

ChatGPT, set up *safely* and used well

A one-page starter for first-time users. Nine setup steps, a map of where everything sits on desktop and phone, a simple way to ask better questions, and the tips most people learn too late.

Level	Time	Works on	Last checked
Entry	about 9 min	Web • Windows • Mac • iPhone • Android	12 Oct 2026

WHERE THINGS ARE

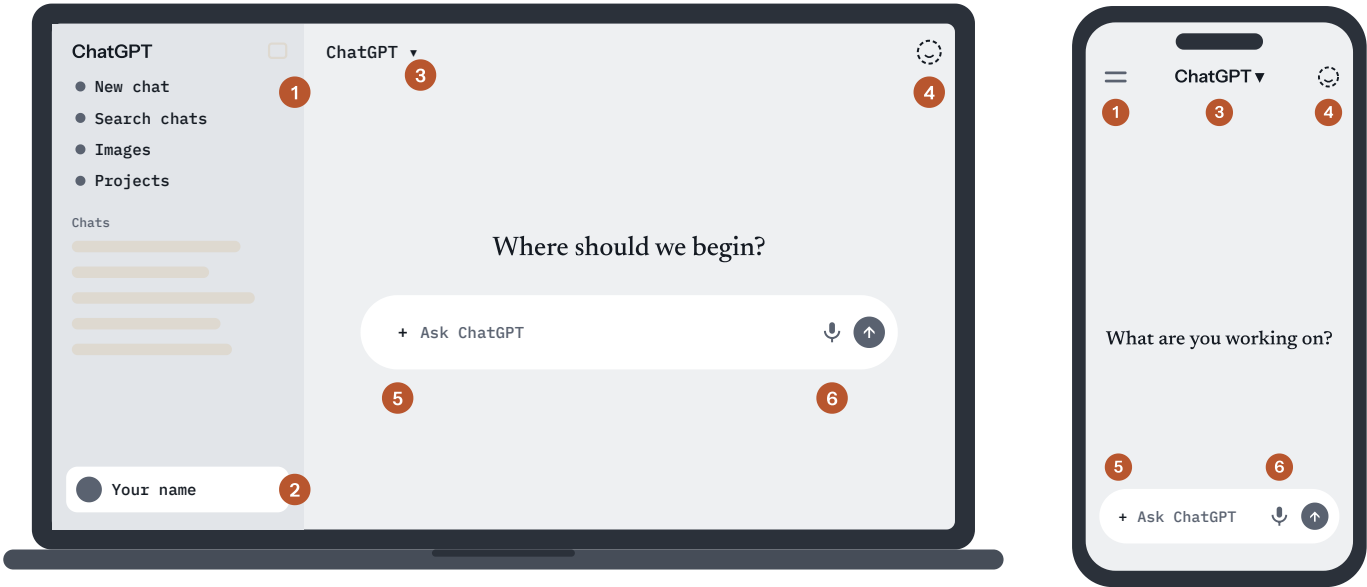
The screen, mapped

Drawn from the real screens as they looked on 12 October 2026, so positions and labels match what you will see. Buttons move between app updates, so if something has shifted, look for it by name.

DESKTOP AND WEB BROWSER

CHATGPT.COM

PHONE APP



- 1 **Sidebar.** New chat, Search chats and your past chats. On a phone, tap the menu icon (two lines) at top left.
- 2 **Your name or picture.** Opens your account menu, then choose Settings. On a phone, open the sidebar and tap your profile picture.
- 3 **Model picker.** The ChatGPT name at the top left. Free accounts use a default model; for a harder question, tap the plus button and choose Think.
- 4 **Temporary chat.** The dashed-circle icon at top right. Not saved to history, not used for training.
- 5 **Plus button.** Add a photo, file or PDF, or turn on tools such as web search.
- 6 **Microphone.** Dictate instead of typing. Very handy on a phone.

SETUP CHECKLIST

Nine steps before your *first real* question

- ☐ **01 Get the real app**

DESKTOP	Go to <code>chatgpt.com</code> . Type it yourself rather than clicking ads.	PHONE	App Store or Google Play. The publisher must read OpenAI .
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Copycat apps with similar names and icons exist and some charge fees. Check the publisher before you install.
- ☐ **02 Create your account**

BOTH Sign up with email, or with your Google, Apple or Microsoft account.

The free plan is enough to learn on. Use a personal email for personal use. For work, ask your employer first; they may already provide an approved version.

- ☐

03

Turn on two-step sign-in

DESKTOP

Your name > Settings > Security > Multi-factor authentication

PHONE

Set it up on the web at chatgpt.com. It protects your account on every device.

Choose an authenticator app or a passkey if offered. Your chats can hold personal details, so protect the account like your email.
- ☐

04

Decide whether your chats help train the model

DESKTOP

Settings > Data controls > Improve the model for everyone

PHONE

Sidebar > your profile picture > Data controls

Switch it off if you would rather your conversations are not used to improve OpenAI's models. Your chats still save to your history either way.
- ☐

05

Tell it about you, once

DESKTOP

Settings > Personalization > Custom instructions

PHONE

Sidebar > your profile picture > Personalization

Make sure **Enable customization** is on.

Add your role, your country and how you like answers. Example: *"I'm a practice manager in Australia. Use Australian English. Keep answers short and plain, with steps where useful."* It applies to every new chat.

☐

06

Check what it remembers

DESKTOP

Settings > Personalization > Memory

IN CHAT

Ask *"What do you remember about me?"* Say *"Forget that"* to remove something.

Memory makes answers more personal over time. Review it now and then, and delete anything you would not want kept. Deleting a memory does not remove it from past chats, so delete those chats too if needed.

☐

07

Know how to start a temporary chat

BOTH

Open a new chat, select **Temporary**, then choose **Personalized** or **Unpersonalized** before you send your first message. Unpersonalized ignores your memory and custom instructions.

KEYBOARD

Ctrl

Shift

N

 (Mac

Cmd

Shift

N

) in the desktop app

It stays out of your history, does not update memory and is not used for training. OpenAI may still keep a copy for up to 30 days for safety checks.

☐

08

Set your own "never paste" rule

BOTH

See the list at the end of this sheet. Remove names and numbers before you paste, or describe the situation instead.

Treat anything you type as something that could be stored. Privacy settings reduce risk; they do not remove it.

☐

09

Pick a plan only when free runs out

BOTH

Plans include Free, Go, Plus and Pro. Compare current prices at

chatgpt.com/pricing

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Free includes everyday text chats. Uploads, images, voice and other tools have tighter limits, so upgrade only if you keep hitting them. Plans bought on chatgpt.com are charged in Australian dollars. Free and Go accounts may see ads; you can turn off ad personalisation in

Settings > Ads controls

 .
- ASKING BETTER
- The three-part question
- Most weak answers come from short questions. Give it these three things and the answer improves straight away.
- | | | |
|--|--|---|
| <div>PART 1</div> <div>Who it's for</div> <div>Your role, the reader, the situation.</div> | <div>PART 2</div> <div>What you need</div> <div>The task, plus the facts it needs to do it well.</div> | <div>PART 3</div> <div>How you want it</div> <div>Length, format, tone, Australian English.</div> |
|--|--|---|
- TIPS AND TRICKS
- Nine habits that make it *far* more useful
- | | | |
|---|--|---|
| <div></div> <div><div>Let it ask you first</div><div>For anything important, end with this line.</div><div>"Ask me 3 questions before you start."</div></div> | <div></div> <div><div>Reply, don't restart</div><div>Keep shaping the same answer in the same chat.</div><div>"Shorter." "Plainer."</div><div>"Make it a table."</div></div> | <div></div> <div><div>Ask for options</div><div>Choosing between drafts is faster than fixing one.</div><div>"Give me 3 versions: formal, warm, brief."</div></div> |
| <div></div> <div><div>Show it, don't describe it</div><div>Use the plus button to add a photo, screenshot or PDF.</div></div> | <div></div> <div><div>Get current information</div><div>Ask it to search the web when facts may have changed.</div></div> | <div></div> <div><div>Check the facts</div><div>It can sound sure and still be wrong. Verify names, numbers, laws and dates.</div></div> |

"Summarise this letter in 5 dot points."

**One topic per chat**

Long mixed chats get muddled. Start fresh for a new job.

New chat:

Ctrl

Shift

0

"Search the web and give me the sources."

**Talk on the go**

On a phone, tap the voice button and speak naturally. Good for planning while walking.

"Help me plan tomorrow. I'll talk, you list."

"Which parts of this should I double-check?"

**Make it teach you**

Use it to learn, not only to produce.

"Explain it simply, then quiz me."

QUICK REFERENCE

Shortcuts and safety

From OpenAI's published shortcut list. Some shortcuts differ between the browser and the desktop app. Press

Ctrl

/

 (Mac

Cmd

/

) inside ChatGPT to see the current list for your version.

DO THIS	WINDOWS	MAC
Show all shortcuts	Ctrl /	Cmd /
New chat	Ctrl Shift 0	Cmd Shift 0
New temporary chat (desktop app)	Ctrl Shift N	Cmd Shift N
Open Settings	Ctrl ,	Cmd ,
Open the model picker	Ctrl Shift M	Ctrl Shift M
Search your chats (browser)	Ctrl K	Cmd K
Show or hide the sidebar	Ctrl Shift S	Cmd Shift S

Never paste

- Passwords, PINs or sign-in codes
- Tax file number, Medicare, licence or passport numbers
- Bank or card details
- Other people's health, legal or personal records
- Confidential work material your employer has not cleared

Good first uses

- Rewrite an email so it is clearer or kinder
- Summarise a long document or letter
- Plan a week of meals from what is in the fridge
- Explain a bill, policy or form in plain English
- Practise for a job interview

YOUR NEXT MOVE

Set up? Now see where you stand.

Take the free ApplyAI check to see how ready you are to use AI in your job, then pick a free course matched to your result.