BEGINNER · 10 min read · November 4, 2026 · By Kelly Stratton

How to Build Your First AI Agent: One File, No Code

Drop my AI Agent Builder into Claude or Codex on your computer and it interviews you and builds your first AI agent: three files for its identity, your rules, and its memory. Every click, from making the folder to calling your agent by name.

An AI agent does more than answer you. It has one main job, it knows how you like things done, and it does the work right on your computer: it writes the draft, saves it to a folder, and picks up tomorrow right where you left off. I run my entire business with one AI agent named Apollo. This guide gives you my AI Agent Builder, one file that interviews you and builds your first agent for you in Claude or Codex, with no code.

> THE SHORT VERSION
>
> Download the AI Agent Builder, build-my-agent.md. Make a new folder called My AI Team and put the file inside. Open that folder in the Claude app's Code tab. Type **Read build-my-agent.md and follow it.** Answer its questions. When it asks for permission to create files, say yes. Then call your agent by name any time.

> WHAT YOU NEED
>
> The Claude desktop app, signed in on a paid plan (Pro or higher). Or the ChatGPT app for Mac, which has Codex built in; how much you can use it depends on your ChatGPT plan. The AI Agent Builder file, build-my-agent.md. About 30 minutes, more if you have a lot to tell it. The steps below show a Mac.

PART 1 What Is an AI Agent, and What Will Yours Be?

Every agent starts with **one main job**. It's a thinking partner who's great at one part of your life or your work. Mine is content: Apollo is my whole content team. He does my research, schedules my posts, and builds my newsletters and guides. Yours could plan your week, run your small business's social media, help you study, keep your household organized, or be whatever you want it to be.

"Agent" sounds technical, but it's just three files on your computer, and Claude writes every one of them for you during the interview:

Your agent's three files
IDENTITY.md Its name, its main job, and its personality. You decide how it talks to you: straight to the point, warm, funny, calm, or one that pushes back when an idea is weak.
RULES.md How you like things done. It saves what you tell it right away, never makes you explain the same thing twice, and only adds a new rule when you say "always."
MEMORY.md Your projects and every decision you've made, plus where you left off. Every time you open your agent, it starts with what you finished, what's waiting on you, and what's next.

PART 2 Make a Home for Your Agent

Your agent lives in its own folder. This is the step where most people get stuck, so go slowly.

1. **Download the file:** build-my-agent.md. It lands in your Downloads folder.

2. **Make a new, empty folder somewhere easy to find.** On a Mac, open Finder and press **Shift + Command + H**. That opens your home folder, the one with the house icon. Right-click an empty spot and choose **New Folder**. Name it **My AI Team**. A crowded Desktop is the hardest place to find it again, especially if your Desktop is stored in iCloud.
3. **Move build-my-agent.md into My AI Team.** Drag it from Downloads into the folder.
4. **Don't open the file.** Double-clicking it opens it in whatever app your computer picked for .md files, which can be anything (on my Mac, it opened in Canva). You never need to open it yourself. Claude reads it for you.

PART 3 Open the Folder in Claude

1. **Open the Claude desktop app** and click the **Code** tab, the **</>** icon at the top left.
2. **Find the folder name in the bar under the message box.** That bar has three things in a row: **This computer**, then a folder name (it might say Documents, No folder, or the name of another folder), then **Worktree**. The only one you'll click is the folder name in the middle. Don't click This computer or Worktree.
3. **Click the folder name** and choose **Open folder...** A window titled **Select folder** opens.
4. **Click My AI Team once** so it's highlighted. Click the folder, not the file inside it. Then click **Open**.
5. **Check the bar.** It should say **My AI Team**. If it says another folder name with **+ 1** after it, two folders are open. Click it, choose **Open folder...**, and pick My AI Team so it's the main folder with the checkmark. If anything is still listed under **Also included**, click the **×** next to it. Your agent should only see its own folder.

CAN'T FIND THE FOLDER IN THE WINDOW?

Open Finder, find My AI Team, and drag the folder right onto the Select folder window. It jumps straight there. Then click Open.

PART 4 Start the Interview

DO THIS BEFORE YOU START

Write a brain dump, or talk one into a voice memo and copy the text: where you've been, what you do now, what you want, what you're tired of repeating, and your dreams for the next few years. Drop it in during Round 4. It's the fastest way to give your agent the whole picture.

Click in the message box, type this, and press Return:

PROMPT

```
Read build-my-agent.md and follow it.
```

That's the only thing you type that isn't a conversation. From here, Claude interviews you one question at a time and tells you why it's asking each one. Answer in your own words, as if you were talking to a new assistant on their first day.

Give it as much as you can. This is the most important part of the whole guide. The more your agent knows about you, the better it works from day one: your history, your work, your life, your dreams, your goals, and where you're going. A short answer gets you a generic agent. A full answer gets you one that feels like it has known you for years.

Here's what the interview covers, in four rounds:

The interview

Round 1: Meet your agent
What you want to call it (this becomes its name and the word you'll use to call it back), and how you want it to talk to you (this becomes its personality). Your own words work better than any list.

Round 2: The basics
Your name, what a normal day looks like, what you're working toward (the big goal and what's in front of you this month), and what you want its help with most. That last answer becomes its main job.

Round 3: Your world
Who you do this for, what good looks like to you, what drives you crazy, what it should always remember, and what it should never do without asking you first.

Round 4: Anything else
Anything you want it to read: a bio, notes, past writing, a business plan, or a brain dump about your life and where you're headed.

After Round 2 and Round 3, it checks in: keep going, give it notes to read, or build now. **Keep going.** You can say **build it** at any point, but the agents that feel real are the ones that got all four rounds.

> NEVER SHARE THESE
>
> Passwords, credit card or bank numbers, Social Security numbers, medical records, or API keys. Your agent saves what you tell it in plain files, so keep those out. The file reminds you, too.

When it asks for permission to create files, say yes. That's your agent being saved into your folder. It creates the three files, a short note for today, and a shortcut so you can call it by name.

When it's done, it greets you as your new agent, tells you how to call it back, and offers three small things it can do for you right now. Pick one. That's the moment it feels real.

PART 5 Use Your Agent Every Day

Every time you want your agent, open a fresh session in the same folder and call it by name:

1. **Open the Claude desktop app** and click the **Code** tab, the **</>** icon at the top left.
2. **Click + New** at the top of the left sidebar. This opens a fresh session.
3. **Check the folder name in the bar under the message box.** If it doesn't say **My AI Team**, click the folder name and pick **My AI Team** from the **Recent** list. It shows up there after the first time.
4. **Type / and your agent's name** in the message box, like **/maple**, and press Return. It reads its three files and opens with **Here's where we are.**
5. **Work with it.** When you tell it something worth keeping, it saves it right away and shows a line that starts with 📝 **Remembered**.
6. **Correct it** when it gets something wrong. It fixes it and asks if that should always be the rule. Say **yes, always** and it goes into RULES.md.
7. **Type wrap up** when you're done for the day. It saves where you left off, so next time you don't start over.

PART 6 Using Codex Instead

The same file works in Codex, which comes with ChatGPT. Use the **ChatGPT app on your Mac**, not the ChatGPT website. On the website, Codex only works in the cloud and asks you to connect GitHub. It can't see a folder on your computer.

1. **Open the ChatGPT app on your Mac** and click **Work** at the top, next to Chat.
2. **Look at the bar under the message box.** It shows **Choose project**, **Files**, and **Plugins**, with a small laptop icon on the right, which means it's working on your computer. If a blue box pops up about running chats in the cloud, close it. Don't click

Try now.

3. **Click Choose project,** then click **New project**, the first item under the search box.
4. **Name it My AI Team.** Under **Source folders**, make sure it says **Add a folder on this computer**, click **Add**, and pick your **My AI Team** folder.
5. **Click Create project.**
6. **Type:** Read build-my-agent.md and follow it. It runs the same interview and builds the same three files.
7. **When it asks for permission to create files, say yes.**
8. **To call your agent back,** start a new chat in the My AI Team project and type **$** and its name, like **$maple**.

PART 7 Connect It to the Tools You Already Use

Your agent starts by knowing you. Connect it to your apps and it can do things for you too: read your email, check your calendar, make a Canva design, post an update to Slack, or add a page to Notion. You run the show.

1. **Open a regular Claude chat** (not the Code tab), click the **plus button** in the message box, and choose **Connectors**.
2. **Turn on the apps you use,** like Gmail, Google Calendar, Canva, Slack, or Notion. Each one asks you to sign in to that app once.
3. **Go back to your agent.** Apps you connect to your Claude account work in the Code tab too.
4. **Ask your agent in plain English:** “Check my calendar and plan my week,” or “Draft a reply to the last email from my landlord.”

Start with one app. Have it ask before it sends, posts, or deletes anything, and add that as a rule: “Always ask me before you send or post anything.”

YOU JUST SET UP YOUR FIRST AI AGENT

That's the foundation: an agent with a name, a personality, your rules, and a memory that grows every time you use it. There's a lot more you can do with it, and more is coming on how to get the most out of your agent. Follow along so you don't miss it.

FIXES If Something Goes Wrong

The snags people actually hit

I can't find my folder
Make it in your home folder (the house icon in Finder), not on a crowded Desktop. Or drag the folder from Finder onto the Select folder window.

The file opened in another app
You clicked the file instead of the folder. Close that app. In the Select folder window, click the folder once, then Open.

The bar says a folder name plus 1
Two folders are open. Click it, choose Open folder..., and pick My AI Team. Then click the × next to anything under Also included.

It didn't ask me any questions
Check the bar says My AI Team and that build-my-agent.md is inside it. Then type the sentence again exactly.

/name doesn't work
Click + New for a fresh session, check the bar says My AI Team, then type it again. If it still doesn't, it may not have had permission to save the shortcut. Type: Read IDENTITY.md, RULES.md, and MEMORY.md in my agent's folder and become my agent.

It forgot something
Tell it again and ask it to remember. Open MEMORY.md in the folder any time to see exactly what it knows.

FAQ

Questions People Ask About Building an AI Agent

Straight answers

What is an AI agent?
An AI agent is an AI with one main job that works for you right on your computer. It has a name and a personality, follows your rules, and keeps a memory file of your projects and decisions. A chat hands you an answer. An agent writes the work, saves it in its folder, and picks up where you left off.

How do I build my first AI agent?
Make a new folder on your computer, put the AI Agent Builder file (build-my-agent.md) inside it, open that folder in the Claude app's Code tab (or in Codex), and type: Read build-my-agent.md and follow it. Claude interviews you, one question at a time, and builds your agent from your answers.

Do I need to know how to code?
No. You need one job and three files, and Claude writes the files for you. You answer questions in plain English, and the AI Agent Builder tells Claude what to ask and what to build. The only technical part is opening the right folder, and this guide walks through every click.

What files does my agent have?
Three files in its own folder on your computer, and Claude writes all three. IDENTITY.md holds its name, its main job, and its personality. RULES.md holds how you like things done. MEMORY.md holds your projects, every decision you've made, and where you left off last time. There's also a short note for each day you work together.

Does it work in ChatGPT's Codex?
Yes. Use the ChatGPT app on your Mac, not the website. Click Work, then Choose project, then New project, add your My AI Team folder, and type the same sentence. It runs the same interview. You call your agent with $ and its name in Codex, and with / and its name in Claude.

Can my AI agent use Gmail, my calendar, or Canva?
Yes, once you connect them. In Claude, tap the plus button and choose Connectors to turn on apps like Gmail, Google Calendar, Canva, Slack, and Notion. Your agent can then use them when you ask.

Is it safe to tell my agent personal things?
Tell it about your work, your goals, and how you like things done. Never give it passwords, credit card numbers, or API keys. Everything it remembers is saved as plain files in your folder, so you can open them, read them, and delete anything.

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