

A Beginner's Guide to AI Research Workflows

1. Introduction: From Drowning in Tabs to Actionable Insights

If you've ever tried to research a topic online, you know the feeling: a dozen browser tabs open, snippets of information copied into a messy document, and a constant struggle to remember where you found what. It's a process of gathering raw information and then spending even more time trying to make sense of it all. AI-powered tools offer a fundamentally new approach. Instead of manually hunting for data, you can delegate the entire research project to an AI. This guide will walk you through three fundamental AI research workflows: uncovering competitive insights, creating trend reports, and summarizing long documents. The goal is to shift your mindset from asking an AI to "help me search" to instructing it to deliver "**actionable insights**" directly. By mastering these techniques, you'll learn to turn broad questions into structured, useful knowledge you can act on immediately.

2. The Core Concept: How to Delegate Research to an AI

The most significant change in AI-powered research is learning to think like a manager, not just a searcher. You are delegating a complete task to a capable assistant. This represents a fundamental shift in approach, moving from "help me search" to "research this topic and give me actionable insights," a core principle taught by experts like Eddie Belaval. To delegate effectively, you can use a simple three-part formula:

- **Context:** Clearly state what you are trying to understand. What is the core question or topic you need to explore? This sets the stage for the entire project.
- **Outcome:** Define the specific format you need the information in. Do you want a one-page briefing, a comparison table, or a bulleted list of key takeaways? Being precise about the output saves you from getting a wall of unorganized text.
- **Location:** Tell the AI where the final result should be saved. This turns your AI into an organized assistant that files its own work. Being specific (e.g., Save to ~/Documents/Research/filename.md) prevents digital clutter and creates an automated system. With this formula, you provide the AI with a complete project brief, enabling it to execute the research and deliver a finished product.

See the Concept in Action: A Real-World Example

Eddie Belaval, a reality television producer, uses this delegation model to handle the immense task of researching cast members. Before, this took a human researcher half a day per person. Now, he gives the AI a list of names with this prompt: "Research these 10 cast members. For each one, find: social media presence and follower counts, any news coverage or articles about them, relationship history if public, potential storylines or drama, and red flags we should know about. Create a briefing for each person. Save to ~/Documents/CastBriefings/." The result is ten detailed briefings in about 15 minutes. The grunt work is eliminated, freeing his team to focus on creative strategy. This is a perfect illustration of effective delegation.

3. Setting Realistic Expectations

As an expert instructor, it's my job to tell you what works and what doesn't. Before you dive in, it's crucial to understand an AI's research capabilities to avoid frustration. AI models are excellent at researching information that is publicly available on the web. They can synthesize data from multiple articles, company websites, and public forums to create comprehensive summaries. However, they have limitations:

- **Paywalls:** An AI cannot log into your subscriptions to access paywalled articles or academic journals.
- **Proprietary Databases:** It cannot access private, internal company information or specialized databases.
- **Very Recent News:** There can be a slight delay in its knowledge of breaking news, so it may miss events that happened in the last few hours.
- **Information That Doesn't Exist:** If the information isn't online, the AI can't find it. Setting these expectations helps you delegate tasks the AI can succeed at, making your workflow far more effective.

4. Workflow #1: Uncovering Competitive Insights

One of the most valuable ways to use AI research is to understand the competitive landscape, whether for a school project, a business idea, or a job application. This can be broken down into two main approaches.

4.1. The Company Deep Dive

This workflow is designed to give you a focused, actionable summary of a single competitor. It cuts through the noise to deliver a concise briefing on what makes a specific company tick. **Delegation Pattern:**

Research [competitor company]. I want to understand: their product/service offering, their pricing (if public), their target customer, their key differentiators, recent news or announcements, and their apparent strategy. Create a one-page briefing. Include sources.

The expected outcome is a clean, one-page document that covers the competitor's most important attributes, complete with sources for key claims. It's like having an analyst prepare a pre-meeting brief for you.

4.2. The Landscape Overview

When you need a higher-level view, this workflow helps you map out an entire market or industry. It's designed to identify the top players and analyze the broader strategic environment. **Delegation Pattern:**

I'm entering the [industry/market]. Research the top 5-10 players. For each one, give me: company name, what they offer, approximate size/funding, target customer, and one-line positioning. Then give me

your analysis: what gaps do you see? What's everyone doing the same? What's underserved?

The result is a structured overview that not only lists competitors but also provides valuable analysis on market gaps and common patterns. This process can save you weeks of manual work, delivering a strategic foundation in minutes.

4.3. See it in Action: A Real-World Example

Eddie Belaval, founder of ID8Labs, used this technique when building his own company. He needed to understand the crowded AI tools landscape. Instead of spending days browsing websites, he delegated the task to an AI. The process took about 20 minutes and saved him what he estimated to be a full week of manual research. The AI provided the structure he needed, allowing him to **"think strategically instead of drowning in tabs."**

5. Workflow #2: Creating a Trend Report

Understanding what's new, what's growing, and what's fading away is crucial in any field. This workflow allows you to quickly generate a report on the current trends in a specific industry or area of study.**Delegation Pattern:**

Research current trends in [industry/topic]. I want to understand: what's changing, what's emerging, what's declining, and what experts are predicting. Focus on the last 12 months. Create a trend report with specific examples and sources.

The expected outcome is a structured report that identifies the most important trends from the past year. Crucially, it will provide specific examples and cite its sources, giving you the evidence needed to back up the claims. This is perfect for essays, presentations, or simply staying informed.

6. Workflow #3: Summarizing Long Documents

We all suffer from information overload. It's common to collect dense industry reports, academic papers, or long articles—a problem Eddie Belaval describes from his own experience, where these important documents would sit unread in his Downloads folder. This workflow helps you conquer that pile. The "Report Digest" is a perfect pattern for this.**Delegation Pattern:**

Read this 50-page report at [file path]. Give me: the main conclusions, the key data points, the recommendations, and anything surprising or controversial. Keep it under 2 pages.

Note: To use this pattern, you typically need to first upload the document to the AI tool or provide a publicly accessible link. The result is a brief digest that extracts the most critical information from a lengthy document. You get the main conclusions, key data, and important recommendations without having to read every single page, making it possible to actually absorb the knowledge you've collected.

7. An Essential Final Step: Always Verify Your Findings

As powerful as AI research is, it's not infallible. AI models can make mistakes, misunderstand context, or pull from outdated sources. Verification is not an optional step—it's a critical part of the research process to ensure your work is accurate and credible. For this, it's helpful to adopt "Eddie's Verification Rule" as a personal best practice. "If a number or fact is going to influence a decision, I tell Claude: 'Find me a second source for this.'" You can build this step directly into your workflow using a simple fact-checking request.

Fact-Check Request:

Here's a claim I found: [claim]. Verify this. Find multiple sources that confirm or contradict it. Tell me how confident I should be in this information.

This simple command helps you build confidence in your findings and has the potential to save you from embarrassing and costly mistakes.

8. Conclusion: Putting Your New Skills into Practice

You now have a foundational understanding of how to delegate research to an AI assistant. By moving beyond simple searches, you can produce high-quality, structured insights in a fraction of the time it would take manually. You've learned three core workflows:

- **Competitive Analysis:** Generating deep dives on single companies or overviews of entire markets.
- **Trend Reports:** Synthesizing what's new and important in any given field.
- **Document Summaries:** Distilling the key insights from long, dense reports and papers. The single most important takeaway is this: The goal of AI research is not just to find facts, but to synthesize them into **actionable insights** that you can use to make decisions, form arguments, or take the next step in a project. Once you master getting insights, the next level is to chain research directly to action. You can ask the AI to use its findings to create something new, like recommendations or a comparison table. This is an advanced technique, but it shows where these skills can lead:

Advanced Tip: Research → Action

Research [topic]. Based on what you find, give me 3–5 specific recommendations for how I should [action]. Explain your reasoning for each.

Your Challenge

It's time to put these skills to the test with a hands-on exercise.

- **Pick a workflow** from this guide (Competitive Analysis, Trend Report, or Document Summary) and a topic you're interested in.
- **Use the corresponding pattern** to delegate your research task to an AI.
- **Review the output and take two more steps:**
- **Verify a Fact:** Find one key number or claim in the report. Use the "Fact-Check Request" pattern to ask the AI to find a second source for it.
- **Go Deeper:** Ask a follow-up question about one part of the AI's output. For example, "Tell me more about the 'market gap' you identified," or "Expand on the third trend you

listed."This multi-step process mirrors how experts work: delegate, verify, and iterate. Welcome to the future of research.