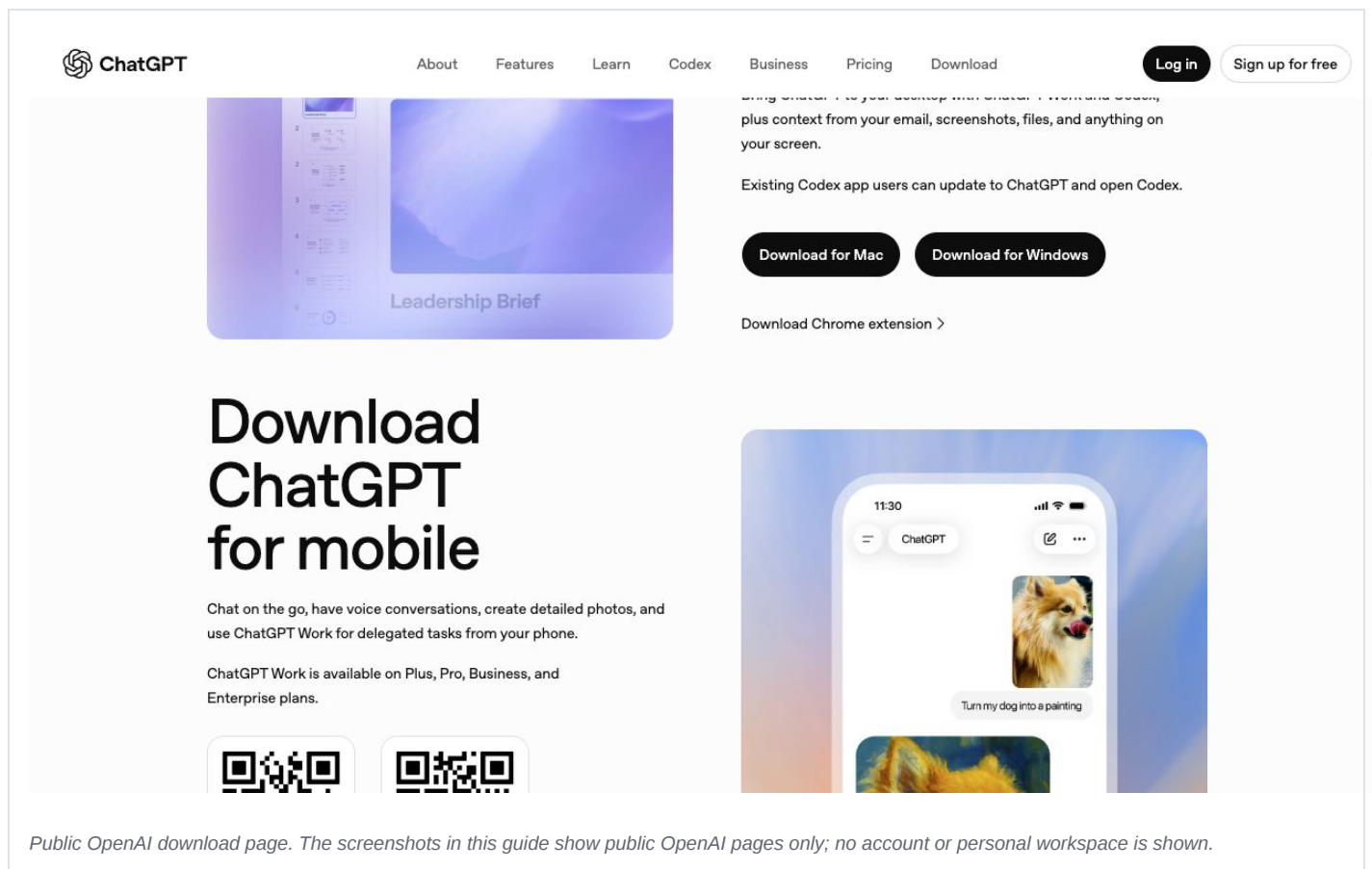


Enable Computer Use in ChatGPT / Codex

A plain-English, visual setup guide - from downloading the desktop app to safe overnight workflows.

THE SHORT VERSION

Install the ChatGPT desktop app, open **Codex** (or ChatGPT Work), install the **Computer Use** plugin, grant macOS permissions, then start a small task with **@Computer**.



Public OpenAI download page. The screenshots in this guide show public OpenAI pages only; no account or personal workspace is shown.

Prepared from official OpenAI documentation checked 15 Aug 2026. Feature availability can vary by region, plan, workspace, and rollout.

START HERE

What you are turning on

Computer Use is the desktop control layer: it lets ChatGPT see and operate the apps you explicitly allow. The agent still needs a clear task and can pause for approval.

USE THE RIGHT LAYER

Use **Computer Use** for visible desktop actions. Use **Browser** for the built-in web session. Use **Chrome** when an existing signed-in Chrome profile matters. Use **Cloud** when the task does not need your Mac's local files or apps.

Computer Use Clicks, types, and navigates macOS or Windows apps. Best for UI-only tasks, settings, visual bugs, and workflows that cross several desktop apps.	Browser Operates the built-in browser in a separate browser profile. Use @Browser for public sites or a separate sign-in when needed.
Chrome Use @Chrome when the task needs your existing signed-in Chrome tabs, profile, or extensions. Review every action as if you were doing it yourself.	Cloud / Scheduled Runs work away from your local desktop when the task can use cloud context, uploaded files, or connected tools. It cannot see local desktop apps or local files.

PRIVACY RULE OF THUMB

Start with one app and one outcome. Keep unrelated sensitive apps closed. Allow only the apps needed for the task, and stay present for account, payment, security, sharing, or deletion actions.

STEP 1

Download and install the desktop app

Computer Use requires the ChatGPT desktop app. Codex is now part of that desktop app on macOS and Windows.

1 Open the official download page

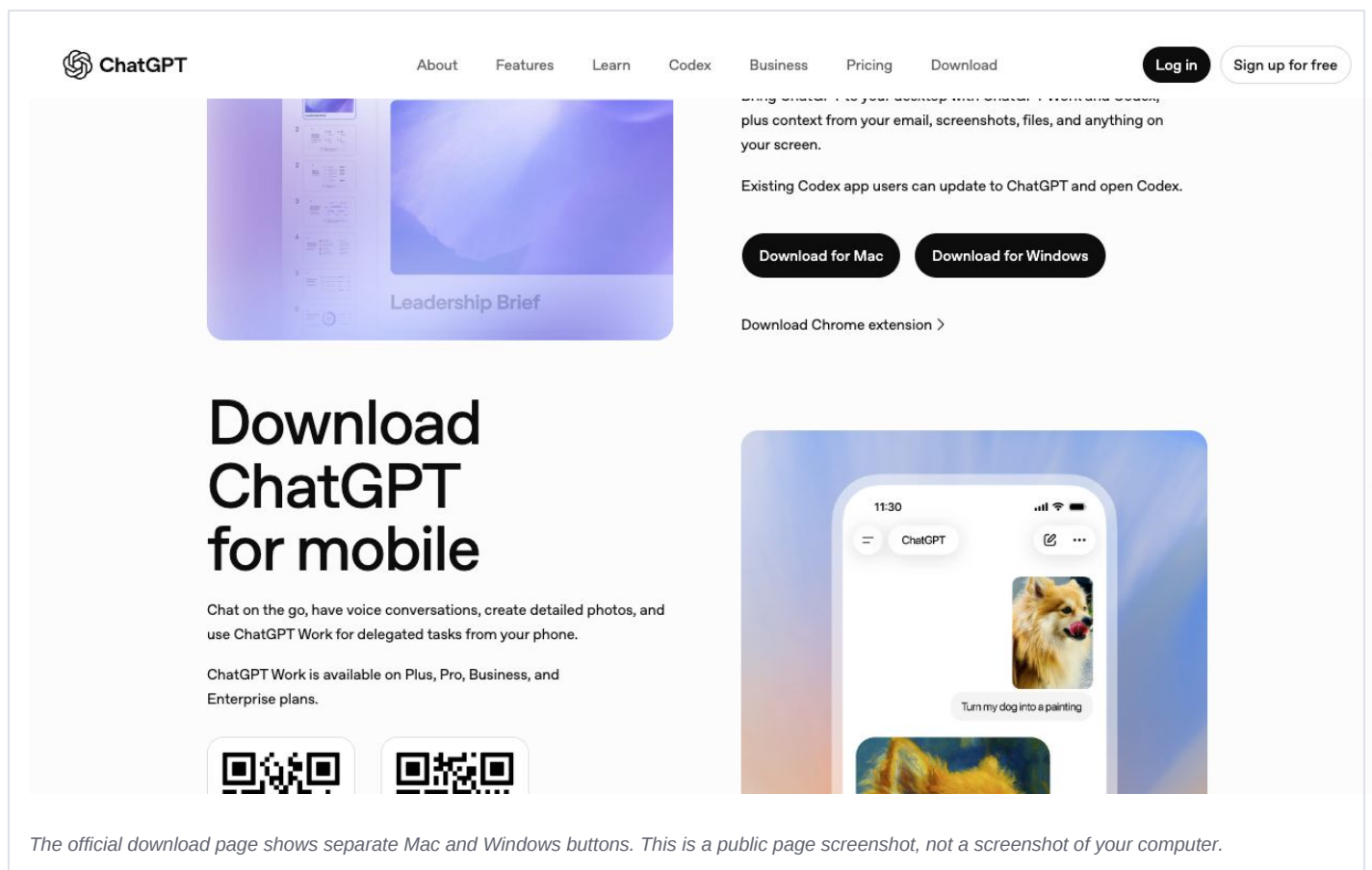
Go to chatgpt.com/download in any browser. Choose **Download for Mac** or **Download for Windows**.

2 Install the app

Open the downloaded installer and follow the normal operating-system prompts. If you already have the older Codex app, update it and open Codex inside ChatGPT.

3 Launch ChatGPT

Open the desktop app and sign in with the ChatGPT account and workspace you want to use. Do not share your password with the agent.



The official download page shows separate Mac and Windows buttons. This is a public page screenshot, not a screenshot of your computer.

IF YOU DO NOT SEE THE FEATURE

Update the desktop app first. Then check whether your region, plan, workspace administrator, or staged rollout supports Computer Use.

STEP 2

Open Codex or ChatGPT Work

Computer Use is available from the desktop app in supported regions with ChatGPT Work and Codex.

- 1 Choose your surface**
In the app, select **ChatGPT** and switch to **Work** in the switcher, or select **Codex**.
- 2 Choose local or cloud work**
Keep **Work locally** selected when the task needs apps or files on your computer. Choose **Cloud** when you want the task to continue after you close the app or turn off the computer, and local files are not required.
- 3 Choose a project when useful**
For local work, choose the project folder that contains the files the agent needs. For a first Computer Use test, use a harmless app such as Calculator or a blank note.

Local is right when...

The agent needs a desktop app, local folder, signed-in desktop browser, or a file that is not uploaded.

Cloud is right when...

The task is research, a recurring update, or a deliverable using cloud context, uploaded files, or connected tools. The computer does not need to stay awake.

FIRST TEST PROMPT

I want to test Computer Use safely. Open Calculator, add $27 + 38$, and show me the result. Do not open any other app or save anything.

STEP 3

Install and enable the Computer Use plugin

This is the main switch. The exact labels are shown in the public OpenAI documentation screenshot below.

1 Open Plugins

In the desktop app, open the **Plugins** tab.

2 Find Computer Use

Select **Computer Use**. If you see **Install plugin**, select it. If you see **Enable**, select it.

3 Turn on both controls

Turn on the **Computer Use server** and **Computer Use skill** toggles. Then select **Try now** to start.

the Computer Use server and skill toggles, then select **Try now** to start.

Then open **Settings > Computer use** to review app access. Connected browser controls show a **Manage** action. Apps you approve for future tasks appear in the **Always-allowed apps** section.

Official setup illustration: the Computer Use server and skill toggles are enabled, with a Try now action.

WHAT THIS DOES

It makes Computer Use available to the agent. It does not automatically grant every app access. The next step is where you review app permissions.

STEP 4

Review Settings > Computer Use

Use the settings page as your control panel. Keep access narrow until you know exactly what the workflow needs.

- 1 **Open the settings page**
Go to **Settings > Computer use** in the desktop app.
- 2 **Turn on only what you need**
The settings page shows app controls and connected browser controls. Turn off apps you do not want Computer Use to access.
- 3 **Use Always-allowed apps carefully**
Apps you approve for future tasks appear in **Always-allowed apps**. Add only trusted, low-risk apps. Remove an app later from the same section.

Then open **Settings > Computer use** to review app access. Connected browser controls show a **Manage** action. Apps you approve for future tasks appear in the **Always-allowed apps** section.

Computer use
Manage how ChatGPT uses other applications on your computer

Control

App	Control	Manage
Any App	Let ChatGPT control apps on your computer	☐
Google Chrome	Connected to browser extension for additional control	☐
Microsoft Excel	Let ChatGPT use Microsoft Excel add-in for additional control	☐
Microsoft PowerPoint	Let ChatGPT use Microsoft PowerPoint add-in for additional control	☐

Always-allowed apps

App	Remove
Calculator	Remove

On Windows, keep the target app visible on the active desktop while the task runs. On macOS, grant Screen Recording and Accessibility permissions when prompted so ChatGPT can see and interact with the target app.

On macOS, grant:

Official settings illustration: app controls, browser management, and the Always-allowed apps list.

SAFE DEFAULT

For your first real task, approve one app for one job. Leave high-risk apps closed. Do not give the agent passwords, one-time codes, payment details, or administrator approval prompts.

STEP 5

Grant operating-system permissions

ChatGPT's app approvals and your operating system's permissions are separate. Both may be needed.

macOS: Screen Recording Allows ChatGPT to see the target app window. Open System Settings > Privacy & Security > Screen Recording and allow Codex Computer Use when prompted.	macOS: Accessibility Allows ChatGPT to click, type, and navigate. Open System Settings > Privacy & Security > Accessibility and allow Codex Computer Use when prompted.
Windows: keep the target visible Computer Use runs on the active desktop. Keep the target app visible in the foreground, keep Windows unlocked, and stay connected to the internet.	After granting access Return to the ChatGPT app and retry the small test. If the app is still not visible or controllable, re-check both macOS permissions and the app approval in Settings > Computer use.

WHY THE PROMPTS MATTER

Screen access lets the agent read visible content; Accessibility lets it interact. Treat the screen, clipboard, files, and browser pages in the target app as information the agent may process while the task runs.

Do not automate terminal apps or ChatGPT itself with Computer Use. The product blocks those paths to protect approval and security boundaries.

STEP 6

Start your first Computer Use task

A good prompt names the app, the exact result, and what the agent must not do.

1

Mention the tool

Start with **@Computer** or mention a specific app such as **@Chrome**. You can also ask in plain language: 'Use Computer Use to...'

2

Keep the scope small

Name one app or one short flow. Say what state you care about, such as 'read-only', 'draft only', or 'stop before submitting'.

3

Review the result

Stay available for permission prompts. Stop the task if it opens the wrong window or tries to take a sensitive action.

SAFE DESKTOP PROMPT

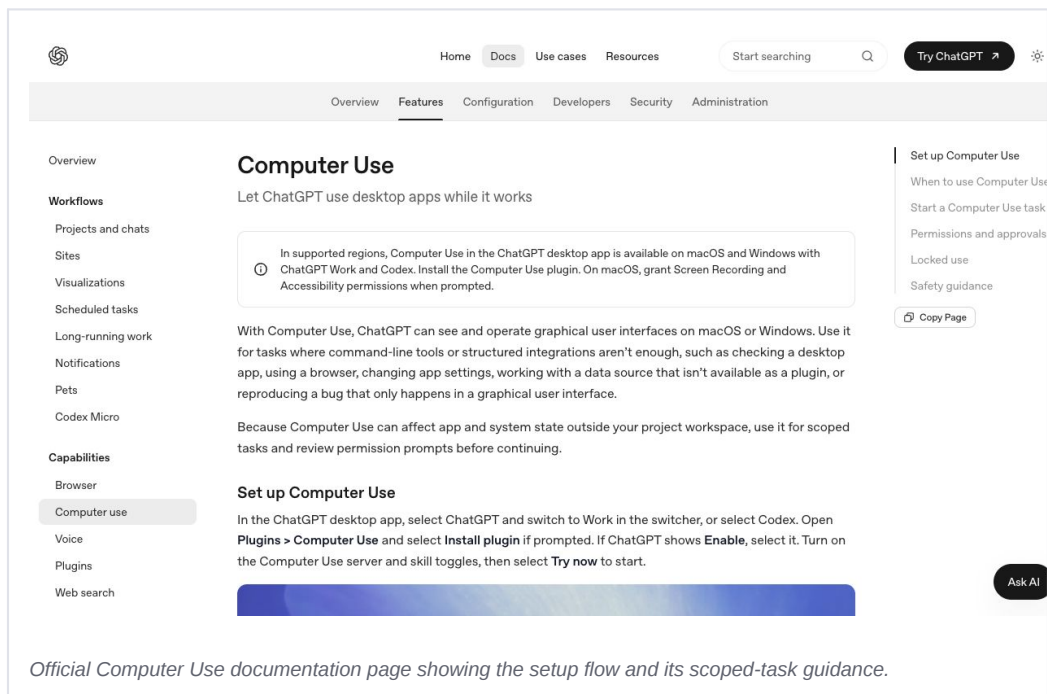
@Computer Open Notes, find the note called 'Weekend plan', and summarize the action items in a new local note. Do not send, share, delete, or change any existing note.

Good task

'Open the project tracker, compare it with my meeting notes, and prepare updates. Ask before submitting anything.'

Risky task

'Open my accounts and send whatever needs sending.' Too broad. Split it into a review step and a separate action step.



Official Computer Use documentation page showing the setup flow and its scoped-task guidance.

USEFUL ADD-ON

Use Computer Use in the browser

Browser tasks are often the easiest way to get value from the agent, but browser profiles and permissions matter.

- 1 **Install Browser**
Open **Plugins** and install **Browser**.
- 2 **Call the browser explicitly**
Ask ChatGPT or Codex to use the browser, or reference it as **@Browser**. The built-in browser can open pages, click, type, inspect rendered state, take screenshots, and verify results.
- 3 **Choose the right browser**
Use the built-in browser for a separate session. Use **@Chrome** when an existing signed-in Chrome tab, profile, or extension is required.

The screenshot shows the ChatGPT desktop app interface. The top navigation bar includes 'Home', 'Docs', 'Use cases', and 'Resources'. A search bar is on the right. The left sidebar lists 'Overview', 'Workflows' (with sub-items like 'Projects and chats', 'Sites', etc.), and 'Capabilities' (with 'Browser' selected). The main content area is titled 'Computer Use in the browser' and explains that ChatGPT can search browsing history. It includes a code block example: 'Use the browser to open http://localhost:3000/settings, reproduce the layout bug, and fix only the overflowing controls.' A right sidebar shows a search bar and a list of actions like 'Search from the address bar', 'Manage browsing history', etc. An 'Ask AI' button is at the bottom right.

When available, ChatGPT can ask to search your browsing history to find a page that matters to the current task. Review the request before allowing access. Browsing history can include internal URLs, search terms, and other sensitive information, so allow it only when the task requires that context.

Computer Use in the browser

In the desktop app, Computer Use lets ChatGPT Work or Codex operate the built-in browser directly. The selected experience can open pages, click, type, inspect rendered state, take screenshots, and verify the result of its work in the page.

Open the **Plugins** tab and install **Browser**. Then ask ChatGPT or Codex to use the browser in your task, or reference it directly with `@Browser`.

For example:

```
Use the browser to open http://localhost:3000/settings, reproduce the layout bug, and fix only the overflowing controls.
```

ChatGPT asks before it uses a website unless you have already allowed that site. Manage allowed and blocked sites in **Settings > Browser**. ChatGPT also asks for confirmation before sensitive actions such as submitting information, making a purchase, changing permissions, or deleting data. ChatGPT can't automate file uploads in the built-in browser.

Instructions on a page can be misleading or malicious. A website permission lets ChatGPT interact with that site: it doesn't make the site's content trustworthy or approve every action.

Official Browser documentation page showing **Plugins > Browser** and the `@Browser` workflow.

BROWSER SAFETY

A website can contain misleading instructions. A site permission only allows interaction with that site; it does not make the site trustworthy. Review submits, purchases, permission changes, and deletions before approving them.

OVERNIGHT REALITY CHECK

Will it work if the Mac sleeps?

The important distinction is **locked** versus **asleep**. A locked Mac can support a narrow Computer Use flow after you enable Locked use. A sleeping Mac is unavailable.

STATE	WHAT TO EXPECT
Mac screen locked	Yes, for Computer Use after you enable Settings > Computer Use > Locked use . This is macOS-only and intentionally narrow.
Mac actually asleep	No. Local work and remote access stop when the host sleeps. Keep it awake, plugged in, online, and running the desktop app.
Scheduled task needs local files	No if the Mac is asleep or off. Keep the computer on and the app running when a scheduled task uses a local project.
Cloud / web task	Yes, when it uses cloud context, uploaded files, or connected tools. It cannot access local apps, local files, or a signed-in desktop browser.
Windows Computer Use	Keep the target visible, the session unlocked, and the device connected. Windows Computer Use runs in the foreground.

Overview

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Sites

Visualizations

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Long-running work

Notifications

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Web search

Locked use

Locked use is for macOS. On Windows, Computer Use works in the foreground.

Locked use lets ChatGPT use Computer Use after your Mac locks, but only after you enable it. Use it when a ChatGPT task needs to use desktop apps from a connected device after the Mac locks.

When you enable locked use, ChatGPT installs an Apple [authentication plug-in](#) that participates in the macOS unlock flow.

Locked use is intentionally narrow. It's not a general-purpose remote-unlock path for your Mac, and it doesn't let other apps or local processes unlock the computer.

To use locked use:

1. Open Settings > Computer Use in the app.

2. Enable locked use.

3. Start a task that uses Computer Use from a connected device after your Mac's screen has locked.

When a ChatGPT task accesses an app via Computer Use after your Mac locks, ChatGPT temporarily unlocks the Mac while blocking local use and preserving the locked screen protections. Before unlocking, ChatGPT checks whether the unlock attempt is for an active, trusted Computer Use turn. Outside that short-lived window, ChatGPT denies the unlock and asks you to unlock manually if needed.

Set up Computer Use

When to use Computer Use

Start a Computer Use task

Permissions and approvals

Locked use

Safety guidance

Copy Page

Ask

Locked use is a macOS setting for after the screen locks.

Overview

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ChatGPT Work admin

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Authentication overview

Personal Access Tokens

Service accounts

Workspace access, policy, and model

Groups and provisioning

Roles and workspace permissions

GDPR and Sharing

Managed configuration

when you need continuous access or a different environment.

Your laptop or desktop

Connect the Mac or Windows PC where the desktop app is already installed. This gives remote access to the same projects, chats, credentials, plugins, and local setup you already use.

If that computer sleeps, loses network access, or closes the app, remote access stops until it's available again. If you use this computer as your host device, keep it plugged in and use the host's connection settings to keep it awake where available.

On a Mac laptop, remote access can stay available with the lid open and power connected. With the lid closed, connect an external display as well. Choosing **Sleep** still stops remote access.

On a Windows host, keep the session unlocked and available for tasks that use **Computer Use**. Computer Use on Windows runs in the foreground, so remote control is best for starting or checking work while you dedicate the host desktop to the task.

A dedicated always-on computer

Use a dedicated always-on Mac or Windows PC when you want ChatGPT to stay reachable for longer-running work.

Install the projects, credentials, MCP servers, skills, and tools ChatGPT or Codex should use on that machine.

What you can do remotely

Before you set up Remote

Set up Remote

Choose what to connect

What comes from the connected host

Pick up work from another device

Connect to an SSH host

Hand off a chat between hosts

Authentication and network exposure

Troubleshooting

See also

Copy Page

Ask

Remote access stops if the host actually sleeps.

THE OVERNIGHT ANSWER

For a Mac desktop task: enable Locked use if you only expect the screen to lock, and use your Mac's power settings to prevent automatic sleep when you need the task to keep running. If the Mac sleeps, the task cannot keep controlling it.

OVERNIGHT PLAYBOOK

Set up a task before you go to bed

Use the least-permission workflow that can still produce the result. Treat overnight work as unattended work: make the stop conditions explicit.

1. Choose the run type

Use Computer Use for a scoped desktop flow. Use Scheduled for repeated work. Use Cloud when local files and apps are not required.

2. Prepare the host

Plug in the Mac, keep it online, keep the ChatGPT app running, and prevent automatic sleep for the window you need. Do not rely on a sleeping Mac.

3. Prepare the workspace

Close unrelated sensitive apps. Open only the app the task needs. Use a dedicated project folder or Git worktree for code and file changes.

4. Set boundaries

Say: read-only, draft only, do not send, do not buy, do not delete, do not change permissions, stop if blocked.

5. Make the output reviewable

Ask for a short summary, a list of changes, screenshots, and anything that needs your approval.

6. Test once while awake

Run the exact prompt manually. Fix unclear steps before leaving it unattended.

Scheduled tasks

Schedule recurring tasks in ChatGPT

Schedule recurring tasks to run in the background. Review active, paused, and completed tasks and recent runs in **Scheduled**. You can combine scheduled tasks with **skills** for more complex work.

Schedule tasks with ChatGPT

Scheduled Tasks With ChatGPT

Official Scheduled tasks page. Scheduled tasks are useful for recurring reports and checks; local-project runs still need the computer and app awake.

EVERYDAY IDEAS

Smart ways everyday people can use the agent

Start with tasks that end in a draft, checklist, summary, or organized workspace. Keep actions reversible until you trust the workflow.

Morning command center

Read allowed notes and messages, summarize what changed, and produce a prioritized to-do list. Say: 'Do not message anyone.'

Travel research

Use @Browser for public sites to compare price, cancellation terms, travel time, and accessibility. Ask for a shortlist; do not book.

Inbox to action list

Review a selected folder, group messages by topic, and draft replies without sending them. Use a Gmail integration when available.

Digital cleanup

Review Downloads and propose folders, duplicates, and old files. Ask before moving or deleting anything.

Personal admin

Compare a budget spreadsheet, flag unusual rows, and create a plain-English summary. Do not transfer money or change account settings.

Fix a desktop problem

Reproduce a UI bug, check a setting, or walk through a setup in one app. Start with one app and let the agent show its work.

EVERYDAY PROMPT

@Computer Check my Downloads folder and show me a proposed organization plan. Group files by project and age. Ask before moving, renaming, or deleting anything.

A BETTER PATTERN

Ask the agent to **inspect -> propose -> wait -> apply**. That gives you a review point before anything changes.

BUSINESS IDEAS

Smart ways teams can use the agent

Business workflows get safer and more repeatable when the agent prepares a result for review instead of acting as an invisible operator.

Daily KPI brief

Open the approved dashboard or spreadsheet, capture the important numbers, flag anomalies, and create a morning brief. Do not publish it automatically.

Meeting follow-up

Read meeting notes and a project tracker, map decisions to owners, and prepare updates. Ask before submitting or messaging.

Support triage

Review a defined queue, group issues by urgency, and draft response suggestions. Keep customer data scoped and do not send replies without review.

Website QA

Use @Chrome or @Browser to test a staging page, capture screenshots, list visual bugs, and stop before publishing or changing production.

Sales briefing

Compare approved CRM, calendar, and notes context to prepare a one-page account brief. Use structured plugins when they can provide the data more reliably.

Overnight engineering check

Run a scheduled, narrow project check in a dedicated worktree. Return tests, errors, changed files, and a review list; do not deploy automatically.

BUSINESS PROMPT

@Computer Open the project tracker and meeting notes. Prepare the matching updates in the tracker, but do not submit them. Return a table with owner, action, due date, source, and anything ambiguous.

USE STRUCTURED INTEGRATIONS WHEN AVAILABLE

If a plugin or connector can read the data directly, prefer it for repeatable business workflows. Choose Computer Use when the task genuinely depends on the visual app interface.

SAFETY AND TROUBLESHOOTING

What to do when something is not working

Most failures come from a missing OS permission, the wrong app being active, an asleep host, or a task that is too broad.

Computer Use is missing Update the desktop app. Check supported region, plan, workspace access, and staged rollout. Then look under Plugins.	The app cannot see the window On macOS, re-check Screen Recording and Accessibility for Codex Computer Use. On Windows, make sure the target app is visible on the active desktop.
The task pauses overnight Look for a permission or approval request. Make sure the Mac is awake and online. Locked use only helps after the screen locks, not after the Mac sleeps.	Browser uses the wrong context Use @Browser for a separate browser profile. Use @Chrome only when the existing signed-in Chrome profile or tab is required.
Two tasks fight each other Do not run two Computer Use tasks against the same app at once. Competing clicks and window changes make the result unreliable.	You need to take over Stop the task and use the computer yourself. On macOS, local keyboard or pointer input during locked use causes the Mac to relock and pauses automatic unlock.

ALWAYS STAY PRESENT FOR
Passwords, one-time codes, payments, purchases, account permissions, security settings, data sharing, sending messages, deleting data, or anything that represents you to another person.

If a webpage tells the agent to ignore safety rules, reveal secrets, or take an unexpected action, treat it as untrusted page content and stop to review.

KEEP THIS PAGE

One-page cheat sheet

Save this page as the quick reference you use before starting a desktop or overnight task.

GOAL	USE	SAFE START
Need to click a desktop app?	@Computer	Install Computer Use; grant OS permissions; name one app and one outcome.
Need a separate web session?	@Browser	Install Browser; use the built-in browser; review website prompts and submits.
Need an existing signed-in Chrome tab?	@Chrome	Use the Chrome extension; treat actions as if you were doing them yourself.
Need recurring work?	Scheduled	Test the prompt first. Local runs need the computer and app awake; cloud runs do not need your computer awake.
Need phone control?	Remote	Connect the host in Settings > Connections. Keep the host awake, online, and signed in.
Need the Mac screen locked?	Locked use	Enable Settings > Computer Use > Locked use. This is macOS-only and does not survive actual sleep.

THE BEST FIRST PROMPT

Use **@Computer** to open **[one app]**, do **[one small task]**, and return **[one reviewable result]**. Do not send, buy, delete, publish, or change permissions. Ask before anything important.

Official sources

Computer Use learn.chatgpt.com/docs/computer-use Setup, permissions, locked use, and safety guidance.	Browser learn.chatgpt.com/docs/browser Built-in browser, @Browser, Chrome distinction, and browser safety.
Use your computer with Codex learn.chatgpt.com/use-cases/use-your-computer-with-codex Examples, prompt patterns, macOS background use, and Windows foreground behavior.	Scheduled tasks learn.chatgpt.com/docs/automations Background runs, local-project requirements, worktrees, and security model.
Get started with ChatGPT Work learn.chatgpt.com/docs/get-started-with-work Local versus Cloud work and when the computer must stay awake.	Remote connections learn.chatgpt.com/docs/remote-connections Host setup, awake/sleep behavior, and phone-based remote control.
Download ChatGPT chatgpt.com/download/ Official public desktop download page shown in the screenshots.	

Screenshots were captured from public OpenAI pages and do not show a signed-in account, private files, personal tabs, or user-specific information.