

Getting Started with an API: (FAQ)

Version 1.0 | September 2025 | Prepared by Tiffany Smith

[Maintained by IT Security Team]

General

What is an API?

- A set of rules that lets software exchange data.
- Commonly used to connect apps or services.

What is a REST API?

- A type of API that uses HTTP methods (GET, POST, PUT, DELETE).
- Most widely used today.

Authentication & Security

Why do I need an API key/token?

- Identifies you to the API.
- Prevents misuse and tracks usage.

How do I keep my key safe?

- Store in environment variables or config files.
- Never share or commit to GitHub.

Usage & Limits

What is a rate limit?

- A cap on how many requests you can send in a set time.

What does a 429 error mean?

- You've hit the rate limit.
- Reduce request frequency or add retry logic.

Errors & Troubleshooting

What do common status codes mean?

- **200:** OK
- **400:** Bad Request - check syntax/parameters
- **401:** Unauthorized - bad key/token
- **404:** Not Found - wrong endpoint
- **500:** Server Error

How do I know if it's my issue or the API's?

- Check the API status page.
- Confirm your request format and authentication.

Further Learning

Where can I learn more about APIs?

- Official documentation for the API you're using
- [Postman tutorials](#) (great for hands-on practice)
- [FreeCodeCamp's API tutorials](#)

Glossary

- **API (Application Programming Interface):** Rules for software interaction.
- **REST (Representational State Transfer):** Style of API using HTTP.
- **Endpoint:** Specific URL where API requests are sent.
- **Auth token/API key:** Identifier proving who you are.
- **Rate limit:** Max number of requests allowed per time frame.