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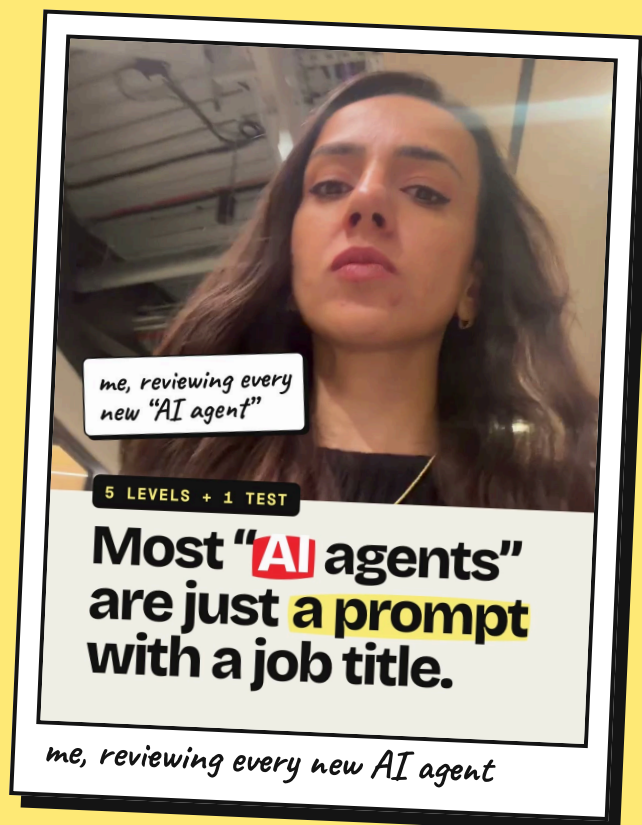
TECH, AI & THINGS WORTH TRYING

FREE

Agent or Prompt? The 5 Levels

Everyone has an “AI agent” now. Here’s how to spot a real one, with examples from my own week and a 3-question test you can run on any tool.

Job titles are free. Agents aren’t. ↗

[START HERE →](#)

THE PROBLEM

Everyone has an “agent” now

Most of them still wait for you to press send.

Every week a new tool launches with “AI agent” on the box. Some are. Most are a prompt with a job title.

The difference isn’t how clever it sounds. It’s who decides the next step. If that’s still you, it’s not an agent yet.

So I broke it into 5 levels. Each one adds one thing. Only the last one finishes the job without you.

Levels 1–4

You decide what happens next.

Level 5

It decides, does, checks and keeps going.

Job titles are free. 😊

LEVELS 1-2

Prompt, then Project

Both useful. Neither is an agent.

- 01 Level 1 • Prompt: you ask, it answers.** I type “Write my TikTok caption. Make me sound less tired.” Claude gives me one with more energy. Then I copy, paste, post and fix it. I still press post.
- 02 Level 2 • Project: your prompt, saved.** My “Seda Works content helper” has instructions (“Sound like me. No cringe. No corporate words.”) and files (my tone of voice, my content ideas). Claude reads them in every chat, so I never explain myself twice. But it still waits for me to type.

Same level elsewhere

Claude Projects, Custom GPTs and Gemini Gems are all Level 2.

Free to try

Claude Projects work on free accounts too (up to five).

← *still waiting*

LEVEL 3

Skill: a recipe it grabs by itself

It knows HOW, not just what.

A Skill is a folder: a `SKILL.md` file with the steps, plus anything that helps, like templates, fonts or scripts. You don't attach it. When a job matches, Claude opens it by itself and follows the same steps every time.

A CAROUSEL SKILL, FOR EXAMPLE

- ✓ `SKILL.md` the steps and my brand rules
- ✓ `brand-fonts/` so every slide looks like me
- ✓ `template.html` the slide layout

ME

Make a carousel about my London week

Claude replies "Reading seda-carousel/SKILL.md" and gets to work, the same way every time.

Where

In the Claude apps on every plan, Free included, when code execution is on. And in Claude Code.

Still not an agent

A Skill makes the work consistent. It doesn't decide what happens after.

Same steps every time.

LEVEL 4

Tools: now it can do things

Web search, calendar, Gmail, Drive.

ME

Find me a London AI event this week.

Claude searched the web and came back: “Found 3. Want me to shortlist the best one?”

That’s real work, not just writing. Then it handed the job back to me. Shortlist, book, add to my calendar: I still decide every next step.

Where

In Claude, the tools are web search and connectors like Gmail, Google Calendar and Google Drive.

↑ *so close.*

LEVEL 5

Agent: you give a goal. It finishes the job.

It plans, uses the tools, checks its own work and keeps going. You come back to a result, not a question.

GOAL

Add subtitles to my new reel.

- 01** **Transcribed** my voice.
- 02** **Wrote** the subtitles.
- 03** **Burned** them into the video.
- 04** **Checked the frames**, found a typo, fixed it. **That's the loop.** Nobody told it to check.
- 05** **Delivered** `reel-final.mp4`.
- 06** **Stopped** and asked me before posting.

Claude Code

The agent I use. It works on the files on my computer. Paid plans.

Claude Cowork

Claude Code's agent powers for everyday work beyond coding. Paid plans.

Good agents ask before anything public.

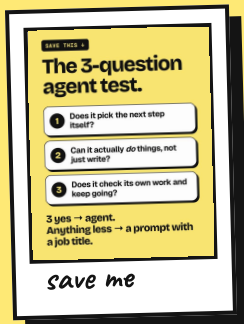
SAVE THIS

The 3-question agent test

Run it on any tool that calls itself an agent.

- 01** Does it pick the next step itself?
- 02** Can it actually do things, not just write?
- 03** Does it check its own work and keep going?

3 yes → **agent**. Anything less → a prompt with a job title.



Screenshot it. I won't tell.

Bonus

Does it stop and ask before anything risky, like posting, paying or deleting? The good ones do.

TRY IT

Prompt vs goal

An agent needs the finish line, not the next step.

Prompt

"Write subtitles for this text."

Goal

"Add subtitles to my reel, check them and give me the final file."

A GOAL TO PASTE INTO CLAUDE CODE (select + copy)

My reel is reel.mp4 in this folder. Goal: add burned-in subtitles in a clean, readable style. Transcribe my voice, write the subtitles, burn them in, then check the frames and fix any mistakes before you show me. Save it as reel-final.mp4 next to the original and don't change or delete the original. Ask me before installing anything.

Say what done looks like

A file, a list, a draft. Name it.

Say where to stop

"Ask me before posting, paying or deleting."

Then leave it alone

Come back to a result. That's the point.

Try it on a copy first.

PLOT TWIST

Claude made this whole carousel

From one sentence. With a typo.

WHAT I TYPED

make me a quick carousel so I posted something today

- 01 Studied** a post I liked.
- 02 Turned** my office clip into the cover.
- 03 Wrote** 8 slides, in my fonts.
- 04 Checked** every slide and fixed the mess.



via Claude Code · ChatGPT gave notes · I approved the words

So I ran my own test on it. Picked the next steps itself? Yes. Actually made the files? Yes. Checked its own work? Yes. 3 yes. Agent. 🤖

I still approved every word.

Agent or prompt?

Now you know the difference.

*Run the test on your favourite AI tool
and tell me its score 🙄*



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Sources, checked 26 Oct 2026:

- [Building effective AI agents \(Anthropic\)](#)
- [What are projects? \(Claude Help Center\)](#)
- [What are skills? \(Claude Help Center\)](#)
- [Enable and use web search \(Claude Help Center\)](#)
- [Use Google Workspace connectors \(Claude Help Center\)](#)
- [Claude Code overview \(Claude Code Docs\)](#)
- [Get started with Claude Cowork \(Claude Help Center\)](#)