

Understanding Claude Skills

What they are, how they work, and how to set up your own

What Is a Skill?

A **skill** is a specialized module — a reference guide or instruction set that Claude consults before working on particular types of tasks. Rather than relying on general knowledge alone, a skill gives Claude precise, tested instructions for doing a job well.

Think of it like handing Claude a detailed instruction manual before it starts. The result is faster, higher-quality output that follows best practices from the start.

A Concrete Example: Creating a Word Document

Imagine you ask Claude: “**Create a professional business proposal for me.**”

Without a Skill	With the docx Skill
Basic, unstructured formatting	Proper Heading 1 / Heading 2 styles
Text placed without hierarchy	Automatic table of contents
No headers, footers, or page numbers	Correct margins, fonts & page numbers
Wrong margins or fonts for Word	Consistent, professional formatting
Missing best practices	Knows which libraries to use and why

The skill makes the difference between a document that looks like a draft and one that looks like it was made by someone who really knows Microsoft Word.

Set Up Your Own Personal Style Skill

One of the most powerful skills you can create is a **personal working-style skill** — a document that tells Claude how you think, write, and make decisions. Once saved, Claude will use your style automatically in every conversation.

Step-by-Step Setup

Step 1 — Define your working style on Maven

Go to Maven and open the project called “**Project 1.2: Define Your Custom Skill — How Do You Work?**”. It asks you to write 300–500 words describing how you personally work: how you write, how you make decisions, how you give feedback, and more.

Project 1.2: Define Your Custom Skill — How Do You Work? [🔗](#)


PROJECT • SUBMIT BY WED. MAY 27

Before you can build an AI that works like you, you need to know how you work.

This project is about capturing your personal operating style — the way you communicate, think, decide, and lead. By the end of this course, these inputs will form the foundation of your own AI tool or agent built in your voice, not a generic template.

 What to Document (answer each in 3-5 sentences or bullet points):

1. How do you write? (Email tone, formality level, structure preference — do you bullet or prose? Long or short?)
2. How do you give feedback? (Direct, coaching-style, sandwich method, written vs. verbal?)
3. How do you run meetings or 1:1s? (Agenda-first, conversational, outcome-focused, relationship-first?)
4. How do you present or structure a business case? (Story-first, data-first, exec summary up top, bottom-up?)
5. How do you make decisions? (Gut + data, consensus-driven, framework-based, speed vs. thoroughness?)
6. What's your communication style with leadership vs. your team? (Do you adapt your style, and how?)
7. What's one thing you do really well that you'd love AI to replicate for you?

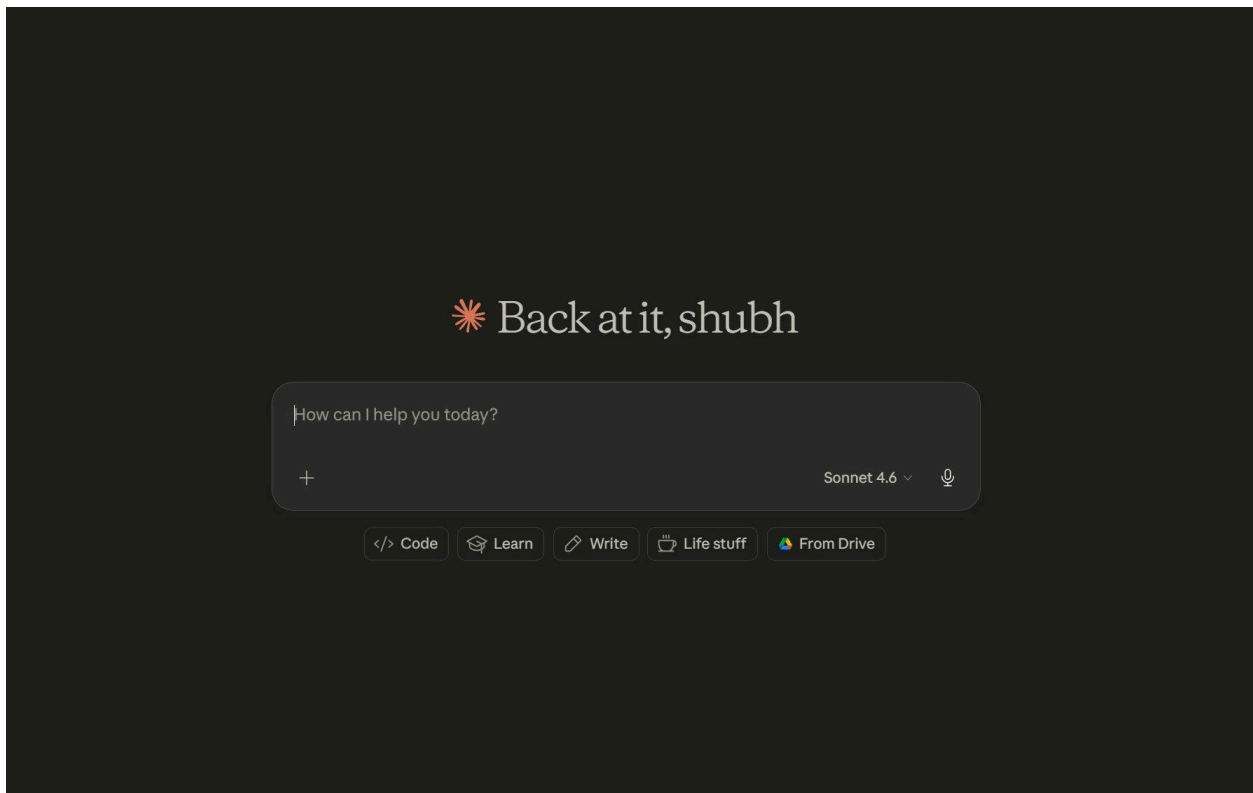
 Use AI to Help You Articulate It: Open Claude or ChatGPT and say: "I'm going to describe how I work. Ask me 5 questions to help me articulate my working style clearly." Use the conversation to dig deeper than you normally would. Paste a summary of your key insights as your submission.

Submission: A personal working-style document (300-500 words). You'll revisit and build on this in Weeks 3 and 4.

The Maven project page — answer each question to define your working style.

Step 2 — Where this happens in Claude

Go to **claude.ai** in your browser and log in (or create a free account). The interview and example-sharing from Step 2 all happen right here in the chat box.



Step 3 — Let AI interview you

Don't write your answers from a blank page. The fastest way to get rich, accurate material is to have an AI interview you. It will pull out details you wouldn't think to mention on your own.

Open Claude and ask it to act as an interviewer. Answer in your natural voice, and don't worry about polish, you'll clean it up later.

PROMPT 1 — ASK AI TO INTERVIEW YOU

I'm going to describe how I work. Ask me 5-10 questions, one at a time, to help me articulate my working style clearly – how I write, make decisions, give feedback, and run meetings. Dig deeper than I normally would.

(Note : Make sure to paste in Project 1.2, it will get more context)

Share real examples as you go. When the AI asks a question, don't answer in the abstract, paste in actual emails you've sent, feedback you've given, or a decision you made recently. Concrete examples make your skill far more accurate than vague descriptions.

PROMPT 2 — SHARE EXAMPLES OF YOUR WORK

Here's a real email I sent last week and a piece of feedback I gave a teammate. Use these as examples of my actual tone and style what patterns do you notice?

🌟 Why this matters

AI sees patterns in your real work that you take for granted.

Examples capture nuance tone, structure, pacing that adjectives can't.

An interview surfaces the “unwritten rules” of how you operate.

The Claude homepage — run your interview and paste your examples into this chat box.

Step 4 — Ask AI to format it as a skill

Once the interview is done, ask Claude to convert everything into the **standard skill format** — the structure skills used so they can be uploaded and triggered correctly.

PROMPT 3 — ASK FOR THE SKILL FORMAT

Take everything from our conversation and format it as a skill document I can upload. Use the standard skill structure: a name, a description with clear trigger conditions, and the working-style instructions in the body.

A skill document has three core parts:

- **Name** : a short, clear title (e.g. *my-working-style*).
- **Description** : explains **when** the skill should activate. This is the most important part: it lists the **intention types** (trigger conditions) that tell Claude to use the skill.
- **Body** : the actual instructions: your tone, decision-making style, feedback approach, and examples.

Intention Types — Telling Claude When to Use Your Skill

An **intention type** is a trigger condition: the kind of request that should make Claude reach for your skill. Strong, specific intention types make the skill fire at the right moments. Ask AI to include a clear set of these in your description.

Intention Type	What It Means	Example Trigger
Task type	A category of work the skill covers	“Draft an email to my team”
Tone request	When the user wants output in their voice	“Write this the way I would”
Decision support	Framing choices the user’s way	“Help me think through this call”
Feedback / review	Giving feedback in the user’s style	“Review this and give notes”
Document / format	Producing a deliverable in a set format	“Turn this into a one-pager”
Keyword match	Specific words or project names	Mentions “Maven” or “my proposal”

Tip

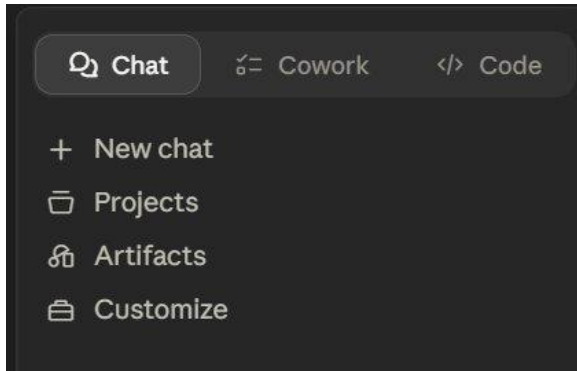
The more specific your intention types, the more reliably the skill triggers.

Vague triggers (“writing”) fire too often; precise ones (“drafting client emails”) fire when they should.

Ask AI: “List the exact situations where this skill should and shouldn’t activate.”

Step 5 — Open the Customize menu

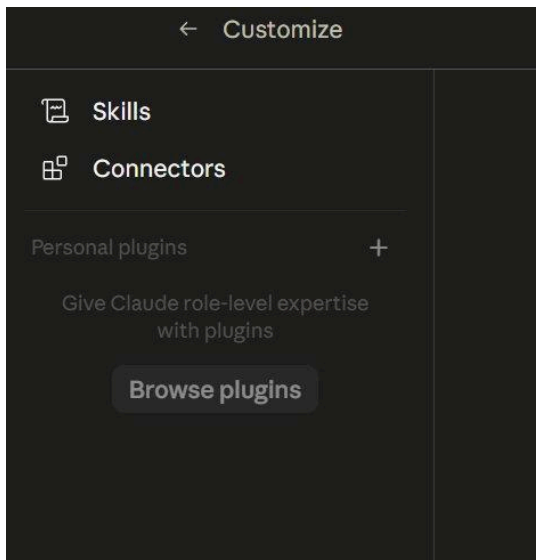
With your formatted skill ready, save it so Claude uses it every time. Look at the top-left corner of the screen and click **Customize**.



Click “Customize” in the left sidebar.

Step 6 — Go to Skills

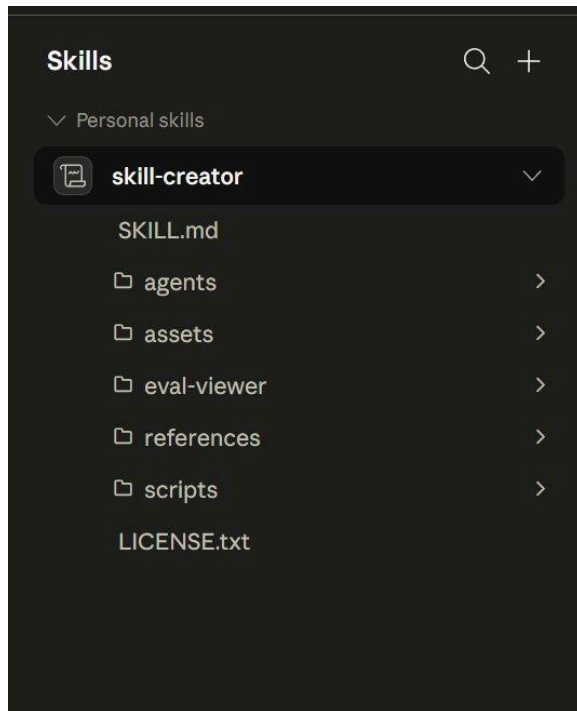
Inside the Customize panel you’ll see two options: **Skills** and **Connectors**. Click **Skills**.



The Customize panel — select Skills.

Step 7 — Add and upload your skill

You'll see your Personal Skills listed here. Click the + button to add a new skill, then upload or paste the formatted skill document from Step 4. Save it.



The Skills panel — upload your formatted skill document here.

You're done!

Every time you use Claude, it will already know how you like to work.

Because your skill has clear intention types, it activates at exactly the right moments.

Feel free to explore, try different requests, and update your skill as your style evolves.

There is nothing to break you can always come back and refine it.