

Claude.ai Conversation

Topic: CLAUDE.md, AGENTS.md, Memory.md, and the Memory System — February 24, 2026

Jim

what are claude.md and agents.md

Claude

Both are special markdown files used to configure and guide Claude's behavior in agentic/coding contexts. CLAUDE.md is a configuration file recognized by Claude Code (the CLI tool). When you run Claude Code in a project directory, it automatically reads CLAUDE.md to understand: project-specific context (what the project is, how it's structured), build/test/run commands, coding conventions and style guidelines, important architectural notes, and things Claude should or shouldn't do in that codebase. It's essentially a persistent system prompt scoped to your project. You can have them at the repo root, in subdirectories, or in ~/.claude/CLAUDE.md for global user-level preferences. AGENTS.md serves a similar purpose but is associated with OpenAI's Codex CLI and other agentic tools that look for it. Some tools in the ecosystem treat AGENTS.md as their equivalent of CLAUDE.md — a markdown file that provides instructions to an AI agent operating in that codebase. The broader pattern is that both files represent an emerging convention where you commit AI instructions directly into your repository, so any developer (or CI system) using an AI coding tool gets consistent, project-aware behavior automatically. In practice, if you're using Claude Code, CLAUDE.md is the one to focus on.

Jim

does # Project My Rust Library provide project specific commands and if this is omitted the claude.md contents apply to all projects?

Claude

The '# Project: My Rust Library' line in the example was just a heading for human readability — it doesn't actually scope the file to a specific project. Claude Code doesn't parse that heading as a selector or filter. How scoping actually works is by file location: - ~/.claude/CLAUDE.md — global, applies to all projects - /your/repo/CLAUDE.md — applies only when Claude Code runs within that repo - /your/repo/subdir/CLAUDE.md — applies when working within that subdirectory Claude Code reads them hierarchically — global first, then the repo-level one, then any subdirectory ones — and they all stack together. So the location of the file is what provides the scoping, not any content within it.

Jim

is Memory.md a special file

Claude

Not in the same way. Memory.md is not a formally recognized special file by Claude Code or other major agentic tools the way CLAUDE.md is. However, you'll see it used in a few informal contexts: some people create a Memory.md in their repo as a convention they've established themselves, then reference it in their CLAUDE.md (e.g., "read Memory.md for project history and decisions"); some custom AI agent frameworks or personal workflows use it as a place to store persistent context or notes that get fed to the AI; and there are various community-built agent setups that adopt it as a pattern. So it's more of an informal/community convention than an officially recognized file. If you want Claude Code to use it, you'd explicitly tell it to in your CLAUDE.md.

Jim

Does claude.ai read the global claude.md file on startup

Claude

No. CLAUDE.md is specific to Claude Code (the CLI tool). Claude.ai (the web/mobile chat interface) doesn't read any files from your filesystem at all — it has no access to your local machine. The distinction: Claude Code runs locally in your terminal, can read your filesystem, and picks up CLAUDE.md files automatically. Claude.ai is web/app based and only knows what you paste or upload into the conversation. If you want persistent context in Claude.ai, your options are the memory system (what Claude uses to remember things about you across conversations) or pasting relevant content directly into the chat.

Jim

tell me more about the memory system

Claude

Claude.ai's memory system works in a few ways: Auto-generated memories: As you chat, Claude.ai periodically analyzes conversations in the background and extracts notable facts — your job, tech stack, preferences, ongoing projects, etc. — and stores them. This is how Claude already knows things like you work at Syracuse University, develop in C++/Python/Rust/C#, use Windows 11 with PowerShell, and so on. You don't have to do anything for this to happen. You can explicitly ask Claude to remember things: Just say "remember that I prefer X" or "forget about Y" and Claude will use a tool to add/update/remove memory entries directly. You can view and manage memories: In Claude.ai settings there's a Memory section where you can see all stored memories and delete any you don't want. Scope: Memories are tied to your account, not a specific conversation. They apply across all your chats outside of Projects. Conversations inside a Project have their own separate context and don't draw from the general memory pool. Limitations: Memories update periodically in the background so very recent conversations may not be reflected yet; it's not a perfect transcript but more like extracted key facts; and incognito conversations don't generate memories.

Jim

yes

Claude

There are no manually added memory edits (things explicitly requested to remember/forget). The memories Claude has been drawing on — your role at Syracuse University, your languages (C++, Python, Rust, C#), Windows 11/PowerShell preference, your work on educational repositories, AI tools exploration, etc. — all come from the auto-generated memory that Claude.ai builds from past conversations. To see or manage those auto-generated memories yourself, go to Claude.ai Settings > Memory. You'll see the full list there and can delete anything you don't want retained.

Jim

save this conversation including my prompts as a pdf file and download