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Set up Claude Code on Windows

Install. Try something useful. Check the result.

WINDOWS

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This guide uses Claude Code in a Windows terminal. You will install the tool, sign in, choose a practice folder and build a tiny enquiry tracker using fictional data. The guide is free; provider access and usage may cost money.

Before you begin

- Windows 10 version 1809 or later, or a supported newer Windows release; at least 4 GB RAM and an internet connection.
- A Claude account with Claude Code access, or an approved Console or organisation account. Check the provider's current access and billing before starting.
- PowerShell and a dedicated practice folder. Git for Windows is recommended for Bash-based tooling; current Claude Code can otherwise use PowerShell.

Checked against official documentation on 12 November 2026. Recheck linked sources for changes. Independent guide; not affiliated with OpenAI or Anthropic.

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Get set up.

01 Open the right terminal

Open Start, search for PowerShell and launch it. A PowerShell prompt normally begins with PS. The command below is for PowerShell, not Command Prompt. Use a personal practice folder rather than a live client project.

02 Install from the official source

Open the official setup page linked at the end and compare its Windows PowerShell command with this one. This command downloads and runs Anthropic's installer. On a managed work computer, follow your organisation's software policy.

```
irm https://claude.ai/install.ps1 | iex
```

03 Check the installation

When installation finishes, close and reopen PowerShell. Run this check; success is a version number. If the command is not recognised, follow the official PATH troubleshooting rather than installing several different versions.

```
claude --version
```

04 Create a practice workspace

Run these lines one at a time. They create a folder inside your user profile, enter it and start Claude Code. Use a different folder name if this one already contains work you want to keep.

```
New-Item -ItemType Directory -Path "$env:USERPROFILE\ai-practice"
Set-Location -LiteralPath "$env:USERPROFILE\ai-practice"
claude
```

05 Sign in and read the permissions

Follow Claude Code's browser sign-in flow using your intended account. Read any folder-trust and permission prompts. Keep the practice limited to this folder; a beginner exercise does not need unrestricted access or a live customer database.

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Make something small.

Your first practice brief

Use fictional information. Paste this brief into your new conversation, then review the plan before continuing.

> Build a single-file HTML enquiry tracker in this folder. Use three fictional enquiries, a status filter and an accessible form. Do not connect to external services or send messages. First explain your plan and wait for my agreement. After building, tell me how to open it and check the filter and empty-field behaviour.

Check it yourself

1. Confirm the plan matches the exercise before asking it to build.
2. Open the generated HTML file in your browser. Add a fictional enquiry and try each status filter.
3. Submit an empty form. Check that the app explains what is missing.
4. Refresh the page and ask what persists. A local prototype is not a shared production system.
5. Ask for a list of changed files and known limitations. Keep a backup of the version that works.

A prototype is a learning tool.

A working screen is not the same as a production application. Shared access, data storage, integrations and ongoing support need their own decisions and checks.

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Keep moving.

If something goes wrong

+ 'irm' not recognised: check that you opened PowerShell, not Command Prompt.
+ 'claude' not recognised: reopen the terminal, then use the official PATH troubleshooting.
+ Login or access problem: confirm the account has Claude Code access and check the provider's current billing or team settings.
+ The generated app fails: copy the visible error into the conversation and describe the exact action that caused it. Ask for the smallest fix.

Official sources

Official installation and system requirements
https://code.claude.com/docs/en/setup

Official first-session quickstart
https://code.claude.com/docs/en/quickstart

Troubleshooting
https://code.claude.com/docs/en/troubleshooting

From experiment to useful business software

Once you can review a small local prototype, map one real workflow before connecting real systems. Caffeine Output can help turn that experiment into a supported business application.

Start a conversation: dev@caffeineoutput.com