

JIMMY TOOLS

# The Complete OpenClaw Setup Guide

From Zero to Your Own AI Assistant

Version 1.0 | February 2026

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# 1. What is OpenClaw?

OpenClaw is an open-source platform that lets you run your own AI assistant. Unlike ChatGPT or Claude.ai, OpenClaw runs locally on your machine and can:

- **Connect to messaging apps** — Telegram, WhatsApp, Discord, Signal, iMessage, and more
- **Execute code and scripts** — Run Python, access files, automate tasks
- **Browse the web** — Search, fetch pages, control browsers
- **Access your tools** — Calendar, email, databases, APIs
- **Work autonomously** — Background tasks, scheduled jobs, proactive notifications

Think of it as giving Claude or GPT "hands and feet" to actually do things, not just answer questions.

## Why Use OpenClaw?

Feature	ChatGPT/Claude.ai	OpenClaw
Runs locally	✗	✓
Persistent memory	Limited	✓ Full file-based
Executes code	✗	✓
Messaging integration	✗	✓
Custom tools/skills	✗	✓
Data stays private	✗	✓

# 2. System Requirements

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## Hardware

- **RAM:** 4GB minimum, 8GB+ recommended
- **Storage:** 2GB free space for OpenClaw + dependencies
- **Network:** Internet connection for AI API calls

## Software

Platform	Requirements
macOS	macOS 12+ (Monterey or later)
Linux	Ubuntu 20.04+, Debian 11+, or equivalent
Windows	Windows 10/11 with WSL2 (strongly recommended)

## Node.js Requirement

OpenClaw requires **Node.js 22 or newer**.

Check your current version:

```
node --version
```

If you don't have Node.js or have an older version, the installer will handle it.

## 3. Installation

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### Method 1: Installer Script (Recommended)

The easiest way to install OpenClaw. One command handles everything.

#### macOS / Linux / WSL2

```
curl -fsSL https://openclaw.ai/install.sh | bash
```

#### Windows (PowerShell as Administrator)

```
iwr -useb https://openclaw.ai/install.ps1 | iex
```

#### What the installer does:

1. Checks for Node.js 22+ (installs if missing)
2. Installs OpenClaw globally via npm
3. Launches the onboarding wizard

### Method 2: Manual npm Install

If you already have Node.js 22+ and prefer manual control:

```
# Install OpenClaw
npm install -g openclaw@latest

# Run onboarding
openclaw onboard --install-daemon
```

#### Troubleshooting: sharp build errors

If you see errors about sharp or node-gyp :

```
SHARP_IGNORE_GLOBAL_LIBVIPS=1 npm install -g openclaw@latest
```

## Windows-Specific Instructions

**We strongly recommend using WSL2 on Windows.**

### Installing WSL2

1. Open PowerShell as Administrator
2. Run: `wsl --install`
3. Restart your computer
4. Open "Ubuntu" from the Start menu
5. Create a username and password when prompted
6. Now run the Linux installer:

```
curl -fsSL https://openclaw.ai/install.sh | bash
```

## 4. The Onboarding Wizard

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After installation, the onboarding wizard guides you through setup.

```
openclaw onboard --install-daemon
```

### Step 1: Choose Setup Mode

```
? Setup mode
> QuickStart (recommended defaults)
  Advanced (full control)
```

**QuickStart** is recommended for most users. It uses sensible defaults.

### Step 2: Authentication

The wizard asks how to authenticate with AI providers.

#### Anthropic (Recommended)

You'll need an Anthropic API key:

1. Go to [console.anthropic.com](https://console.anthropic.com)
2. Sign up or log in
3. Navigate to API Keys
4. Create a new key
5. Copy and paste it into the wizard

### Step 3: Workspace

The workspace is where OpenClaw stores agent files, memory, and sessions. The default location ( `~/openclaw/workspace` ) works for most users.

## Step 4: Gateway Settings

The Gateway is the background service that runs OpenClaw. Default settings are secure and work well locally.

## Step 5: Channels (Optional)

Channels let you message your AI through existing apps. You can add channels later with `openclaw configure`.

## Step 6: Install Daemon

This installs OpenClaw as a system service that starts automatically.

## Step 7: Health Check

The wizard verifies everything works:

```
✓ Gateway started
✓ Config valid
✓ Model connection OK
```

```
OpenClaw is ready! Run: openclaw dashboard
```

## 5. Setting Up Channels

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### Telegram Setup

Telegram is the easiest channel to set up.

#### Step 1: Create a Bot

1. Open Telegram and search for **@BotFather**
2. Send `/newbot`
3. Choose a name (e.g., "My Assistant")
4. Choose a username (must end in "bot", e.g., "myassistant\_bot")
5. Copy the **API token** BotFather gives you

#### Step 2: Configure OpenClaw

```
openclaw configure --section telegram
```

Or edit your config directly and add under `channels` :

```
{
  "telegram": {
    "enabled": true,
    "botToken": "YOUR_BOT_TOKEN_HERE",
    "dmPolicy": "pairing"
  }
}
```

#### Step 3: Restart Gateway

```
openclaw gateway restart
```

## Step 4: Start Chatting

1. Find your bot on Telegram by its username
2. Send /start
3. The bot will ask you to pair (security feature)
4. Once paired, you can chat freely!

## WhatsApp Setup

WhatsApp requires more setup but works great once configured.

### Step 1: Enable WhatsApp Channel

```
openclaw configure --section whatsapp
```

### Step 2: Scan QR Code

OpenClaw uses WhatsApp Web protocol. Restart the gateway and scan the QR code with WhatsApp:

1. Open WhatsApp on your phone
2. Go to Settings → Linked Devices
3. Tap "Link a Device"
4. Scan the QR code

## 6. Verification & Testing

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### Check Gateway Status

```
openclaw gateway status
```

Expected output:

```
Service: running  
Gateway: ws://127.0.0.1:18789  
Probe: ok
```

### Run Health Check

```
openclaw doctor
```

This checks for common configuration issues.

### Open the Dashboard

```
openclaw dashboard
```

This opens the Control UI in your browser. You can chat directly here without any channel setup.

## 7. Common Issues & Solutions

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### "openclaw: command not found"

**Cause:** The npm global bin directory isn't in your PATH.

**Solution:**

1. Find your npm prefix: `npm prefix -g`
2. Add to your shell config (`~/.zshrc` or `~/.bashrc`):

```
export PATH="$(npm prefix -g)/bin:$PATH"
```

3. Reload your shell: `source ~/.zshrc`

### Gateway won't start

Check logs:

```
cat /tmp/openclaw/openclaw-$(date +%Y-%m-%d).log
```

**Common fixes:**

- Port in use: `openclaw gateway --port 18790`
- Permission issues: `sudo chown -R $(whoami) ~/.openclaw`
- Restart: `openclaw gateway stop && openclaw gateway start`

### "Model connection failed"

**Cause:** API key invalid or expired.

**Solution:** Verify your API key at the provider's console, then update: `openclaw configure --section auth`

## Telegram bot not responding

Check:

1. Is the gateway running? `openclaw gateway status`
2. Did you pair? Check for a pairing request in Telegram
3. Is the bot token correct in config?

## npm install errors on macOS

For sharp/libvips errors:

```
SHARP_IGNORE_GLOBAL_LIBVIPS=1 npm install -g openclaw@latest
```

For permission errors:

```
sudo chown -R $(whoami) $(npm prefix -g)/{lib/node_modules,bin,share}
```

## 8. Advanced Configuration

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### Config File Location

```
~/.openclaw/openclaw.json
```

Edit directly with: `nano ~/.openclaw/openclaw.json`

### Multiple Agents

Create additional agents with separate workspaces:

```
openclaw agents add work-assistant  
openclaw agents add personal-assistant
```

### Web Search Setup

For the agent to search the web:

1. Get a Brave Search API key from [brave.com/search/api](https://brave.com/search/api)
2. Add to config under `tools.web.search`

## 9. Next Steps

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### Explore Skills

```
openclaw skills list
openclaw skills install weather
```

### Customize Your Agent

Edit the workspace files:

- `SOUL.md` — Agent personality
- `AGENTS.md` — Behavioral instructions
- `TOOLS.md` — Tool configuration notes
- `MEMORY.md` — Long-term memory

### Join the Community

- **Discord:** [discord.com/invite/clawd](https://discord.com/invite/clawd)
  - **GitHub:** [github.com/openclaw/openclaw](https://github.com/openclaw/openclaw)
  - **Docs:** [docs.openclaw.ai](https://docs.openclaw.ai)
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# Summary

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1. **Install:** `curl -fsSL https://openclaw.ai/install.sh | bash`
2. **Onboard:** `openclaw onboard --install-daemon`
3. **Verify:** `openclaw gateway status`
4. **Chat:** `openclaw dashboard`

You now have your own AI assistant running locally. Customize it, connect channels, and make it yours.

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