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FREE GUIDE

How to Use AI Tools the Smart Way

Real, practical ways to use AI for your career and your work, without sounding like AI wrote it for you.



BEFORE WE GET INTO IT

A quick word first

I put this together because I kept getting some version of the same question: how do you actually use AI day to day, not just to write an email a little faster, but to change how you show up online and how you work.

So this isn't a hype piece about AI. It's three things I actually use myself, written the way I'd explain them to a friend over coffee: how to make your LinkedIn actually work for you, how to stop re-explaining yourself to AI tools every time you open a new chat, and how to use Claude Code without feeling like you need a computer science degree to touch it.

Take what's useful, skip what isn't. If any of this helps you show up a little sharper or land something better, that's the whole point of writing it down.

WHAT'S INSIDE

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| 03 | Using Claude Code without being intimidated | Why it's less scary than it looks, and where to start |

Make your LinkedIn actually work for you

Before anyone reads your resume or gets on a call with you, they check your LinkedIn. That's the real first impression now, not the resume. If it looks outdated, generic, or thrown together, that's the story a recruiter walks away with, whether or not it's true. AI is genuinely good at helping you fix that, as long as you use it to sharpen what's already true about you instead of asking it to invent a version of you that doesn't exist.

1 Your headshot

If your headshot is five years old, poorly lit, or a cropped group photo, an AI photo touch-up tool can clean up lighting, background, and quality in a couple of minutes. Use it to fix a real photo of you, not to generate a fake one. People can tell, and it quietly undercuts the trust you're trying to build.

2 Your headline

Your headline is the one line everyone sees before anything else. Give AI your actual role, your biggest win, and where you want to go next, and ask for five or six options. You probably won't use any of them exactly as written, but you'll see phrasing you wouldn't have landed on alone, and you can build your real headline out of the best pieces.

3 Your About section

This is the section most people either leave blank or write once and never touch again. Give AI the real facts, what you've built, who you've helped, what you're looking for next, and let it draft a first pass. Then rewrite it in your own words. The value isn't the words AI gives you, it's that a blank page turns into an edit.

4 Your work history

Most work history sections are just job duties copy-pasted from an old resume. Ask AI to help turn "responsible for automation projects" into something specific and measurable, a number, a scope, a result. It's much better at pulling the actual impact out of a vague sentence than most people give it credit for.

TIP

Paste your resume or a rough list of accomplishments into the chat first, then ask AI to work only from that. It keeps the output grounded in your real experience instead of generic filler.

What not to do

Here's where most people get it backwards. Using AI to write your actual posts word for word is a bad look, and it's usually obvious. The bold one-line hooks, the bullet list of "lessons learned," the posts that sound like everyone else's AI post, don't build credibility. They quietly cost you some. That doesn't mean AI has no place in your posts, it means its job is to help you say things better, not to say them for you.

SKIP THIS

- ✗ Ask AI to write the whole post
- ✗ Post it exactly as generated
- ✗ End up sounding like everyone else's AI post

DO THIS INSTEAD

- ✓ Brain-dump your real thoughts first
- ✓ Ask AI to organize them, or turn them into a simple diagram
- ✓ Rewrite the final version so it sounds like you

REAL EXAMPLE

This exact guide went through that same process. I knew what I wanted to say in each section, used AI to help organize and tighten it, and made sure it still sounded like me before it went anywhere near this page.

Stop burning tokens re-explaining yourself

If you use AI chat tools for anything beyond one-off questions, you've hit this problem: every new conversation starts from zero. You end up re-pasting the same context, the same background, the same "here's what we're building" explanation, every single time. That's not just annoying, it's one of the biggest reasons people give up on using AI for anything longer than a quick question. Most AI tools built for ongoing work, Claude included, have some version of a "Project": a space where you attach instructions and files that every new chat inside it can see automatically, without you repeating yourself. Here's how I actually use it.

1 Rough it out in a normal chat first

Don't start in the project instructions. Think out loud in a regular chat: what you're trying to build, what's already true, what you're still unsure about. Let it be messy.

2 Move the cleaned-up version into the project's instructions

Once you've landed on the real shape of the thing, the actual rules, goals, and context, copy that into the project's permanent instructions. Now every new chat inside it starts already knowing it, instead of starting from nothing.

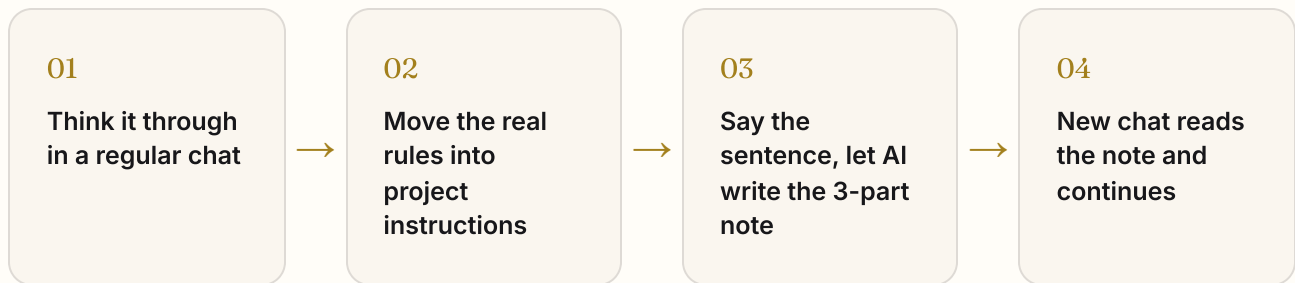
3 Don't write the handoff note yourself, tell AI to

Put one line in the project instructions: "any time I say 'create a handoff note for this session,' write a three-part note with today's date, what got done, what's left, and what you'd suggest for next time, and save it as a file in the project folder." From then on, ending a session is just you saying that sentence. The AI does the writing.

4 Start your next chat by handing it the note

Drop that saved file into a brand new chat, or paste its text as your first message, and it picks up exactly where the last session left off. No re-explaining, no wasted tokens, no starting over.

The loop, laid out



Then it loops: step 4 feeds back into step 3, session after session.

REAL EXAMPLE

This exact pattern is running underneath the site you probably found this guide on. That portfolio's own project file ends with something called a "Handoff Log," one entry per work session, each one saying what got done, what's left, and what I'd suggest for next time. Every new session starts by reading it. That's not a hypothetical example, it's the actual file.

TIP

Keep the note short on purpose. Say so in the instruction too, three tight sections, not three paragraphs. A note that's too long to skim in a minute won't actually get read at the start of the next session.

Try this: a resume-to-job-match project

Here's a specific project you can set up today that shows exactly how this works. Create a project, add your current resume as a file, and give it one standing instruction: every time I paste a job description, walk through it like a hiring manager would.

1

Give me a match percentage

A rough read on how closely your resume actually lines up with this specific job description, not a generic score against job titles in general.

2

Show me the strong points and the gaps

Where the resume already lines up with what the JD is asking for, and where it clearly doesn't, side by side.

3

Tell me what to add

A short, specific list of skills or phrasing straight from the JD that would close those gaps, not generic resume advice.

4

If it's worth tailoring, just do it

When the match is decent, above roughly 50 percent, or close enough that a few changes would help, have it rewrite the resume itself, working in the JD's actual language, so what you submit is tailored to that role instead of the same generic resume for every application.

TIP

Treat the percentage as a gut check, not a science. What actually matters is the gaps and the language it surfaces. Use those, and always give the tailored version a final read before you send it, it should still sound like your resume.

Using Claude Code without being intimidated by it

Claude Code looks like a coding tool, so most non-developers assume it's not for them. That's the wrong read on it. What actually makes it different from a normal AI chat isn't that it can write code, it's that it can open, read, and directly edit files sitting in a folder on your computer.

With a regular AI chat, you're stuck copy-pasting: paste your document in, get text back, copy it out, paste it into your file, and repeat that every time something changes. With Claude Code, you point it at a folder once, tell it in plain English what you want changed, and it makes the change directly in the actual file. No re-uploading, no losing track of which version is current.

You don't need to know how to code to direct it. You need to be able to describe what you want, the same way you'd describe it to a person. "Add a section here," "fix this so it reads better," "go find the part that says X and change it to Y," that's a completely normal way to work with it.

TIP

Start with one small, low-stakes task on a real file you already have, a resume, some notes, a simple document. Get a feel for how it responds before you try something bigger. The trust builds fast once you see it make the right change on its own.

REAL EXAMPLE

After I shipped Kitchrix, my recipe app, on my own, I found Claude Code and pointed it at that same codebase, not to build new features, just to debug it and polish the UI. Using the same handoff-note habit from Part Two, the work got noticeably faster, mostly because Claude Code read and edited the real files directly instead of me copy-pasting code back and forth.

ONE LAST THING

None of this works if it doesn't sound like you

AI is genuinely useful for organizing, drafting, and speeding up work you already understand. It's not a replacement for having something real to say.

Use it to say what you already mean, more clearly and a little faster, and the rest tends to take care of itself.

If any of this helped, or you want to talk through how to actually put it to work, I'd genuinely like to hear from you. Helping other people get further, faster, tends to be one of the best ways to get better yourself too, and that's a big part of why I put this together in the first place.



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