Module 00

What Is OpenClaw?

🦞 The Complete Beginner's Course

🧭 Navigation Chart

By the end of this module, you will be able to:

1. **Explain** what OpenClaw is in one sentence

2. **Describe** how it differs from ChatGPT, Claude, and other AI chatbots

3. **Explain** the "Gateway" concept in plain English

4. **List** the five core capabilities that make OpenClaw unique

5. **Understand** why this is exciting — and why it requires caution

📜 Ship's Logbook (Part 1)

Term	Definition
OpenClaw	Open-source AI personal assistant that runs on your own hardware
Gateway	The central process coordinating messages, AI models, and actions
LLM	Large Language Model — the AI "brain" (Claude, ChatGPT, Gemini)
Open Source	Software whose code is publicly available for anyone to use
API Key	A secret password letting software connect to an AI service

📜 Ship's Logbook (Part 2)

Term	Definition
Persistent Memory	Remembering information across ALL conversations, permanently
Shell Access	Running commands on your computer's terminal
Daemon	A program running continuously in the background (pronounced "dee-mon")
Proactive	Acting on its own, without waiting for you to ask
Skill	Instructions that teach your agent how to use a tool or do a task

The Problem

What life looks like **without** OpenClaw:

- You pay for ChatGPT, Claude, maybe Gemini

- Every task = new tab, new conversation

- The AI **forgets everything** you told it yesterday

- Messages scattered across WhatsApp, Telegram, Slack, email

- Want AI to DO something? Copy-paste across a dozen apps

*The intelligence exists. The tools exist. But the **infrastructure** to make it useful in your daily life — that's been missing.*

What OpenClaw Is — One Sentence

> *OpenClaw is an open-source AI personal assistant that runs on your own computer, lives inside the messaging apps you already use, remembers everything across all conversations, and can take real actions on your behalf — 24/7.*

Let's break that down, piece by piece...

Breaking It Down

"Open-source" 🦞

- Code is **free and public** on GitHub — created by **Peter Steinberger**

- You're not locked into anyone's platform — you can see exactly what it does

- Only cost = the AI model API you choose

"Runs on your own computer"

- Your laptop, desktop, Mac Mini — whatever you have

- Your data **stays with you** — full control over what the AI can do

- Runs 24/7 as long as your computer is on

Breaking It Down (continued)

"Lives inside your messaging apps"

- **You don't go to OpenClaw. OpenClaw comes to you.**

- Telegram, WhatsApp, Discord, Slack, iMessage, Signal, Teams

- Text it from your phone at the grocery store — no new app needed

"Remembers everything" 🪸

- Every conversation, preference, detail — stored locally

- Gets **smarter and more personalized** over time

- Never starts from scratch — unlike ChatGPT or Claude web

Breaking It Down (continued)

"Takes real actions" 🐚

This is what separates OpenClaw from every chatbot you've ever used:

- **Execute commands** — run shell commands, install software, manage files

- **Browse the web** — search, read pages, interact with websites

- **Send messages** — reply on Telegram, email, any connected platform

- **Run scheduled tasks** — morning briefings, monitoring, automations

Anything a human can do at your computer, your agent can do too.

How OpenClaw Differs

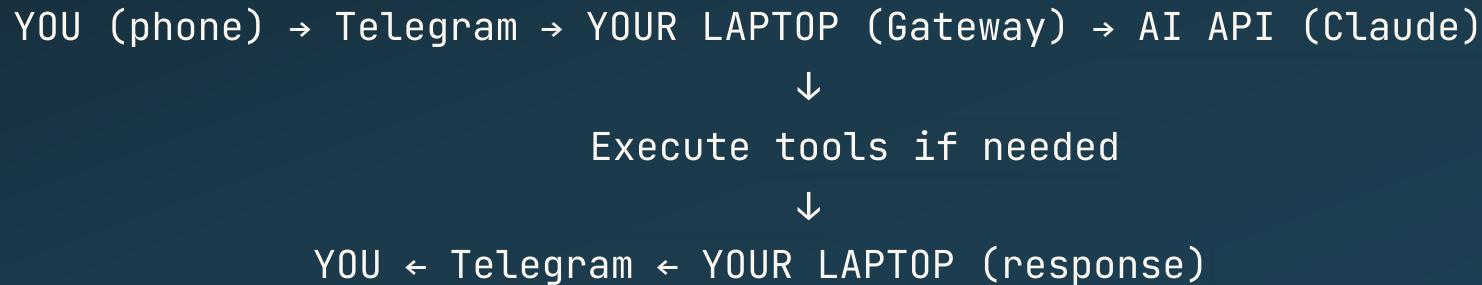| Feature	ChatGPT / Claude Web	OpenClaw
Where it runs	Someone else's servers	**YOUR computer**
How you access it	Website	**Telegram, WhatsApp, etc.**
Memory	Limited, unreliable	**Persistent, permanent**
Can take actions?	No (just talks)	**Yes (shell, browser, APIs)**
Proactive?	No	**Yes**
Runs 24/7?	Only with tab open	**Yes, as a daemon**
Cost	$20-200/month subscription	**Free + API costs**
Data ownership	Company owns it	**You own everything**

OpenClaw vs. Claude Code

Two different tools for two different jobs:

	Claude Code	OpenClaw
Type	Coding agent	Life agent
Interface	Terminal	Messaging apps
Focus	Your codebase	Your entire life
Audience	Developers	Everyone

*Claude Code handles your **codebase**. OpenClaw handles your **life**. They're complementary.*

Fun fact: You can install Claude Code as a *skill* inside OpenClaw! 🐠

The Gateway — How It All Works ⛵

```
YOU (phone) → Telegram → YOUR LAPTOP (Gateway) → AI API (Claude)
                                  ↓
                        Execute tools if needed
                                  ↓
            YOU ← Telegram ← YOUR LAPTOP (response)
```

The **Gateway** is the central brain:

1. **Receives messages** from connected apps

2. **Sends them to an AI model** for processing

3. **Sends the response back** to the originating app

That's it. Message in → AI processes → Response out.

What Stays Local vs. What Leaves

Stays on your computer (never leaves)

- All your files, data, conversation history, and memory

- Configuration, preferences, and tool execution

Leaves your computer 🌊

- Message text sent to AI provider API for processing

- Web searches and platform messages (Telegram/WhatsApp traffic)

- Provider usage tracking and ClawHub telemetry during skill sync

- Remote embeddings for memory search (cloud providers only)

"Local-first" does NOT mean "offline." Outbound calls happen. Control these paths in Module 10.

The Five Core Capabilities

#	Capability	What It Means
1	**Persistent Memory** 🪸	Remembers everything, forever, across ALL conversations
2	**Proactive Automation**	Morning briefings, monitoring, tasks — acts without being asked
3	**Multi-Platform Messaging**	One agent, every platform: Telegram, WhatsApp, Discord, Slack
4	**Full Computer Access** 🐚	Shell, file system, browser, APIs — anything a human can do
5	**Self-Improving** 🐠	Open source, modifiable, 5,700+ community skills on ClawHub

Beyond Text: Canvas, Voice, and Agents 🐙

Live Canvas (A2UI)

Agent pushes interactive UI — dashboards, charts, forms — directly to your device.

Voice Wake + Talk Mode

Always-on speech via ElevenLabs for macOS/iOS/Android — talk naturally, hear responses.

Agent-to-Agent Communication (Pinchboard)

Agents communicate through Pinchboard — a Twitter-like system for AI agents. Enables multi-agent coordination without human routing.

All three features are optional — covered in Module 09.

Brief History

Name	Period	Notes
Clawdbot	Early development	Original name (claw, not Claude)
MoltBot	Brief transition	Molting = lobster shedding its shell
OpenClaw	Current (2026+)	Open source + Claw. Logo is a lobster. 🦞

Created by **Peter Steinberger**. Community = "Friends of the Crustacean." 🦀

If you see "Clawdbot" or "MoltBot" online — they mean OpenClaw.

Real-World Use Cases

Category	Examples
Personal Assistant	Morning briefings, calendar management, email triage
Second Brain	Persistent knowledge base via WhatsApp
Health & Fitness	Whoop tracker integration, insurance reimbursements
Business	Twitter monitoring, newsletters, lead generation
Development	Vibe-coding apps, mission control dashboards
Smart Home	Tesla control, smart devices, restaurant bookings
One-Week Results	One user: 3 products + 4 autonomous agents in 7 days (~$600)

Limited only by your imagination and how much access you give it.

The Right Mindset

1. **Think employee, not tool** — Give goals, not step-by-step instructions

2. **Don't touch config files** — Tell your agent in plain English what to change

3. **Use reverse prompting** — Ask "What should we work on?" instead of always commanding

4. **Every hour invested compounds forever** — Unlike ChatGPT, improvements are permanent

5. **Security is NOT optional** — Your agent has admin access. Treat that seriously.

🚩 Shoals and Sandbars

Myth	Reality
"I need a Mac Mini"	Any computer with Node.js works
"I should use a VPS"	Local is better for beginners
"It's complicated to install"	One command + setup wizard
"I need to code"	You talk in plain English
"It's free"	OpenClaw is free. AI API costs $20-200/month
"It's totally safe"	It has shell access. Read Module 01.

⚙ Hands on Deck (10 minutes)

Write down your answers — you'll use them in Module 04:

1. **What's your name and what do you do?**

2. **Why are you interested in OpenClaw?**

3. **What 3 things do you wish AI could do automatically?**

4. **What are you nervous about?**

5. **What are your goals for the next 6 months?**

These answers become your "brain dump" — how you introduce yourself to your agent.

💎 Treasure Chest

- OpenClaw = open-source AI assistant on **YOUR** hardware

- The **Gateway** coordinates messages, AI, and actions

- It can do **anything a human can do** at your computer

- No Mac Mini, VPS, or coding experience needed

- **Security is critical** — covered in Module 01

- Think **employee**, not tool. Give goals, not instructions.

- Every improvement **compounds forever**

Next Port of Call

Module 01: Understanding the Risks

Read Module 01 before you install anything. This is not optional.