

Skills Cheat Sheet

How Skills Actually Work — your quick reference

What a Skill Is

A Skill is a folder with one file in it — SKILL.md. Inside: a name, a short description, and instructions written in plain English. No code required. Claude (and other supporting tools) reads every skill's description automatically and uses the right one when what you type matches it — you never have to call it by name.

The Anatomy of SKILL.md

NAME	A short, unique label for the skill.
DESCRIPTION	One line that tells Claude when to use it. This is the part that actually does the work — see the mistake section below.
INSTRUCTIONS	Plain-English steps for how to do the task, written the way you'd explain it to a new hire.

Build One in 5 Minutes

1. Settings → Capabilities → Skills → Add → Create with Claude.
2. Describe the workflow in plain English — what it should do, and how the output should look.
3. Review the generated name and description. This is the step people skip — don't.
4. Save it.
5. Start a brand-new chat and just do the task. Don't mention the skill — if the description is good, it fires on its own.

Writing a Description That Actually Fires

DO	DON'T
“Turns meeting notes into Decisions, Action Items, and Open Questions.”	“Handles my notes.”
Name the input and the exact output shape.	Leave Claude guessing what “notes” or “handles” means.

THE #1 MISTAKE

A vague description is the single most common reason a skill doesn't fire. If your skill isn't triggering when you expect it to, rewrite the description first — before touching anything else.

Works beyond Claude. As of December 2025, the SKILL.md format is an open standard — the same file works across Claude, GitHub Copilot, Cursor, and a growing list of other tools. This space moves fast — if you're reading this a while after it was made, DM me and I'll send the current list.