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Set up Codex on Mac

Install. Try something useful. Check the result.

macOS

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Codex is available through OpenAI's current ChatGPT desktop app. This guide helps you choose the right workspace and make one small prototype on your Mac. It is a starting exercise, not a promise that AI-generated software is ready to deploy without review.

Before you begin

- A Mac supported by the current official ChatGPT desktop installer. Check the download page's current macOS and hardware requirements.
- An internet connection and the appropriate ChatGPT account or organisation access. Check current plan limits and billing separately.
- A local practice folder containing no confidential files. Use fictional examples for the first exercise.

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 Get the official Mac download

Open the desktop-app overview linked below and follow its download link for macOS. Use OpenAI's installer and follow its prompts. If the installer asks you to move the app into Applications, complete that step before launching it.

02 Launch and sign in

Open the installed app from Applications or Spotlight and sign in with your intended account. Check the current update guidance if you already use an older Codex desktop installation.

03 Switch to Codex

Choose Codex in the ChatGPT product dropdown and start a new chat. The provider may update the interface; use the official quickstart for current names and locations.

04 Give the exercise its own home

In Finder, create a folder called ai-practice and open it as the project workspace in the app. Start with a local folder you control. Check the project location before asking Codex to create or change anything.

05 Explain the result and boundaries

State the user, the task, what a successful result looks like and what should stay out of scope. Read the app's access and permission prompts. A local practice exercise does not need unrelated folders, external accounts or publishing access.

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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 process map for a fictional studio: enquiry, discovery, proposal, build and handover. Let me select a stage to see its inputs and outputs. Use no external services. Explain your plan first and wait for agreement. After building, describe the files, browser checks and known limitations.

Check it yourself

1. Check that the proposed stages fit the brief before asking Codex to continue.
2. Open the output in a browser and select every stage.
3. Resize the browser to a narrow window; confirm that the stages and explanation remain readable.
4. Try selecting stages with the keyboard. Ask for any missing accessibility behaviour to be corrected.
5. Keep the working version and ask for a short handover. Share a prototype only after you have checked it.

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

+ Cannot install: check the provider's current Mac requirements and whether the device is managed by your organisation.
+ Cannot find Codex: update the app and refer to the official quickstart's product selector.
+ Wrong project context: stop the task and open the intended folder before requesting edits.
+ Needs an external connection: ask why it is necessary; keep this first exercise local unless you deliberately expand its scope.

Official sources

OpenAI desktop-app overview and download
https://learn.chatgpt.com/docs/app

OpenAI desktop quickstart
https://learn.chatgpt.com/docs/quickstart?setup=app

Working with projects
https://learn.chatgpt.com/docs/projects

From experiment to useful business software

Bring the prototype and your team's feedback into a discovery conversation. The next step is to define a real workflow, its owners and the checks needed for a reliable first release.

Start a conversation: dev@caffeineoutput.com