

# Getting Started with Claude Cowork

## A Hands-On Workshop for Economists

Idaliya Grigoryeva

UC San Diego

April 2026

# What Is This Workshop?

- ▶ Our group recently held a **Claude Code** workshop — the *terminal-based*, developer-oriented AI tool
- ▶ This is the **approachable counterpart**: **Claude Cowork**
  - ▶ No terminal. No coding experience needed.
  - ▶ Chat-based interface that works with your files
- ▶ Today's goal: get you set up, show you what's possible, and give you time to try it

## Prerequisites

### To follow along:

- (1) Claude Desktop ([claude.ai/download](https://claude.ai/download))    (2) Claude subscription (Pro \$20/mo, [1 week free w referral link](#))

## Sample Project Files

Download the sample project to follow along during the workshop:

[Dropbox link](#)



## Workshop Recording

Watch the full workshop (UCSD Econ, Zoom, May 2026):

[Dropbox link](#)



# What Can Claude Cowork Do?

Claude Cowork is a mode in the Claude desktop app that can **interact directly with files on your computer**.

## Create files on request

- ▶ Code (Stata, Python, R,  $\text{\LaTeX}$ )
- ▶ Documents (Word, PDF, slides)
- ▶ Notes, outlines, summaries

## Work with existing projects

- ▶ Read your paper drafts, data, code
- ▶ Suggest edits, find inconsistencies
- ▶ Update tables and figures

## Run code & analyze data

- ▶ Write and execute Python scripts
- ▶ Generate summary stats, regressions
- ▶ Create plots and export tables

## Research tasks

- ▶ Search for papers and summarize
- ▶ Draft literature reviews
- ▶ Explore new topics

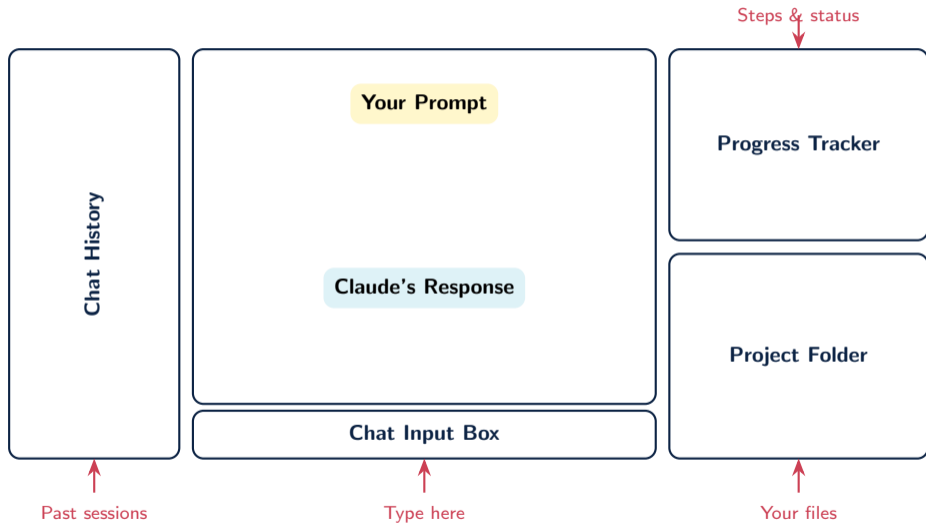
# Three Ways to Use Claude Desktop — At a Glance

All three live in the **same Claude Desktop app** — just different tabs.

	Cowork	Code tab (GUI)	Code (Terminal)
Interface	Chat + file panel	Chat + Diff viewer	Command line
File access	Yes	Yes	Yes
Run code	Python	Python + Stata + R...	Any
Review changes?	No (in background)	You review diffs	You review diffs
Skills auto-set?	Yes	Yes	No
Connectors (Gmail, Calendar)	Yes	No	No?
Best for	Project flow + Web Search + Writing	Coding with review	Power users
Learning curve	Low	Low-Medium	High
Reference slides	Most slides	1 later slide	NA (not here)

**Today's focus: Cowork** (We'll revisit the GUI Code tab briefly with a detailed task-by-task comparison)

# The Cowork Interface — A Quick Tour



# Sample Screen

**Your request (referencing local files)**

Refer to the project on urban to rural spillovers and specifically the most updated version in `/urban_rural_spillovers/urban_rural_spillovers_shared/draft/2026_04_18_draft_v10_assets.pdf` and the most recent (even though somewhat outdated in specification and some of the results paper draft in `urban_rural_spillovers/urban_rural_spillovers_shared/draft/2026_02_24_india_rural_spillovers_draft.pdf`)

- 1) Make an outline of the main narrative in bullet points for a 5-min elevator

**Detailed progress report**

Used 6 tools, read 2 files, loaded tools >

Let me continue reading the remaining pages of the v10 assets PDF to capture the appendix content.

Read 3 files >

I now have a thorough understanding of both documents. Let me check the target directory exists and then create the file.

Used 2 tools, ran a command >

Now let me write the complete document with all three components.

Used 5 tools, loaded tools, created a file >

All three deliverables are in your file:

[View the notes/outline document](#)

Here's what's inside, in order:

1. **Wish-list** (14 high-priority + 4 nice-to-have new exhibits) — welfare back-of-envelope, wage/earnings evidence, commuting vs. migration decomposition, night-lights validation, firm entry vs. expansion, I-O linkage tests, event-study figures, halo map, model-vs-data overlay, pre-trends/placebo checks, and more

**Folders & files**

- urban\_rural\_spillovers
- Instructions - CLAUDE.md
- 2026\_02\_24\_india\_rural\_spillover...
- 2026\_04\_18\_draft\_v10\_assets.pdf
- 2026\_04\_18\_notes\_outline\_slide...
- Scratchpad

**Progress**

- 1 Read both PDF drafts
- 2 Create 5-min elevator pitch outline
- 3 Create detailed slide deck outline
- 4 Add wish-list of figures/tables
- 5 Save final .md file to specified path
- 6 Update elevator pitch to match v10 results
- 7 Update slide deck to match v10 results
- 8 Verify updated file against v10 numbers

**Context**

Track tools and referenced files used in this task.

**Familiar chat box**

Reply...

+ Ask

Opus 4.6

Claude is AI and can make mistakes. Please double-check responses.

## Step 1: Select a Folder

1. Open Claude Desktop → switch to **Cowork** mode (top-left toggle)
2. Click the **folder icon** or drag a folder into the chat
3. This gives Cowork access to read and create files in that folder

### Pro tip: Overleaf + Dropbox sync

If you use Overleaf, you can **sync your projects to Dropbox** (or GitHub). Then the  $\text{\LaTeX}$  files live on your computer and Cowork can work with them directly.

**Setup:** Overleaf → your project → Menu → Sync → Dropbox

### Try it now!

Open Cowork and select the `sample_project/` folder you downloaded.  
Then type: *“Read the CLAUDE.md file and tell me what this project is about.”*

A CLAUDE.md file is a plain-text file in your project folder that **tells Claude how to behave**.

## Example CLAUDE.md instructions

```
# Project Instructions for Claude

## Rules

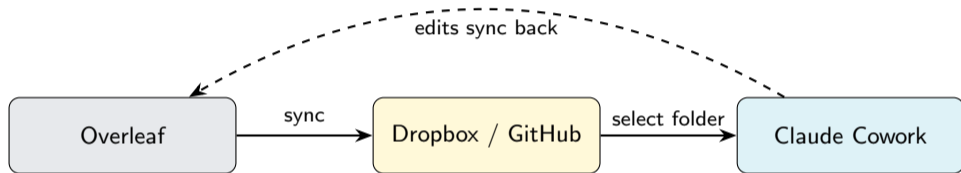
1. Never delete files. Move outdated files to _archive_claude/
2. Ask clarifying questions | even if I don't prompt you to
3. Date-prefix all notes: YYYY_MM_DD_description.md
4. Read before writing | check existing files first
5. Verify numbers | cross-check coefficients against data

## Project context

This project studies urban-rural spillovers using village panel data...
```

CLAUDE.md is optional but dramatically improves results for ongoing projects.

## The workflow:



- ▶ Overleaf syncs your  $\text{\LaTeX}$  files to Dropbox (or GitHub)
- ▶ Select that folder in Cowork → Claude can read and edit your `.tex` files
- ▶ Changes sync back to Overleaf automatically

# Demo: Read a Draft and Create an Outline

## Prompt to try

Read my paper draft in `draft/main.tex` and create an outline of the current structure. Note which sections have TODOs that still need to be written.

What Claude does:

- ▶ Reads the `.tex` file
- ▶ Identifies sections, subsections, equations
- ▶ Lists the TODOs and suggests what to work on next
- ▶ Saves the outline as a dated `.md` file

## Try it yourself

Select the `sample_project/` folder and try this prompt!

### Prompt to try

Read the abstract and data section of my draft. Then write a first draft of the Introduction. It should motivate the research question, preview the findings, and state the contribution. Follow the LaTeX formatting in the existing draft.

**Key point:** Claude reads the full project context — the data, the code, the existing draft — and writes something that's consistent with all of it.

### Follow-up prompt

Good start, but make the motivation stronger. Emphasize that 70% of villages in developing countries are within 20km of a city, so urban-rural linkages affect the majority of the rural population.

→ Iterate via conversation, just like with a co-author.

### Prompt to try

```
Read the dataset in data/village_panel.csv. Create a summary statistics table in LaTeX format using booktabs. Include: ln_pop, ln_emp, services_share, urban_exposure, dist_to_city_km. Report mean, SD, min, max. Save to tables/tab1_summary_stats.tex
```

Claude will:

- ▶ Load the CSV in Python
- ▶ Compute the statistics
- ▶ Format as a proper  $\text{\LaTeX}$  booktabs table
- ▶ Save the .tex file to your tables/ folder
- ▶ You can `\input{}` it in your draft immediately

## Prompt ideas — copy any of these!

Read my draft and check: are all the table/figure references valid? Do any `\ref{}` or `\label{}` commands point to undefined targets?

---

Read my paper and suggest 3 things that would strengthen the empirical strategy section.

---

Create a one-page extended abstract of this paper in a new `.tex` file. Use the same preamble and formatting.

---

I need to present this paper in 15 minutes. Create a Beamer slide outline with the key results.

### Even if you're not a strong coder:

Describe what you want in plain English → Cowork writes the code → you iterate.

#### Cowork can:

- ▶ Write Stata, Python, R, Julia code
- ▶ Run Python scripts in its sandbox
- ▶ Read and explain existing code
- ▶ Debug errors you paste in
- ▶ Generate figures and tables

#### Useful for:

- ▶ Summary statistics
- ▶ Regressions and robustness checks
- ▶ Data cleaning and merging
- ▶ Plotting (matplotlib, ggplot)
- ▶ Converting between languages

### Prompt to try

```
Read the dataset in data/village_panel.csv. Give me a summary: How many villages? How many periods? What are the key variables? Are there any missing values or outliers I should worry about?
```

### Follow-up

```
Create a figure with two panels: (1) histogram of dist_to_city_km, (2) scatter of ln_emp vs urban_exposure for 2010 only. Save to figures/.
```

Claude writes the Python, runs it, and saves the output — all in one step.

## Prompt to try

Using the village panel data, run the following regressions and present results in a clean table:

- (1) OLS: `ln_emp` on `urban_exposure`
- (2) Add district FE
- (3) Add district FE + year FE
- (4) Same as (3) but for `ln_pop` as the outcome

Cluster standard errors at the district level. Export as LaTeX.

## Follow-up: robustness

Now add a robustness check: drop all villages within 5km of a city and re-run specification (3). Does the coefficient change much?

## Prompt to try

```
Read the Stata do-file in code/analysis.do. Translate it to Python using pandas and statsmodels. Keep the same structure and comments. Save as code/analysis_from_stata.py
```

## Also works for:

- ▶ Stata → R
- ▶ R → Python
- ▶ MATLAB → Python
- ▶ “I have this SAS code from the 1990s...”

## Try it yourself

Pick any prompt from this section and run it with the sample project!

## Demo 3: Research & Literature Exploration

Cowork can search the web and create structured research notes — useful for:

- ▶ Getting oriented on a new topic before a deep dive
- ▶ Preparing for a seminar discussion
- ▶ Drafting a literature review section
- ▶ Finding recent papers you might have missed

### Prompt to try

```
Search for recent papers (2020--2026) on urban-rural linkages and spatial spillovers in developing countries. Summarize the top 5 most relevant findings. Save as a notes file with today's date.
```

### Prompt to try

Based on the literature you found, draft a ‘‘Related Literature’’ paragraph for my paper. Position my contribution relative to these papers. Follow the citation style in my existing draft.

### Another useful prompt

What are the main identification concerns with using distance-decay-weighted urban growth as a treatment variable? Create a notes file listing the issues and how other papers have addressed them. I want to use this to strengthen my empirical strategy section.

### Important caveat

Always verify citations and claims independently. Claude can hallucinate paper titles or misattribute findings. Use this as a *starting point*, not a final product.

## Pick one of these and try it on your own machine:

### Option A: Explore the sample project

Read all the files in this project and tell me: what's the next step I should work on?  
Prioritize the most impactful task.

### Option B: Create something new

Create a new figure showing the heterogeneity story: plot the employment effect separately for high vs. low baseline-services villages. Save it to figures/.

### Option C: Use your own project

Select a folder with one of *your* projects and try:  
“Read my files and give me a summary of this project. What are the key files and what stage is the project at?”

## 1. Use **CLAUDE.md**

- ▶ Give Claude project context
- ▶ Set rules (no deletion, naming)
- ▶ List key variables and files

## 2. Be specific

- ▶ Name the files you want it to read
- ▶ Specify the format you want
- ▶ Give examples when possible

## 3. Iterate

- ▶ First draft → refine → polish
- ▶ Treat it like a conversation
- ▶ “Good, but change X and Y”

## 4. Verify everything

- ▶ Cross-check numbers
- ▶ Ask Claude to git it for you
- ▶ Verify citations exist
- ▶ Review code before running in production

## FAQ: Do I Need to Install “Skills” Separately?

**No.** Skills are built into Cowork and activate automatically.

When you ask Cowork to create a specific file type, it automatically uses the right skill:

<b>You say...</b>	<b>Cowork uses...</b>
“Create a Word document”	docx skill
“Make a PowerPoint”	pptx skill
“Generate a spreadsheet”	xlsx skill
“Create a PDF”	pdf skill
“Write a $\LaTeX$ table”	Built-in $\LaTeX$ support

You can also install additional plugins (e.g., Gmail, Google Calendar) from the Cowork interface — but that’s a topic for another workshop!

# When to Use Which?

All three are tabs in the **same app**. Pick by task:

Task	Cowork GUI	Code tab (GUI)	Code (Terminal)
Draft a paper section	✓		
Create slides, docs, PDFs	✓		
Literature search & notes	✓		
Explore a dataset	✓	✓	✓
Write Stata / Python / R	✓	✓	✓
Run Stata in background		✓	✓
Review diffs before applying		✓	✓
Scheduled / background tasks	✓		
Connectors (Gmail, Calendar)	✓		(?) MCP servers
Run a large data pipeline		✓	✓
Git workflow & version control	✓ (partially)	✓	✓
Build a web app or package		✓	✓

## Rule of thumb:

Writing, research, documents → **Cowork**

Code with review → **Code GUI**

Power users → **Terminal**

# The Code Tab: A Closer Look

Indonesia / Analyze city size distribution and urban-rural gaps -

create\_policy\_exposure\_0g018\_0c-001472 admin@stata

So the original construction was already admin-clean on the shock side. The new `TMShare_indiv = I transmigrants placed / I rural keca pop_1980` adds an admin-numerator variant that matches §7 of the reframing memo more literally ("Population in transmigration villages" → count of transmigrants).

Diagnostic re-run, both numerators

Outcome	$\beta$ (A1 placebo, 50km)	$\beta$ (A2 MAIN, 50km)	sign-flip	R <sup>2</sup> (MAIN)
TMShare keca-pop num	+1.23	-1.93	yes	0.006
TMShare INDIV admin num	+4.80	-16.20	yes	0.005

Same qualitative pattern with both numerators: A1 mildly positive, A2 negative, both insignificant,  $R^2 \leq 1\%$ . Decision-rule conclusion unchanged: TMShare is not mechanically downstream of the shock, regardless of numerator. The admin-based version is the cleaner one to use going forward.

Substantive finding from the construction worth flagging for the paper: in some UCs, transmigrants placed exceed 1980 rural pop by up to 17\* — TMVs were the rural population in many sparsely settled outer-island kecas, not a marginal addition.

Updates

- brief: added §7 row #8b documenting the admin-vs-raster preference, applies to all future workstreams.
- memo: added data-source audit table + the `TMShare_indiv` robustness section.
- ✓ `transmigrant_urbanization/code/b/make_TMShare_variants.do`: now builds both numerators in one pass.
- ✓ `transmigrant_urbanization/code/a/diag_TMShare_tuning.do`: runs parallel diagnostics on both outcomes; saves coefplots/binscatters for both.

10m ago

Can you run the do files and look at the results? Instead of having me do it?

Sorry — I ran the do-files and summarized the regression numbers from the logs, but I haven't opened the PDF figures. Doing that now.

Read 2 files >

OK the coefplots show the story clearly:

- Keca-pop (50km): A1 CI [-0.1, +2.5] — barely touches zero. A2/A3 CIs very wide [-5.5, +1.8], include zero comfortably. A2 ≠ A3 (identical, as expected — Bazzi closed by 1990).
- INDIV admin num (50km): A1 CI [+0.1, +9.5] — barely separated from zero, marginally significant ( $\beta/SE = 2.0$ ). A2/A3 CIs huge [-60, +27], totally not significant. Same A2 ≠ A3 collapse.

The INDIV version actually makes the A1 placebo concern more visible. Let me check the binscatters (which show the actual scatter pattern, not just the coefficient) and the 100km coefplots:

Read 2 files >

Now I can actually see what's going on. Three substantive observations from the binscatters that I couldn't see from the regression coefficients alone:

1. A2 and A3 are literally identical lines — the red 1990-vintage line is completely hidden behind the green 2000-vintage line. Confirms visually what the numbers showed: Bazzi PDA roster is closed by 1990 (no TMVs added 1990-2000).
2. The negative  $\beta$ (A2) is a 3-outlier artifact, not a real signal. Look at the green 2000- tag line:

Type / for commands

Relaunch to update v1.860.2

The **Code tab** is a coding-focused interface in the same Claude Desktop app:

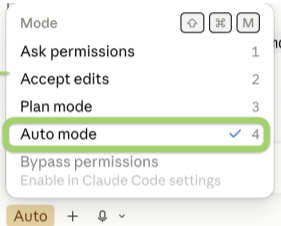
- ▶ **Integrated terminal** — run Stata, Python, git directly
- ▶ **Diff review** — see exactly what Claude changed before accepting
- ▶ **Runs code locally automatically** (not a sandbox) — incl STATA

## When to use it

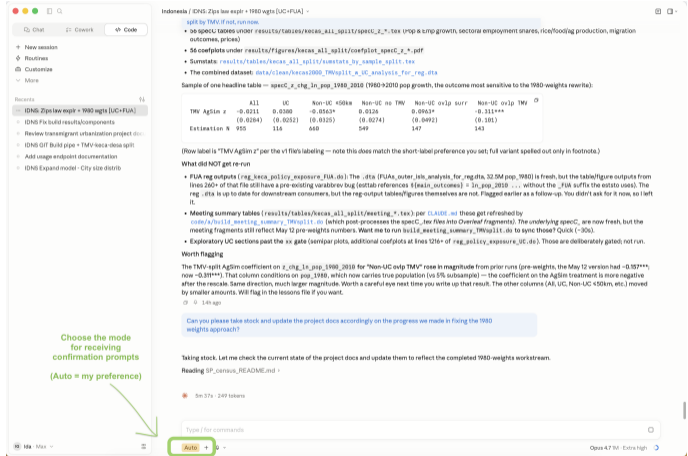
Run Stata do-files, review code changes line-by-line  $\implies$  the Code tab

# Code Tab: Choosing a Mode

The Code tab lets you pick how much autonomy Claude gets. Click the mode button (bottom-left) to switch:



- 1 **Ask** — confirms every action
- 2 **Accept edits** — auto-accepts file changes, asks for commands
- 3 **Plan** — thinks out loud, doesn't act
- 4 **Auto** — runs everything without asking



**Personal recommendation – Auto mode:** lets Claude work uninterrupted, smoother in practice

## Get started

- ▶ Download Claude Desktop:  
<https://claude.ai/download>

## Workshop materials

- ▶ Sample project files (shared via [Dropbox/Drive])
- ▶ This slide deck (Overleaf link in the chat)
- ▶ All sample prompts are in the materials guide

## Overleaf sync

- ▶ Dropbox sync:  
[https://www.overleaf.com/learn/how-to/Dropbox\\_Synchronization](https://www.overleaf.com/learn/how-to/Dropbox_Synchronization)

## Download Ida Gri's Sample Project



## Download Claude Desktop



## Workshop Slides

Download this slide deck (PDF):

[Dropbox link](#)

Or scan the QR code →



## Workshop Recording

Watch the full workshop (UCSD Econ, Zoom, May 2026):

[Dropbox link](#)

Caveat: Claude wasn't fully cooperating during the live demo — best for setup & workflow, not live output.



## Sample Project Files

Download the sample project to follow along:

[Dropbox link](#)



# Q & A

Questions? Ideas? Things you want to try?

[idalija.gri@gmail.com](mailto:idalija.gri@gmail.com)