

Gemini, set up *safely* and used well

A one-page starter for first-time users. Nine setup steps, a map of the screen on desktop and phone, a simple way to ask better questions, and the habits that make it useful alongside Gmail and Drive.

Level	Time	Works on	Last checked
Entry	about 9 min	Web • Android • iPhone • Windows and Mac app • Gmail and Docs on paid plans	12 Oct 2026

WHERE THINGS ARE

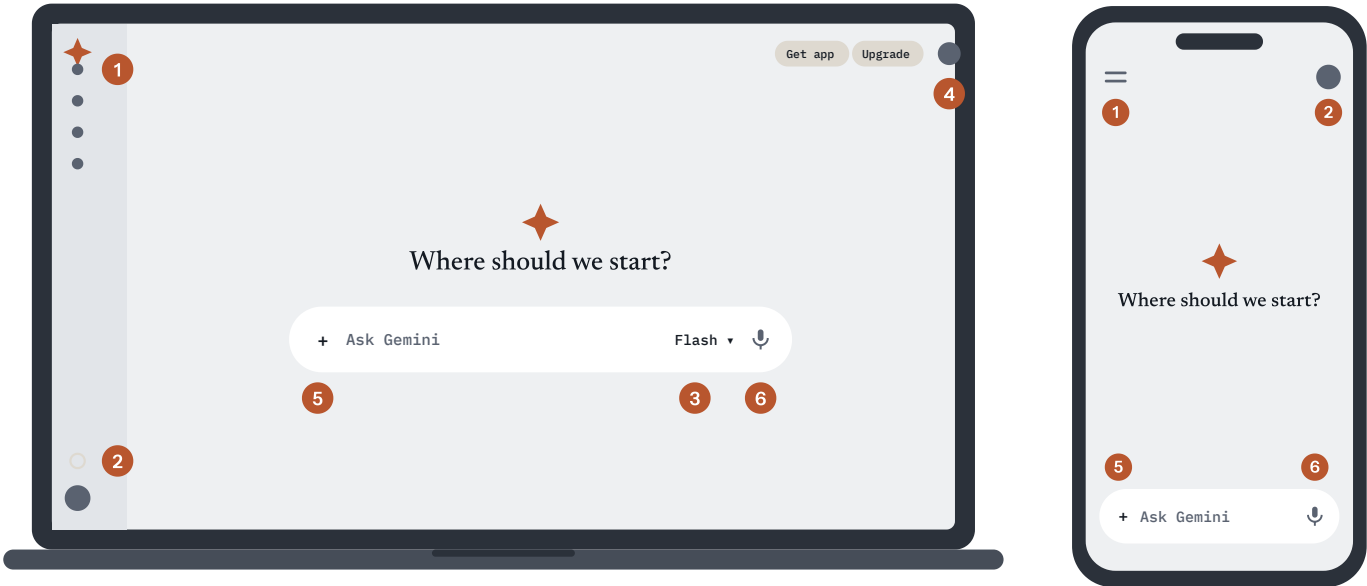
The screen, mapped

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

GEMINI.GOOGLE.COM

PHONE APP



- 1 **Left rail.** New chat, search, Gems and apps. Hover or click the rail to expand it. On a phone, tap Menu (two lines) at top left. Gems become skills on personal accounts from November 2026 and convert automatically.

4 **Profile picture.** Switch accounts, and the quickest route to your Google Account security.
- 2 **Settings & help.** The gear at the bottom of the left rail. On a phone, tap your profile picture.

5 **Add files.** Add a photo, file or Drive document, or choose Deep Research (18 or over).
- 3 **Model picker.** Inside the message box at the right: tap the model name. Leave it on the default while you learn.

6 **Microphone.** Dictate your question. On a phone, the separate **Live** button starts a spoken conversation. Live is not on the web.

SETUP CHECKLIST

Nine steps before your *first real* question

- ☐ 01 **Get the real app**

DESKTOP Go to `gemini.google.com` .

Gemini is part of your Google account, so there is no separate sign-up. If you already use Gmail, you already have access. You must be 13 or over; younger children need a parent's approval through Family Link.

PHONE Android: Google Play (Android 9 or later). iPhone: App Store. Check the publisher is **Google**.

- ☐

02 Choose which Google account to use

BOTH

Tap your profile picture to check which account is signed in before your first chat.

Chats and settings follow the account. Keep personal use on your personal Gmail. A work account may be managed by your employer, with different rules.
- ☐

03 Turn on two-step verification

BOTH

myaccount.google.com > Security & sign-in > How you sign in to Google > 2-Step Verification

Gemini is only as secure as your Google account. Two-step verification, ideally with a passkey or phone prompt, stops most account takeovers.

☐

04 Decide whether your chats are kept and reviewed

DESKTOP

Settings & help > Activity

Near the top, click **On**, then **Turn off** or **Turn off and delete activity**.

PHONE

Profile picture > Gemini Apps Activity

(on some phones, Menu first), tap **On**, then **Turn off**.

Keep Activity is on by default if you are 18 or over. With it on, a subset of chats may be read by human reviewers (disconnected from your account), and reviewed chats are kept for up to three years even if you delete your activity. With it off, chats are held for 72 hours, are not used to improve Google's AI models, and connected apps such as Gmail and Drive stop working in Gemini. If you keep it on, change auto-delete from the default 18 months to 3 months.

☐

05 Tell it about you, once

DESKTOP

Settings & help > Personal Intelligence > Instructions for Gemini > Add

Add your role, your city and how you like answers. Example: *"I run a small landscaping business in Adelaide. Use Australian English. Keep answers short."*

PHONE

Profile picture > Personal Intelligence > Instructions for Gemini

☐

06 Check what it learns from past chats

DESKTOP

Settings & help > Personal Intelligence > Memory

Memory lets Gemini draw on your earlier conversations. It works only for personal accounts aged 18 or over, and only while Keep Activity is on. Turn it off if you would rather each chat start clean.

PHONE

Profile picture > Personal Intelligence > Memory

☐

07 Know how to start a temporary chat

DESKTOP

Next to **New chat**, click **Temporary chat** before you type.

PHONE

Tap **Menu** at the top, then **Temporary chat** next to New chat.

Temporary chats are not saved to your activity, are not used to personalise Gemini and are not used to train Google's models. Google holds them for up to 72 hours, then deletes them.

☐

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

Free is generous. Paid tiers are Google AI Plus, Google AI Pro and Google AI Ultra; compare at

one.google.com/ai

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Most beginners never need to pay. Upgrade when you want the stronger models daily, higher limits or more storage across Gmail, Drive and Photos, not before.

ASKING BETTER

The three-part question

Most weak answers come from short questions. Give it these three things and the answer improves straight away.

PART 1 Who it's for Your role, the reader, the situation.	PART 2 What you need The task, plus the facts it needs to do it well.	PART 3 How you want it Length, format, tone, Australian English.
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TIPS AND TRICKS

Nine habits that make it *far* more useful

Let it ask you first For anything important, end with this line. "Ask me 3 questions before you start."	Reply, don't restart Keep shaping the same answer in the same chat. "Shorter." "Plainer." "Make it a table."	Ask for options Choosing between drafts is faster than fixing one. "Give me 3 versions: formal, warm, brief."
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Use it inside Gmail

With a paid Google AI plan, click **Ask Gemini** at the top right of Gmail to summarise a thread or draft a reply. Free personal accounts in Australia do not get this yet.

"Summarise this thread and draft a short reply."



Go deep when it matters

Deep Research reads many sources and writes a report with links. Slow, but thorough. For users 18 or over; the free plan has daily limits.

Add files > Deep Research



Check the facts

It can sound sure and still be wrong. Verify names, numbers, laws and dates.

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



One topic per chat

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

Sidebar > New chat



Talk it through

Gemini Live lets you have a spoken, back-and-forth conversation on your phone.

"Help me rehearse my presentation."



Make it teach you

Use it to learn, not only to produce.

"Explain it simply, then quiz me."

— QUICK REFERENCE

Shortcuts and safety

These common keys work in the Gemini web app. The Gemini desktop app adds its own: Alt Space on Windows, Option Space on Mac.

DO THIS	WINDOWS	MAC
Send your message	Enter	Return
New line without sending	Shift Enter	Shift Return
Paste a screenshot into the chat	Ctrl V	Cmd V

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

- Summarise a long email thread in Gmail (paid Google AI plan)
- Draft a reply in your own tone
- Plan a trip with real opening hours and maps
- Explain a bill, policy or form in plain English
- Turn a photo of handwritten notes into text

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.