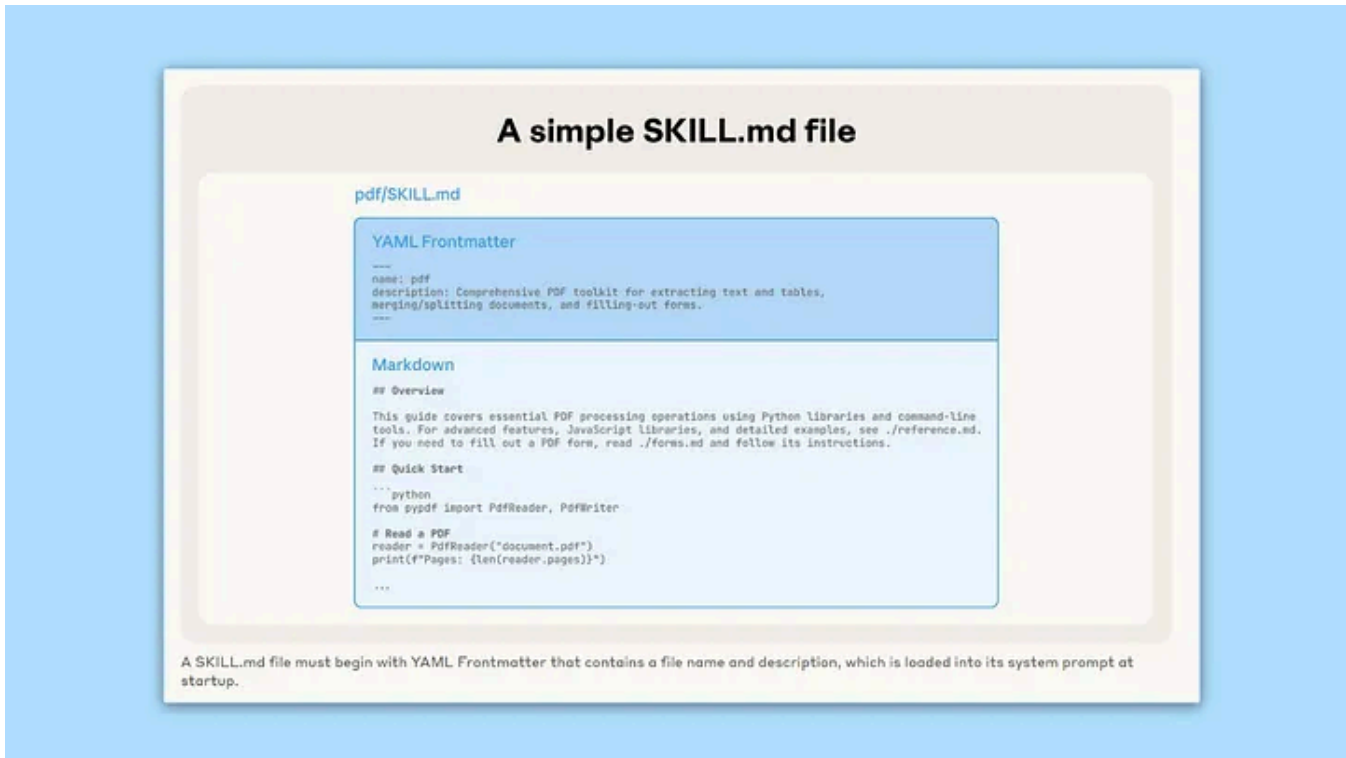


The complete guide to Claude Code's newest feature "skills"

Claude Code released a new feature called Skills.

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Skills start with a markdown file — From the deep dive blog post from Claude

There is a blog post from the Claude team [here](#) but to be honest, I didn't really understand what they were and why they were good. So I spent ages testing them so I could save you time.

Anthropic has some example skills to test

You can find them [here](#). I thought it would be better to do a show don't tell approach to show you what skills are.

The first skill I tested was "brand-guidelines".

So let's say you have a webpage or document like this, but it's not in your brand guidelines.

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What you do is go to Claude and write the following message.

```
v22.17.0 ~\Documents\GitHub\skillcheck git:(master)
```

```
claude --dangerously-skip-permissions
```



Claude Code v2.0.22

Sonnet 4.5 · Claude Max

C:\Users\pcadmin\Documents\GitHub\skillcheck

```
> can you update the @companypage with the branding guideline skill
```

```
  ▶▶ bypass permissions on (shift+tab to cycle)
```

That's all you have to ask and then Claude bubbles away and after some time you get this

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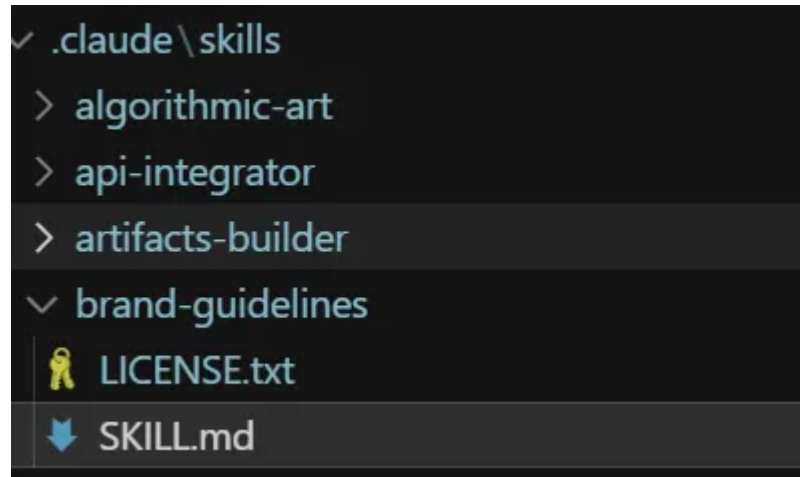
[Get Started Today](#)

So it did that in one prompt.

Let's figure out how it did that.

The first thing to realise is that skills are relatively straightforward. They live in a folder called skills.

And all they need is a markdown file called SKILL.md in there.



Here is an example of what a SKILL.md file looks like.

Anthropic Brand Styling

Overview

To access Anthropic's official brand identity and style resources, use this skill.

Keywords: branding, corporate identity, visual identity, post-processing, styling, brand colors, typography, Anthropic brand, visual formatting, visual design

Brand Guidelines

Colors

Main Colors:

- Dark: `#141413` - Primary text and dark backgrounds
- Light: `#faf9f5` - Light backgrounds and text on dark
- Mid Gray: `#b0aea5` - Secondary elements
- Light Gray: `#e8e6dc` - Subtle backgrounds

Accent Colors:

- Orange: `#d97757` - Primary accent
- Blue: `#6a9bcc` - Secondary accent
- Green: `#788c5d` - Tertiary accent

Typography

- **Headings:** Poppins (with Arial fallback)
- **Body Text:** Lora (with Georgia fallback)
- **Note:** Fonts should be pre-installed in your environment for best results

The files themselves are just simple instructions of the brand's colours and how to use it.

But so far this is quite a simple case. Generating colours from a single markdown document doesn't give you any advantage over just prompting or adding a markdown file as context.

So as a result, let's show off their superpower.

Intermediate Skill Use — Word Document Creation

I prompted Claude Code.

“Make me a word document invoice template, using the docx skill”

ACME Corporation

ACME

CORPORATION

+

Bill To:

[Client Name]

[Client Address Line 1]

[Client Address Line 2]

[City, ST ZIP]

INVOICE

Invoice #:

[INV-0001]

Date:

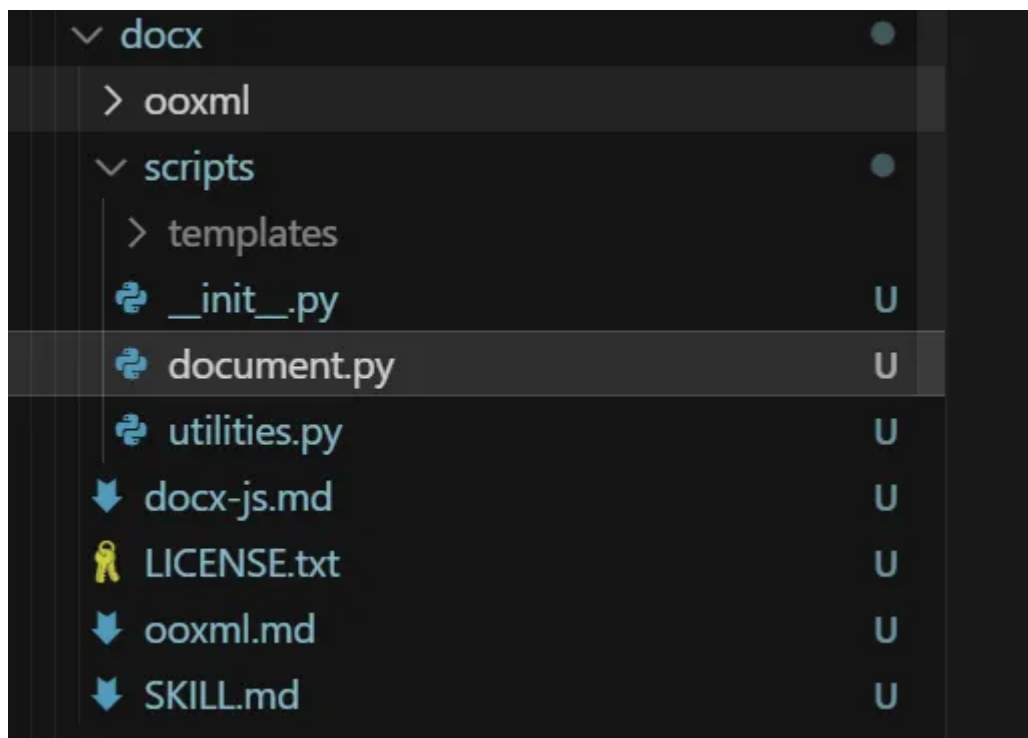
[MM/DD/YYYY]

Due Date:

[MM/DD/YYYY]

Description	Qty	Rate	Amount
Professional Services - Consulting	10	\$150.00	\$1,500.00
Software Development	20	\$200.00	\$4,000.00
Project Management	15	\$125.00	\$1,875.00

This skill was more interesting. Here is the folder structure.



Now not only is there the markdown file in the folder called (docx) at the top. There is a bunch of python files in here.

The SKILL.md file instructs the LLM how to use the python files to create documents.

This is actually super handy. The thing here is that the LLM basically knows now how to go off and tailor based on your query what it needs to adapt the python to your use case.

That sentence might be confusing but it is worth repeating with an example.

Without skills

You'd say:

“Make me a word document” and then paste or debug Python code that uses **python-docx**. Claude might generate a script, but you'd have to run it, fix errors, and re-prompt if you wanted a change.

With skills

When you say:

“Make me a word document invoice template, using the docx skill”

Claude doesn't just spit out raw code. It already has a workflow wired in: how to import **python-docx**, how to structure the file, how to output a .docx. The SKILL.md routes your intent into the right Python helpers.

The difference

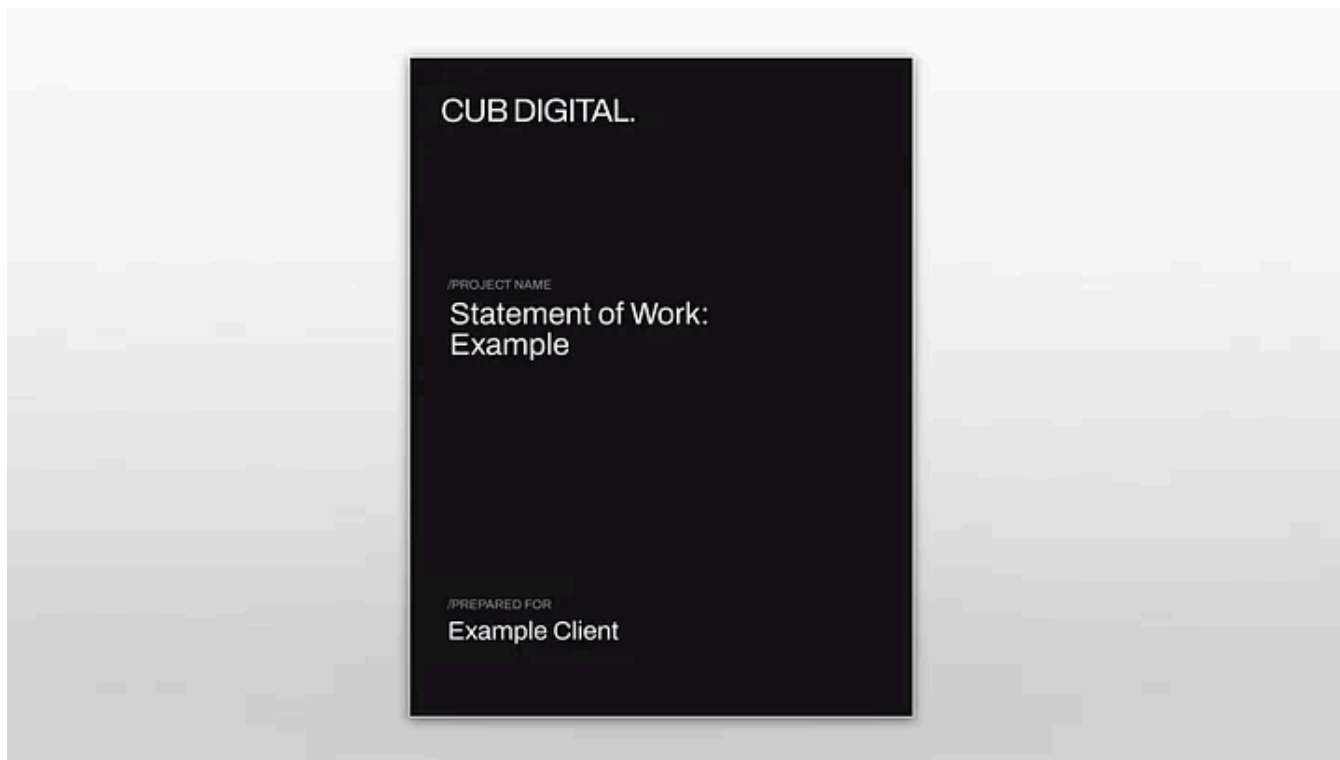
- **Prompting** = Claude invents code each time, results vary.

- **Skill** = Claude knows there's a standardised toolchain for Word docs. You just describe the invoice you want, and it adapts the existing scripts.

I then tried testing to combine 2 skills

- The first test was for creating a word document
- Then I wanted to see if it put it in my brand colours

So here is what our statements of work look like at my agency.



I wanted to see if it could make a quote and then make it in my style.

Here is what the skill made

CUB DIGITAL.

/PROJECT NAME

Test of a Project

Using Computer Vision

/PREPARED FOR

Acme

The white space around the edge looks weird. The font was incorrect. Everything was bold.

I give the skill a 3/10 for this attempt.

I think this probably comes down to me not really understanding the specifics of how my company template and word works and making my SKILLS.md file detailed enough.

So far you might be asking, what's the big deal? Can't I just load in Markdown files?

I thought that too. But Skills have **trigger logic and detection**

- A simple Markdown template is static: you decide to use it or not, and you pass it in each time. You the human are doing all the work.
- A Skill allows the agent to *decide* whether to invoke it (based on metadata + context) and to load it dynamically. This means the agent can pick the right Skill when needed, and you don't always have to manually insert it.

Here's why skills are better than simple markdown

There is a skill called GIF creator.

I just did the simple prompt: Make a GIF saying Chris is cool



This skill was made in one go

Under the hood the LLM called and read a python function and kept the GIF in the exact same function that it needed to be in.

When I prompted it using a normal prompt and markdown, it made this.

Chris is Cool v2 - Bouncing Text GIF Cre



Stop Animation

Download GIF

First, I had to press an animation button, the download GIF button didn't work and it wasn't in the format that it should be for things like Discord.

I got it to make one based on the recent Andrej Karpathy talk using the skills method.



when I go on my
Twitter timeline

So where I can see the real value of skills?

I tested them on the following areas.

Spinning up a new project

One command loads the “Next.js + Tailwind + shadcn” skill → sets up file structure, boilerplate, patterns. Faster and more consistent than re-typing setup prompts.

This is a good use case, as there is typically a bunch of commands that you want run.

Repeatable dev tasks

“Add auth flow” or “Set up feature flag” skill executes the same workflow every time. Way faster than copy-pasting snippets or explaining steps over and over.

I did this for Clerk and it worked well. Basically the way I got Claude Code to make the skill was just to ask it to write a thorough Skill document for implementing Clerk. Then it went ahead and did it. Now this was really helpful as I often find that Clerk gets messed up with the LLMs when I prompt it.

Company document generation

So I actually think document generation for a business is a really good use case for this tool as well as generating memos/letterheads/presentations/reports in the company

template style.

It’s probably better to actually pass it my company template first and then get it to apply any stylistic changes rather than building it from scratch.

This is how I see skills slotting into the arsenal

MCP vs Skills vs Prompting Comparison

Use Case	MCP	Skills	Prompting
Fetch external data	✓		
Multi-step workflow		✓	
Team standards & onboarding		✓	
Complex multi-file code changes			✓
Quick one-off task			✓
Unstructured to structured data	✓		

This is a great tool to add for repeatable workflows. For simple one off tasks stick to prompting

What Skills Are Good At

I see it as three main areas.

1. Complex, Multi-Step Workflows

Skills shine when you have a complicated process that needs to happen the same way every time. For example: creating branded presentations with specific formatting rules, generating documents that follow company templates, building artifacts with particular tech stacks and patterns.

2. Domain-Specific Knowledge

Skills can package up specialized knowledge that Claude needs to reference repeatedly: brand guidelines (colors, fonts, tone), company communication templates, technical frameworks and patterns.

3. Combining Multiple Operations

When a task requires using several tools in a specific sequence, skills can guide that process: the artifacts-builder skill orchestrates multiple files and components, the

algorithmic-art skill manages the full cycle of creating, testing, and refining p5.js code, the canvas-design skill handles Python environment setup, code generation, and file output.

Some questions that I had that you might too

Q: Can I use multiple skills at once?

A: Not really. When you invoke a skill, Claude follows that skill's instructions. You could create a skill that tells Claude to use another skill, but that gets complicated. It's better to create one skill that combines what you need. At least that was my experience.

Q: How do I know what skills are available?

A: Claude can see all skills in your `.claude/skills/` folder. The skill tool shows available skills with descriptions. Note if they aren't in this folder, it won't work.

Q: Can skills make API calls?

A: Skills can instruct Claude to use MCP servers (which can make API calls) or use the WebFetch tool (which can fetch web content). But skills themselves are just instructions — they don't make calls directly.

Q: What's the difference between a skill and a prompt?

A: A skill is a reusable, invokable set of instructions stored in a file. A prompt is what you type to Claude. Skills are formalized prompts that you can activate by name.

Q: Can I create a skill for anything?

A: You can create a skill for any task that Claude Code can do. But whether you should depends on if the task benefits from a structured workflow.

Q: How long should a skill be?

A: As long as needed. Some skills are a few hundred words of instructions. Others (like artifacts-builder) are several thousand words with detailed guidance. If it's getting really long, consider if you're trying to do too much in one skill.

Q: Can I turn off a skill?

A: Just don't invoke it. Skills are only active when you call them. Or you can delete/rename the file if you want to prevent it from being available.

Q: Do skills slow down Claude?

A: They add context for Claude to process, which uses some of Claude's "thinking space."

I would say that they are faster for nice workflows that you use all the time. But it's really clunky getting them to that point.

If this all feels a bit overwhelming

If you are reading all of this and you feel like it's all a bit confusing, play around with the document ones here to get you started. Then ask it to make you some word documents. That kind of shows you the power.