

# The browser that lives *inside ChatGPT*

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How ChatGPT Desktop's built-in browser works, what it can actually do, where its limits are, and eleven practical ways to use it today.

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# 01 The thesis: the app is no longer just a chat

Before the feature, understand the shift

For two years the pattern was the same: work in your browser, copy something, paste it into ChatGPT, read the answer, return to the browser, and apply it by hand. AI lived in a separate tab, and you were the cable between the two windows.

The built-in browser reverses that pattern. The AI app stops being a destination and becomes the place where the work happens. Sheets, Notion, an ads dashboard, App Store Connect, or the page you are building can all open *inside* the app, with a persistent chat underneath that already knows what you are looking at.

That is the strategic shift. OpenAI is not alone: Anthropic is moving in the same direction with Claude. Both are turning their products into something closer to an operating environment - a place where you work, not merely a tool you consult.

## WHY IT MATTERS TO YOU

The platform race belongs to them. Your benefit is concrete: **the cost of giving the model context disappears**. No screenshot, no copying and pasting, and no awkward description of what is on the screen. That invisible cost was the reason AI went unused in many tasks where it could have helped.

## What changes in practice

- **From describing to pointing.** Instead of explaining which landing-page element feels wrong, select it and write "this."
- **From asking to delegating.** The model can do more than comment on a page: it can navigate, click, and type.
- **From sessions to continuity.** The chat does not reset when you change tabs. It keeps the path you have taken.

## 02

## What the built-in browser actually is

A short definition and three common misconceptions

It is a Chromium-based browser embedded in the ChatGPT desktop application for macOS and Windows. It has its own profile, tabs, and address bar, paired with a chat panel that can access what is being rendered.

### IT IS

- A real browser with tabs, history, downloads, and signed-in sessions.
- A canvas you can annotate visually.
- A surface an agent can operate for you.
- An inspector that can expose Chrome DevTools Protocol through Developer Mode.

### IT IS NOT

- Your Chrome profile. It does not inherit your history, extensions, or saved passwords.
- ChatGPT Atlas. Atlas is a separate browser; this one lives inside the app.
- Merely web search. Search reads results; this can operate applications.
- A replacement for your everyday browser. It is a workspace, not your home base.

### Three common misconceptions

**One.** “It is the same as searching the web.” It is not. Web search brings back text from results. Here, the model sees the rendered page, including pages behind a session you opened yourself.

**Two.** “It cannot sign in, so it cannot use my tools.” The documentation says the *cloud* browser cannot sign in for you. In the desktop browser, you sign in manually once and the session remains available. That is why it can work with Notion, Sheets, or App Store Connect.

**Three.** “It is only for developers.” It also appears in Codex mode, but annotating a design, auditing a campaign, or working through a spreadsheet does not require code.

# 03

## How to open it

Four entry points and two shortcuts

| ROUTE           | HOW                                                            | WHEN TO USE IT                                                            |
|-----------------|----------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Direct shortcut | <code>⌘ ⬆ B</code> on macOS · <code>Ctrl ⬆ B</code> on Windows | Open the browser from anywhere in the app.                                |
| New tab         | <code>⌘ T</code> while the browser is focused                  | You are already inside and want another site.                             |
| Toolbar         | Globe icon at the top                                          | You do not want to memorize shortcuts.                                    |
| Click a URL     | Any link returned by ChatGPT                                   | The most natural route: the model cites something and you open it inside. |

### A NOTE ON SHORTCUTS

OpenAI's documentation lists `⌘ ⬆ B` for opening the built-in browser. `⌘ T` behaves like a normal browser and opens a new tab. Bindings can move between versions, so try the other shortcut or toolbar icon if one does not respond.

### The mode matters

The sidebar lets you switch between **ChatGPT** ("Create, learn, and explore") and **Codex** ("Build, debug, and ship"). The browser exists in both. In Codex it also carries the context of your open project or folder, which is what can turn an annotation on a page into a code change.

# 04

## Anatomy of the interface

Every control, from top to bottom

- **Tab bar.** Multiple sites can stay open, and the chat can follow the work across them.
- **Address bar.** Enter a URL or search normally.
- **Annotating.** Click an element or drag over an area to select it visually.
- **Selection.** The blue outline becomes the thing you mean by “this.”
- **“Do anything” composer.** The persistent chat at the bottom already sees the page.
- **Model and effort selector.** Change the model and reasoning level without leaving the browser.
- **Layout controls.** Collapse the chat, minimize the panel, or toggle the sidebar.

### The most underrated control

It is the button that hides the chat panel. With the panel open you feel like you are “using ChatGPT.” With it collapsed, you are simply browsing and the chat becomes a quiet line at the bottom. That reframing is how the feature becomes a habit: it stops feeling like an AI session and starts feeling like your browser can answer back.

## 05

## The separate profile

The detail that decides whether the browser is useful

The built-in browser keeps its own profile, separate from the Chrome, Safari, or Arc profile you use every day. Nothing is imported automatically.

### What that means

- **Your open tabs do not appear.** The profile starts empty.
- **Saved passwords are unavailable.** Sign in manually to the few tools you actually need.
- **Extensions do not install themselves.** The browser profile has to be configured separately.
- **Sessions persist.** Sign in once and the session remains.
- **Downloads** go to the system's default folder unless you change it in Settings.

#### THE FIRST TEN-MINUTE RITUAL

Open the browser and sign in to the tools where real work happens: your document suite, notes or project manager, analytics dashboard, and ads platform. It is the main setup cost, and you pay it once. Without those sessions the browser feels empty; with them it becomes a useful workspace.

### The privacy reading

The separation works both ways. Activity inside ChatGPT's browser stays in that profile and does not touch your personal browsing profile. The app is not reading your general browser history. The model can, however, see the pages you open *inside* its browser while the chat is active. Treat it as a workspace shared with AI, not a vault.

# 06 The four core capabilities

Everything else combines these four

## 1 · Page context

The chat sees what is rendered in the active tab. Ask it to summarize a table, identify what is missing on a screen, or translate a section without pasting anything. It is the simplest capability and probably the one you will use most often.

## 2 · Visual annotation and Adjust

Turn on Annotating, click an element or drag around an area, and leave the comment in place. It feels like reviewing in Figma, but on the real page. **Adjust** adds precise controls for typography, text size, spacing, and color so you can specify values instead of negotiating through adjectives.

### TYPICAL ANNOTATION

```
This block competes with the headline. Lower the weight to 500,
increase line height to 1.6, and use the secondary gray instead
of pure black.
```

## 3 · Computer Use: let the agent operate it

With the Browser plugin installed, mention `@Browser` and ChatGPT Work or Codex can operate the browser: open pages, click, type, inspect rendered state, take screenshots, and verify its own result. Verification is the important part. The agent should look again instead of merely saying it is done.

### DELEGATION

```
@Browser open the campaigns dashboard, filter the last 14 days,
and build a table with the five campaigns with the worst CPA.
Show me a screenshot before changing any budget.
```

## 4 · Developer Mode (CDP)

Developer Mode can expose Chrome DevTools Protocol so ChatGPT can inspect the DOM, applied styles, console, network traffic, and performance. It is the difference between “the page feels slow” and “this request blocks rendering for 800 ms.” Organizations can restrict the option through policy.

# 07

## Desktop browser vs. cloud browser

Two different things that are often confused

ChatGPT has two browser surfaces: the one embedded in the desktop app, which this guide covers, and a cloud-operated browser used from the web. Many “it will not let me sign in” complaints come from confusing them.

|                      | BUILT IN (DESKTOP)                                | CLOUD (WEB)                                              |
|----------------------|---------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------|
| Where it runs        | On your machine                                   | On OpenAI infrastructure                                 |
| Signed-in sessions   | Yes; sign in once and they persist                | Public sites only; no login                              |
| Visual annotation    | Yes, with Adjust                                  | No                                                       |
| Developer Mode / CDP | Yes                                               | No                                                       |
| Downloads            | Your local folder                                 | Limited                                                  |
| Best for             | Operating your tools and reviewing what you build | Researching the public web without touching your session |

### WHERE IT DOES NOT EXIST

The browser is available in ChatGPT web and the desktop app. It is not available in the CLI or IDE extensions. If you work from Codex in a terminal or editor, return to the app for the visual part.

## 08 Eleven copy-ready workflows

Use the prompt, then adapt the tool names to your setup

### 01 Review a design on the real page

DESIGN

Open the page, turn on Annotating, and mark every area that bothers you before writing instructions.

#### PROMPT

Review the four annotations I left. Before changing code, tell me which ones are symptoms of the same hierarchy problem and propose one change that solves several of them.

### 02 Audit an advertising campaign

MARKETING

Sign in to the ads platform inside the browser and leave the dashboard open.

#### PROMPT

Review this campaign view. Find campaigns spending above the average while converting below the average. Tell me what you would cut and what evidence you still need before pausing them.

### 03 Work in a spreadsheet without writing formulas by hand

OPERATIONS

Describe the outcome instead of the formula and require a small sample before applying it widely.

#### PROMPT

Add a column that classifies every row as A, B, or C based on margin. Write the formula, apply it to the first five rows, and show me the result before extending it.

### 04 Restructure a Notion database

OPERATIONS

The value is not the typing. It is the model seeing the current structure before proposing a new one.

#### PROMPT

Read this database as it is. Identify duplicated properties, fields nobody fills in, and how you would reorganize it so we can filter by status and owner without extra views.

## 05 Prepare a release in an app-store console

PRODUCT

Long forms, changing requirements, and strict character limits are a good fit for visible context.

### PROMPT

I am on the distribution screen for version 1.1.1. Check which fields are missing, what warnings remain, and draft the release notes in English and Spanish within the character limit.

## 06 Compare information across tabs

RESEARCH

Open three or four competitors in separate tabs and ask for a synthesis.

### PROMPT

I have four pricing tabs open. Build a comparison table with plan, price, limits, and add-on costs. Flag where the advertised price hides an additional charge.

## 07 QA a flow with Developer Mode

ENGINEERING

Enable Developer Mode and reproduce the bug while the model watches the console and network.

### PROMPT

I am going to reproduce the checkout error. Watch console and network, identify the failing request, and tell me whether it is client- or server-side. Cite the evidence; do not guess.

## 08 Verify your own deployment from Codex

ENGINEERING

Close the loop: the agent changes the code, opens the page, and verifies that the result exists.

### PROMPT

Apply the change, then use @Browser to open the preview and verify the new button on mobile and desktop. Send screenshots of both. If it looks wrong, fix it and verify again.

## 09 Complete a long form

OPERATIONS

Delegate the repetition, but require confirmation before submission.

### PROMPT

@Browser complete this form with the information below. Stop before submitting and show me every field so I can confirm it.

## 10 Translate and adapt a landing page

MARKETING

With the page visible, the adaptation can account for the actual space the copy occupies.

### PROMPT

Adapt this landing page for Latin American Spanish. Do not translate literally: keep line lengths close enough to preserve the layout, and flag any English copy that does not make sense.

## 11 Learn a new tool from its own interface

LEARNING

Ask the screen instead of searching for a separate tutorial.

### PROMPT

This is my first time using this tool. Explain each section on this screen and show me the shortest path to [your goal]. Guide me one step at a time while I click.

## 09

# Permissions, safety, and operating hygiene

What the system confirms and what remains your responsibility

## What the system does for you

- **Requests permission before entering a new site** when the agent navigates on its own.
- **Requests confirmation for sensitive actions** such as submitting information, purchasing, changing permissions, or deleting data.
- **Does not automate file uploads.** That is a deliberate limit.
- **Keeps Developer Mode opt-in**, and organizations can block it through policy.

## What you need to do

### PROFILE RULE

Do not use the ChatGPT browser for accounts where a mistake is expensive: banking, payroll, or production infrastructure. Keep the profile for work tools where the worst case is redoing something.

### STOPPING-POINT RULE

When delegating with `@Browser`, always say where to stop: “stop before submitting” or “show me before saving.” An agent without an explicit stopping point creates avoidable risk.

### UNTRUSTED-CONTENT RULE

A web page can contain text designed to give instructions to a model. If the agent does something you did not request while browsing an unfamiliar site, treat the page as untrusted.

### EVIDENCE RULE

Ask to see what the agent saw: a screenshot, quote, or number. An agent that can inspect the screen should not answer from memory.

# 10

## Real limits and common mistakes

Avoid losing an afternoon discovering them

| WHAT HAPPENS                         | WHY                                       | WHAT TO DO                                                  |
|--------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------|
| A site blocks you or shows a CAPTCHA | Automated-browser detection               | Solve it manually, then return control                      |
| It cannot upload a file              | Upload automation is deliberately limited | Upload it yourself; let the agent continue afterward        |
| "I do not have your passwords"       | The profile is separate                   | Sign in manually once; the session persists                 |
| It does not appear in CLI or IDE     | It lives in web and desktop surfaces      | Return to the app for visual work                           |
| Heavy apps feel slow                 | Chromium is running inside another app    | Use it to inspect and operate, not to keep twenty tabs open |
| A shortcut does not respond          | Bindings can move between versions        | Try the other shortcut or toolbar icon                      |

### THE MOST COMMON MISTAKE

Using it as if it were Chrome. If you open twenty tabs and never involve the chat, the feature contributes nothing. Its value appears when every tab opened there has a question or task attached. Tabs without a task belong in your everyday browser.

# 11

## A seven-day adoption plan

One repetition a day until it becomes automatic

Nobody changes tools by reading a document. The change happens through one useful repetition each day.

### DAY 1 · SETUP

Open the browser and sign in to the four tools where you work most. Nothing else.

### DAY 2 · CONTEXT

Ask three questions about pages already open without copying or pasting.

### DAY 3 · ANNOTATION

Mark five issues on one page and request one change that solves several.

### DAY 4 · DELEGATION

Run one @Browser task with an explicit stop before saving or submitting.

### DAY 5 · MULTIPLE TABS

Open four tabs on one subject and ask the chat for a comparison table.

### DAY 6 · INSPECTION

Enable Developer Mode and diagnose something slow or broken.

### DAY 7 · DECISION

Write down which task became noticeably faster. If none did, this workflow may not be for you.

### How to know it worked

The signal is not that you use ChatGPT more. It is that you stopped taking screenshots to explain the screen. If you are still capturing everything, you are using the old chat through a new window.

## 12

## What to remember

If you keep one idea, keep this one

**Context stopped being expensive.** The implementation details in this guide may change with the next version. The direction will not: AI tools are moving underneath the work instead of sitting beside it. The sooner you adapt your workflow, the sooner you recover that margin.

### SOURCES AND METHOD

OpenAI documentation: [Browser](#) and [ChatGPT desktop app](#), reviewed July 27, 2026. Shortcuts, interface details, and workflows were also checked through first-hand use of the macOS desktop app. OpenAI changes these details frequently; when this guide and the current interface disagree, trust the interface.