. Then start every new chat inside the project the same way, so you can see what it actually absorbed.

PROMPT 2 · COPY & PASTE

Before we start, tell me in five lines what you know about this project from the instructions and the files: who I am, what we are working on, the rules you are following, and the most important facts from the documents. Then tell me the one thing you would need to know that is not in there yet.

One honest thing about files: on both tools an uploaded file is a snapshot from the day you added it. If your price list changes, upload it again. The exception is a Google Doc added to a Claude project through Drive, which stays live and always reads the latest version.

MAVERICK'S TIP

Merge before you upload. ChatGPT Free allows five files per project, so five quotes for a renovation become one PDF. Claude lets you add as many as you like, but on the free plan the whole set has to fit at once, so keep it to the documents that matter.

3 Decide what it remembers

This is where the two tools differ, and where most people get bitten.

In ChatGPT a project remembers its own chats, and it has two modes. Default memory lets chats inside the project also use your main ChatGPT memory. Project-only memory is a wall in both directions: the project remembers only itself, and nothing from it reaches your main memory. Set it from the three-dot menu on the project, then Project settings, then Memory. You can change it on an existing project now, and any project you share is forced to project-only automatically. One catch: Work mode is not available inside a project-only project.

In Claude every project gets its own separate memory automatically, kept apart from your main memory and from other projects, and you can read and edit everything it holds under Settings, then Memory. The thing to know is that chats inside a Claude project do not see each other unless the information is in the project's files or has landed in that memory, so anything important goes into the knowledge panel, not just into a chat.

PROMPT 3 · COPY & PASTE

Add this to the project knowledge as a running decisions log and keep it updated as we go. Every time I make a decision in this project, add one line: the date, what I decided, and why. When I open a new chat here, remind me of the last three decisions before we start.

In ChatGPT, when it writes the log, open that response's menu and choose Save to project, which turns it into a source every chat in the project can read. In Claude, ask it to write the log as a text you can paste into the knowledge panel, and update it every week or so.

4 Set up the four projects everyone needs

- **My business.** Instructions: who you are, who you sell to, tone, things never to say. Files: brand voice, price list, FAQ, two of your best past emails. Use it for replies, quotes and captions.
- **Job hunt.** Instructions: target roles, locations, salary floor, what to emphasise. Files: current resume, two or three target job descriptions, a list of your wins. In ChatGPT set it to project-only so interview prep stays out of your general memory. Use it for tailoring the resume per role, cover letters and mock interviews.
- **Family admin.** Instructions: the kids' names and years, the school, what you want help with. Files: term calendar, timetable, the school's homework policy. Project-only in ChatGPT, so family details are walled off. Re-upload the calendar each term.
- **The big purchase or renovation.** Instructions: budget ceiling, timeline, non-negotiables, where you live. Files: the quotes, the floor plan, the materials list. Use it to compare quotes, draft the emails to tradespeople, and keep the decisions log from Step 3.

Inside any ChatGPT project you can also use voice and connected apps, and on paid plans Deep Research and Work mode, so a project is a full workspace, not just a folder of files. Claude projects work across the web, the desktop app and the phone, and on paid plans the desktop app's Cowork mode can attach a real folder on your computer to a project.

The Honest Part

Neither tool shares memory between projects, on purpose, so a fact you want everywhere goes in your main memory or custom instructions, not in a project. Files go stale and nobody warns you. Scheduled tasks created inside a ChatGPT project cannot read the project's files, which catches people out. And sharing is uneven: ChatGPT lets anyone share a project, even on Free, while Claude only lets Team and Enterprise plans share.

Set up the one project you would use tomorrow, run the instructions prompt, and add the two files you are sick of pasting. The first chat that already knows your prices is the moment this clicks.

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