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Set up Codex on Windows

Install. Try something useful. Check the result.

WINDOWS

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OpenAI's current desktop documentation directs users to the ChatGPT desktop app, with Codex selected inside it. This guide follows that route, rather than an older standalone-app tutorial. Downloading this guide is free; account access and usage depend on the provider.

Before you begin

- A Windows PC supported by the current official installer and an internet connection. Check compatibility on the provider's download page.
- A ChatGPT account with the access you need. For company work, use the account and setup approved by your organisation.
- An empty local practice folder and fictional sample information. No GitHub connection or API key is needed for this introductory local 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 Download from OpenAI

Follow the download link in the official desktop-app documentation. Choose Windows and complete the installer. Avoid third-party download mirrors. On a company-managed PC, ask your administrator to provide the approved installation.

02 Open the desktop app and sign in

Open ChatGPT from Start and sign in with your intended ChatGPT account. If you already have the older Codex app, check the current update instructions before installing another copy.

03 Select Codex

Use the ChatGPT product dropdown to select Codex, then start a new chat. Labels can change as the app evolves; the official quickstart linked below is the reference for the current interface.

04 Open a local practice folder

In File Explorer, create an ai-practice folder in a location you can find again. Open that folder as the workspace in the app. The selected folder is the context for this exercise; confirm its name before requesting file changes.

05 Keep a review step

On Windows, the official guide describes Ask for approval beneath the composer as the setting that applies sandbox protections. Use a constrained local workspace for this first task. Native Windows work does not require WSL; leave advanced environment changes for a real need.

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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.

> In this empty folder, build a single-file HTML quotation checklist for a fictional business. Include scope, assumptions, exclusions and an approval checklist. Do not create prices or send anything. First explain the plan and wait for agreement. After building, show the changed files and how I can test the checklist in a browser.

Check it yourself

1. Check that Codex understood the purpose before accepting the proposed plan.
2. Review the changed files and open the HTML output in a browser.
3. Try completing tasks, resetting them and moving around with the keyboard.
4. Ask where any saved information goes and what would be needed for a team to share it.
5. Ask for limitations and next steps. Keep the prototype separate from live customer work.

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 see Codex: check that the desktop app is updated and consult the current product-selector instructions.
+ Installer blocked: use your organisation's software support route; do not bypass a device policy.
+ Files cannot be accessed: confirm the selected workspace and review the specific permission request.
+ The result looks finished but fails: reproduce the exact action, share the visible error and ask Codex to verify the fix.

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

Windows app and permission guidance
https://learn.chatgpt.com/docs/windows/windows-app

From experiment to useful business software

Use the prototype to discuss the workflow with your team. Agree the data, review steps and success measures before connecting it to email, a CRM or live customer records.

Start a conversation: dev@caffeineoutput.com