



The one-time setup

No new tools, no automation platform, no IT ticket. Every assistant you already have can hold standing context — so it knows the situation and the format before you type anything at all.



README

What this is. Fifteen minutes of setup that removes the paste-the-same-context step from every conversation you have from now on, in whichever assistant your company already approved.

How to use it. Page 2 tells you where the feature lives in each tool. Page 3 writes your standing context. Page 5 proves it's working.

The running example. Throughout, you're an operations manager at a mid-size company. Priya is your director. The monthly report is the job you're setting up here.

Same idea, four `names`

Every major assistant now has a place to store standing instructions. They're all the same feature with different branding, and most people have never opened it.

TOOL	WHAT IT'S CALLED	WHERE TO LOOK
Claude	Projects	New project, then the custom instructions field.
ChatGPT	Projects	New project, then its instructions panel.
Gemini	Gems	Gem manager, then a new Gem with instructions.
Copilot	Pages and agents	Varies by tenant — check what your admin enabled.

- a The instructions field is the whole point.** Most people create a project, drop files in it, and never fill in the instructions — which is the part that actually changes every conversation inside it.
- b This is the third step, not the first.** Standing context only helps once you know what the stable half of your brief is. If you haven't split one yet, do that before setting this up.
- c It's the moment it stops being a personal trick.** A project you can share means the same standard applies whether or not you're the one running it that week.

CHECK FIRST

Names and menus move constantly, and Copilot in particular differs by tenant. If a menu doesn't match what's above, the feature is almost certainly still there under a new label — search the tool's help for "custom instructions".

Write the standing context

The first prompt works out what belongs in there. The second turns it into the block you actually paste into the instructions field.

1 · Work out what belongs in it

COPY-PASTE · THE AUDIT

I'm setting up a saved project for this recurring task: [describe it]

Here are the last two or three times I asked for it: [paste those prompts]

Tell me which parts I retyped every single time. Those are the candidates for standing context. Then flag anything I should deliberately leave out because it changes run to run, or because it's sensitive.

2 · Turn it into the instructions block

COPY-PASTE · THEN PASTE THE RESULT INTO THE TOOL

Write this as standing instructions for a saved project. It will be loaded before every conversation, so write it as context and standing rules, not as a request.

Cover: who I am and what I do, who the audience is and what they already know, the format and length, what to always cut, and which decisions are mine rather than yours.

Keep it under 200 words. Don't include anything specific to one run.

Details: [paste what you found in step 1]

Check it actually loaded

Standing context fails silently. It looks set up, and then a conversation behaves as if the instructions aren't there. Test it once, properly.

3 · The smoke test

COPY-PASTE · RUN THIS IN A FRESH CONVERSATION

Before I give you anything, tell me back:

- who you understand my audience to be, and what they already know
- the format and length you'll produce by default
- one thing you've been told to always cut
- which decisions are mine rather than yours

If you don't have standing instructions loaded, say so plainly instead of guessing.

Reading the result

WORKING

It answers all four specifically, using your words — naming Priya, the phone, the three-bullet format. Now open a real conversation and paste only this month's material.

NOT WORKING

Generic answers, or a polite guess. Usually it means you're in a normal chat rather than inside the project, or the text went into a description field instead of instructions.

The monthly report, loaded

Here's a real standing-context block, and what a conversation looks like once it's in place.

Pasted once into the instructions field

STANDING CONTEXT · WRITTEN ONCE, NEVER RETYPED

I'm an operations manager at a mid-size company. I produce a monthly report for Priya, our director of operations, who forwards it to the leadership team. She reads it before the monthly call and cares about what changed and what needs a decision.

Format: same structure every month so nobody has to relearn it. A bottom line, then the numbers with commentary, then anything that needs a decision. Always cut pure activity updates.

Flag anything that moved more than ten percent, with why you think it moved. Don't guess at causes you can't see in the data – say the data doesn't explain it and I'll check with the team.

Your call vs mine: wording, ordering, what to cut. Not commitments, not new dates, and nothing evaluative about a person.

What every conversation looks like now

EVERY MONTH · THE ENTIRE MESSAGE YOU SEND

[paste this month's exports and my notes]

That's the whole thing. The context, the format, the judgment line and the honesty rule are already loaded before you type a word.

Three setup traps

01 Putting the variable half in too

The most common, and it poisons every future run.

This month's numbers do not belong in standing instructions. Next month the model will still be carrying them, quietly treating stale figures as current context. Standing means standing — if it changes between runs, it goes in the message, not the setup.

02 Never opening it again

Slow decay you won't notice for months.

Your audience changes, your format shifts, you get a new director. Reread the instructions once a quarter. It takes two minutes and it's the difference between an asset and a fossil.

03 Assuming approved means unrestricted

Worth thirty seconds before you paste.

Your company approving a tool settles how the data is handled. It says nothing about whether a particular document should be sitting in permanent context. Standing instructions persist — apply the same test you'd apply to any single paste.

RECAP

You now have

- 1 Where the standing-context feature lives in Claude, ChatGPT, Gemini, and Copilot.
- 2 A prompt that works out what belongs in it, and one that writes the block.
- 3 A smoke test that proves it loaded, because this fails silently.
- 4 A real standing-context block you can adapt in about five minutes.

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