

SuperWhisper Modes Explained

How to configure SuperWhisper to adapt to different tasks automatically

12-minute read

Quick Reference

Why This Matters

You don't write emails the same way you write code. You don't take meeting notes the same way you draft reports. **Modes** let SuperWhisper adapt to what you're doing—so you can dictate naturally and get the right output format every time. This guide shows you how to make that happen.

What Are Modes, Exactly?

Think of modes as **profiles** for different tasks. Each mode can have its own settings for:

- **AI instructions** — How should SuperWhisper transform your speech?
- **Context settings** — What information should the AI see?
- **Output formatting** — Bullet points? Paragraphs? Code comments?
- **Auto-activation rules** — When should this mode turn on automatically?

□ Think of It Like This

Modes are like having multiple assistants who each specialize in something different. Your "email assistant" knows to be professional and concise. Your "notes assistant" organizes things into bullets. Your "code assistant" knows to format output as comments. You don't train them on the fly—you set them up once, and they're ready whenever you need them.

The Three Built-In Modes

SuperWhisper comes with three modes out of the box. These are good starting points, but you'll probably want to create custom modes for your specific

workflows.

Voice Mode BUILT-IN

What it does: Pure transcription. Your words become text. That's it.

- No AI processing—just raw speech-to-text
- Fastest option, lowest latency
- What you say is exactly what you get (with all the "ums" and corrections)
- Use when you want to capture your exact words, stream-of-consciousness style

Super Mode BUILT-IN

What it does: Context-aware dictation. Adapts formatting based on what app you're in.

- All context types enabled by default (sees what app you're using)
- Automatically adjusts—code-like output in VS Code, prose in Word
- Includes system info (date, your name) for smarter responses
- Good general-purpose mode, but can feel like a "jack of all trades"

Note Mode BUILT-IN

What it does: Organizes your speech into structured notes and lists.

- Great for meetings, brainstorming, quick captures
- Automatically creates bullet points and structure
- Strips out filler words and hesitations
- Focus on getting ideas down, not perfect prose

Built-In Modes Are Starting Points

Most people find that built-in modes work for about 60% of their tasks. The magic happens when you create **custom modes** tailored to your specific workflows—like an email mode that matches your organization's tone, or a chat mode that keeps messages appropriately casual.

The Power Move: Custom Modes

Custom modes are where SuperWhisper becomes genuinely useful for professional work. Instead of generic AI behavior, you get modes that understand exactly what you need.

Custom Modes

CUSTOM

What they do: Whatever you tell them to. You define the AI instructions, context settings, and formatting rules.

- **FREE tier:** Create up to 3 custom modes
- **PRO tier:** Unlimited custom modes
- Full control over AI prompts—tell it your role, your audience, your style preferences
- Can auto-activate based on which app or website you're using
- Each mode can use a different model (balance privacy and accuracy per task)

In the exercises, we'll build several custom modes:

Professional emails with a consistent, appropriate tone

→ **Local Email Mode**

Quick Teams/Slack messages that sound like you (but less rambly)

→ **Teams Chat Mode**

Technical documentation with proper formatting

→ **Documentation Mode**

Code comments that actually explain what's happening

→ **Code Comment Mode**

Context: The Secret Ingredient

What makes modes powerful isn't just the AI instructions—it's **context**. SuperWhisper can share information with the AI about what you're doing, which lets it make smarter decisions.



Application Context

Tells the AI which app is active. The AI can adapt its formatting based on whether you're in Outlook, VS Code, Teams, or something else.

Example: "Format this as a code comment" when VS Code is active



Selected Text Context

Passes any highlighted text to the AI. Perfect for replying to emails, transforming existing content, or referencing what you're looking at.

Example: "Reply to this email" with the email selected



Clipboard Context

Uses recently copied content as reference. Great for working with error messages, templates, or style guides you've copied.

Example: "Use this template" after copying a template



System Context

Includes current date/time, your name, computer name. Helps AI personalize responses and handle date references correctly.

Example: AI knows "tomorrow" means the actual date

☐ CONTEXT + CUSTOM MODES = MAGIC

The real power comes from combining context with custom modes. An email mode with **selected text context** enabled means you can highlight an email, hit your hotkey, and say "reply to this, tell them I'll have the report by Friday." The AI sees the original email, understands you're responding, and drafts an appropriate reply.

Mode Switching: Three Ways

You'll switch modes constantly as you work. Here's how to do it efficiently:

METHOD	HOW IT WORKS	WHEN TO USE IT
Keyboard Shortcut	Assign unique shortcuts per mode in Settings → Keyboard. Each mode gets its own hotkey.	Your go-to method. ⌘+Shift+E for email, ⌘+Shift+C for chat, etc. Fastest way to switch.
Menu Bar	Click the SuperWhisper icon in menu bar → select mode from dropdown list.	When you can't remember the shortcut, or you're exploring modes you don't use often.
Auto-Activation	Set rules: "When Outlook is active, use Email Mode." SuperWhisper switches automatically.	Hands-free workflow. Set it up once and forget about manual switching.

Auto-Activation in Action



The Goal: Stop Thinking About Modes

Once you've set up auto-activation rules, you shouldn't have to think about modes at all. You just dictate, and SuperWhisper does the right thing based on context. That's the workflow we're building toward in this workshop.

Experiment: Which Mode for Which Task?

Before building custom modes, it helps to think through your common tasks and how you want them handled:

□ Quick Exercise: Map Your Workflows

Take 3 minutes right now. List your five most common tasks where you write text.

For each one, consider:

1. What application do you use for this task?
2. What tone/style should the output have?
3. Do you need context (like selected text)?
4. How often do you do this task?

The tasks you do most often are the ones worth creating custom modes for.

Don't try to cover everything—start with your top 3-4 workflows and add more later.

Common Mode Patterns

Most custom modes fall into a few patterns. Here's what tends to work:

□ Email Modes

Key settings: Professional tone, medium length, auto-signature optional.

Selected text context ON (for replies). Consider different modes for internal vs. external emails if your tone varies significantly.

Auto-activate: Outlook, Gmail, or whatever email client you use.

□ Chat Modes

Key settings: Casual but professional, short/punchy messages, no formal greetings. Maybe mode variations for Teams (work) vs. Slack (if more casual) vs. iMessage (personal).

Auto-activate: Teams, Slack, or specific chat apps.

□ Documentation Modes

Key settings: Clear, structured, slightly formal. May want to include technical vocabulary additions. Good use case for clipboard context (paste a template, dictate content).

Auto-activate: Word, Notion, Confluence, or wherever you write docs.

❑ Code Modes

Key settings: Output as comments in your language's format. Technical vocabulary enabled. Application context ON so AI knows your IDE.

Auto-activate: VS Code, PyCharm, Xcode, or your IDE of choice.

Start Simple, Evolve Later

Don't try to create 15 custom modes on day one. Start with **one mode** for your most painful workflow—probably email. Get comfortable with that. Then add a second mode. You'll learn what works by using the tool, not by planning the perfect setup in advance.

Where Settings Live

To create or edit modes:

1. Click the SuperWhisper icon in your menu bar
2. Click **Settings** (gear icon)
3. Select **Modes** from the left sidebar
4. Click **+ Add Mode** to create new, or click existing mode to edit

Each mode has tabs for:

- **General** — Name, model selection, keyboard shortcut
- **AI Instructions** — The prompt that tells AI how to process your speech
- **Context** — Which context types to enable
- **Auto-Activation** — Rules for automatic mode switching

❑ THE AI INSTRUCTIONS TAB IS WHERE THE MAGIC HAPPENS

This is where you write the prompt that defines how your mode behaves. In the exercises, we'll write these together—giving you templates you can customize. The difference between a generic mode and a great mode is usually just 2-3 well-written sentences in this field.

Quick Reference: Built-In vs. Custom

FEATURE	BUILT-IN MODES	CUSTOM MODES
AI Instructions	Fixed (can't change)	Fully customizable
Context Settings	Preset defaults	You control each type
Model Selection	Uses default model	Choose per mode
Auto-Activation	Not available	Full rule support
Keyboard Shortcuts	Limited	One per mode
Availability	Always included	FREE: 3, PRO: unlimited

Your Assignment

Before starting the exercises, open SuperWhisper settings and look at the Modes section. Click through the built-in modes and see what settings they have. Don't change anything yet—just familiarize yourself with where things are. When you're ready, move to **Exercise 03: Local Email Mode** to build your first custom mode.