

What Can AI Do? ChatGPT and Codex for Beginners

A Simple, Practical Guide to Using AI at Work

Start with Everyday Tasks—Even a Messy Spreadsheet

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Before You Begin

This is a practical introduction to using ChatGPT and Codex at work. Product screens, features, available plans, prices, and usage limits can change. Check current official information and your own account before subscribing, paying, sending confidential information, deleting files, or publishing anything.

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Introduction: When Someone Tells You to “Use AI to Automate Your Work”

“From now on, we need you to use AI to work more efficiently.”

“Can’t we automate this process with AI?”

Has a manager or business owner ever said something like this to you?

You have been told to use AI.

You have been told to automate your work.

But you have no idea where to begin.

You cannot write software.

You have used ChatGPT, but you are not sure what to do with it beyond asking questions or drafting text.

There is no budget to hire an outside specialist, and no one around you seems to know much more than you do.

If that sounds familiar, this book is for you.

You do not have to become a programmer to use Codex.

The Final Chapter Shows Work That Was Actually Completed

You may be thinking, “I understand the explanation, but can this really help me at work?”

That is why the final chapter is a collection of **real examples**.

It covers a company website that had become difficult to update, revisions and diagrams for the book you are reading now, the creation of PDF and Kindle files,

an AEO-and-landing-page project, an AI system called AI Clairvoyant, and the public WorldScene website, which brings together more than twenty apps.

These are not examples in which someone merely asked for instructions.

They are examples in which work was assigned to Codex, actual files and screens changed, and a person inspected the completed deliverables.

My experience was one discovery after another: “Codex can do this, too?”

If you want to see the real examples first, you can jump directly to Chapter 27 from the table of contents. Then return to the chapters that are closest to your own work.

This book is not asking you to memorize how to write long programs.

It is asking you to learn how to hand a troublesome task to Codex—and how to check the work when it comes back.

“Use AI” Does Not Tell You What to Do Today

“Use AI” is an enormous instruction.

By itself, it does not tell you what to do today.

Should you upload every internal document to an AI system?

Should you introduce a new company-wide platform?

Should you train every employee?

Should you redesign all the company's work at once?

When you begin with a plan that large, research and meetings tend to multiply. Someone creates comparison charts, researches prices, checks security, and drafts an implementation plan.

Yet the work on the front line may not become any easier at all.

This book starts in the opposite direction.

Choose one small task that you already understand well.

Clean up one Excel workbook.

Create one PowerPoint presentation.

Organize one job that you repeat every month.

Fix one section of a website.

Create a small, concrete deliverable and inspect it for yourself. Once you know it is useful, expand to the next task.

Even with ChatGPT, You May Still Be Doing the Final Work Yourself

ChatGPT can be an excellent thinking partner.

You can ask it about an Excel formula.

You can have it suggest the structure of a proposal.

You can ask it to draft website copy.

You can ask it to explain an unfamiliar term.

But after reading the answer, you may still have to do the actual work.

Open Excel.

Enter the formula.

Fix the error.

Move the text into PowerPoint.

Format the slides.

Find the website files.

Publish the changes.

Knowing the method does not make your job easier if the work itself is still unfinished.

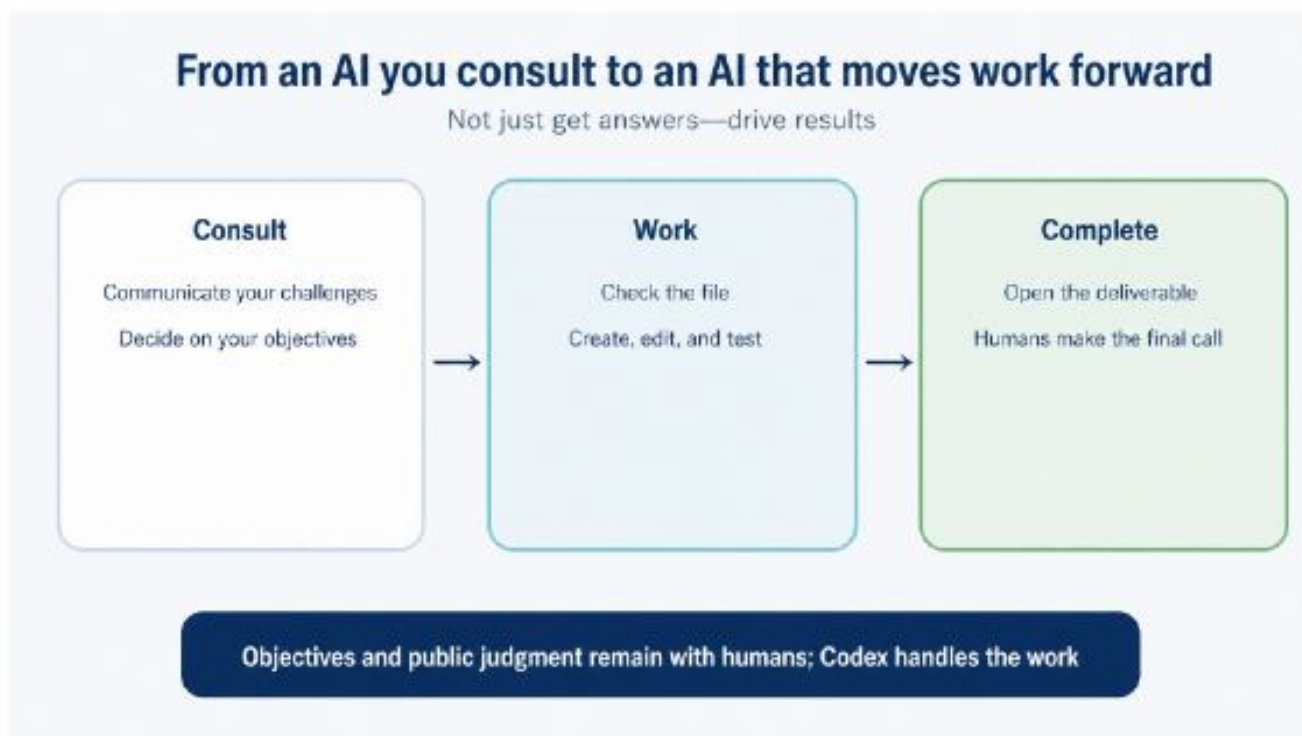


Figure 0-1. The difference between advice, action, and a completed deliverable

AI Can Now Do More Than Answer Questions

Codex changes the way you can work with AI.

The familiar pattern looks like this:

1. A person asks a question.
2. ChatGPT answers.
3. The person reads the answer.
4. The person carries out the work.

With Codex, the pattern can look like this:

1. A person assigns a task.
2. Codex inspects the relevant files and system.
3. Codex carries out the work.
4. Codex makes revisions and runs checks when necessary.
5. A person reviews the deliverable.

The relationship changes from “ask AI for advice” to “assign work to AI.”

That change is the starting point of this book.

Codex Is the Part of ChatGPT That Works on Code and Projects

As of August 31, 2026, the ChatGPT experience brings Chat, Work, and Codex together while giving each a different role.

Chat helps you ask questions, explore possibilities, and think through a problem. Work turns goals, files, and context into documents, spreadsheets, presentations, and other deliverables. Codex is designed to understand codebases, build and test features, fix bugs, and review changes.

This book focuses primarily on Codex in the ChatGPT desktop app for Windows.

You do not need to memorize every product name or technical distinction at the beginning. For now, remember one idea: you can ask AI not only for an explanation, but also for a concrete result you can inspect.

Screens, features, supported environments, prices, and plans can change. Whenever this book discusses a product-specific detail, treat it as information current at the time of writing. Before using it, check the latest official OpenAI documentation and your organization’s policies.

Official reference: <https://learn.chatgpt.com/>

The Change the Author Experienced

The author had used ChatGPT before trying Codex. Even so, the first experience with Codex came with a genuine surprise.

My experience was one discovery after another: “Codex can do this, too?”

It could clean up an Excel file.

It could create the presentation itself.

It could fix a website.

It could build a small system.

It could run what it had built, inspect the result, and revise the work.

After each finished task, a new question appeared: “If it can do this, could I give it the next job as well?”

The AI was no longer only answering questions. It was carrying work forward inside the computer.

In the past, tasks such as the following often required a developer or production company:

- building a company website;
- creating a service landing page;
- processing Excel data;
- building a small business system; and
- deploying that system to a server.

Hiring a specialist can be the right choice, but not every task receives a budget.

Useful ideas are often postponed for familiar reasons:

“This is too small to send to a production company.”

“We cannot spend money on it right now.”

“I only want to test a small version, but preparing an outside request is a project in itself.”

As a result, something worth building can remain stalled for months.

Codex changed the order of the work.

Do not begin by committing a large budget.

First, give the idea a concrete shape.

Look at the real thing.

Decide whether it is useful.

Correct what is wrong.

Move into full production only after the need has become clear.

The question changes from “We cannot build it because we have no budget” to “Can we build a small version and test it first?”

This is not merely a cheaper way to produce something. It is a change in who can move an idea forward and when they can begin.

This Is Not a Technical Manual

The purpose of this book is not to turn you into an engineer.

You do not need to memorize a large vocabulary of technical terms or learn to read pages of code.

Instead, the book focuses on the before and after of a job.

What used to take time?

What do you give Codex?

Which parts of the task can Codex carry out?

What is the deliverable?

What must a person check?

How does the work become easier?

The important measures are not how complicated the technology sounds. The important questions are:

- Did it reduce manual work?

- Did it reduce the time required?
- Could you test an idea before outsourcing it?
- Did it reduce waiting?
- Can you actually use the deliverable?
- Does the result help a customer or user?

Code is not the main character in this book.

The completed work is the main character.

Look at the Diagram Before Reading the Explanation

Each practical example begins with a diagram.

The left side shows the work a person used to do.

The center shows Codex.

The right side shows the completed deliverable or improved state.

Begin with the diagram. Identify what goes into Codex and what comes out. The detailed explanation will be easier to follow after you understand that overall flow.

Text inside the figures is intentionally brief. Use the main text for fuller explanations, sample instructions, cautions, and ways to apply the same idea elsewhere.

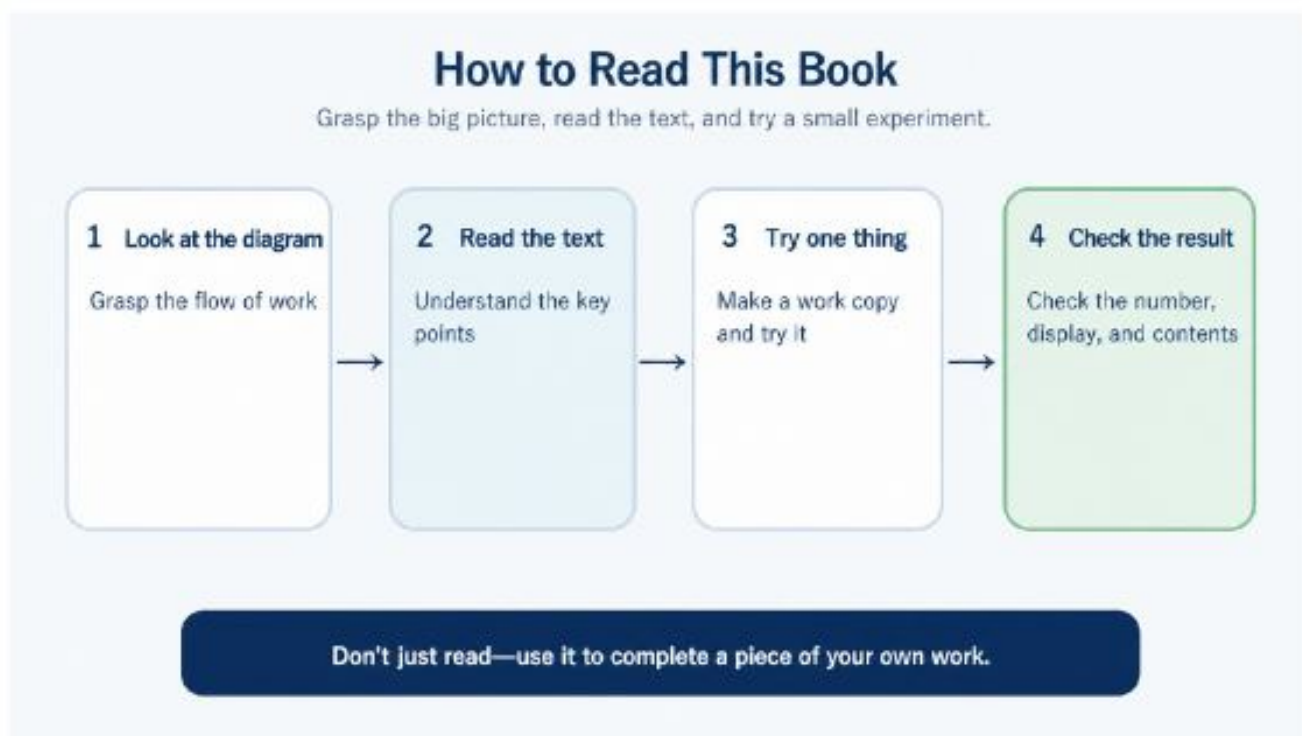


Figure 0-2. Read the diagram, understand the explanation, try a small task, and verify the result

Find the Work Closest to Yours Among Twenty Examples

This book presents twenty practical examples.

It begins with Excel and CSV files: cleaning up a workbook, combining multiple files, organizing customer lists, repairing garbled text, preparing monthly summaries, and aggregating sales data.

It then moves to Word and document work: extracting information from many documents, comparing old and new versions, preparing a standard report, and summarizing a survey.

The sales and planning examples cover a PowerPoint proposal and a plan for a new service.

The computer-work examples cover renaming files, organizing folders, and turning repetitive steps into a repeatable workflow.

The website examples include editing an existing page, creating a new company website, and building a page for a new service.

Finally, the book shows how an Excel-based process can become a web system and how that system can be prepared for use on a server.

You do not have to try every example in order. Start with the work that resembles your own.

However, Chapters 1 through 3 explain the basic way to work with Codex. If this is your first time, read those chapters before jumping ahead.

Real Examples and Teaching Examples Are Different

The company names, customer names, file names, and numbers in the twenty examples are illustrative. They are there to make the workflow easy to understand.

They should not be read as the author's actual files, elapsed times, costs, errors, or business results.

When the book discusses the author's real experience, it distinguishes verified facts from claims that would require further confirmation.

The final chapter contains examples that include the redesign of a real, publicly available company website. Even there, the fact that something was made public is kept separate from any unverified business outcome.

Adapt the Sample Instructions to Your Work

Each example includes a sample instruction for Codex.

You can copy it as a starting point, but change the file names, column names, customer names, folders, and acceptance criteria to match your real task.

A useful instruction does not have to be long. It needs to communicate the right information:

- What is the problem?
- What material should Codex use?
- What result do you want?
- What must Codex not do?

If you do not know part of the answer, say so. You can ask Codex to help you clarify the task before it changes anything.

Codex Can Make Mistakes

Even when Codex says, “Done,” inspect the finished work.

Open the Excel workbook.

Check the number of rows and the totals.

Open the PowerPoint presentation.

View the website in a browser.

Use the system yourself.

Keep the source files.

Make a backup.

Do not begin by changing the production environment.

AI can carry out the work, but people still decide whether the result is correct and useful.

You can delegate work to AI without delegating the purpose of the work.

What I Hope You Do After Closing This Book

When you finish this book, you do not have to remember the name of every Codex feature.

It is enough if you want to try just one of these:

- ask Codex to clean up one Excel file;
- ask it to create one PowerPoint presentation; or
- discuss one frustrating task and find a safe first step.

The goal is to help you move from this reaction:

"I thought Codex was only for programmers."

to this one:

"I could use this in my own work."

Then, while the idea is still fresh, assign one small task.

Let us begin with Chapter 1. We will look at the difference between ChatGPT and Codex—not as a difficult technical distinction, but as a difference in how work gets done.

Chapter 1: What Is the Difference Between ChatGPT and Codex?

Central idea of this chapter **ChatGPT** is an AI you can talk things through with. **Codex** is an AI you can assign work to.

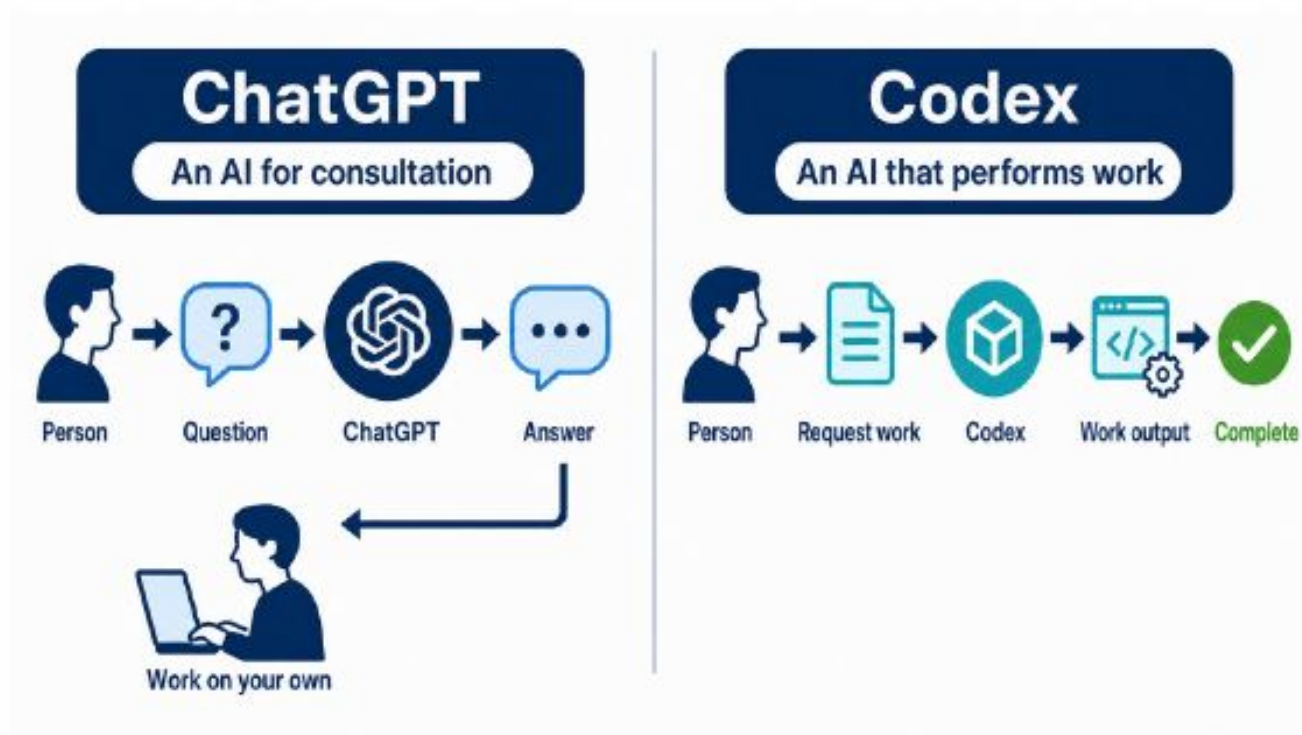


Figure 1. The difference between ChatGPT and Codex

Begin with Figure 1. It contrasts a workflow in which you ask for advice and then carry out the work yourself with one in which you assign a task to Codex and inspect the finished deliverable.

Begin with This Diagram

On the left side, a person asks AI a question.

The AI answers.

But the person still performs the work that follows.

On the right side, a person assigns work to AI.

The AI inspects the relevant files, then creates or processes the deliverable.

At the end, the person sees more than an explanation of how the task could be done. The person can inspect the file that was created or the screen that was changed.

This is the first difference I want you to understand.

AI can now do more than answer. It can carry out real work.

Codex Works on Code, Files, and Projects in the ChatGPT Desktop App

The name *Codex* may sound intimidating when you first hear it. You may assume it is a specialist tool intended only for programmers.

This book begins with a simpler way to think about it.

This book shows you how to assign work through Codex in the ChatGPT desktop app for Windows.

As of August 31, 2026, ChatGPT brings together Chat, Work, and Codex for different kinds of activity. Chat supports questions and discussion. Work turns goals, files, and context into documents, spreadsheets, presentations, and other deliverables. Codex focuses on understanding projects and codebases, making changes, testing, and review.

This book concentrates on Codex and its ability to work with files, code, and projects.

If you have used ChatGPT, you already understand the basic experience of asking AI for something in everyday language.

You can ask a question.

You can ask for a draft.

You can request ideas.

You can ask for a clearer way to say something.

The conversational starting point is similar in Codex. You do not need to memorize a special command language.

What changes is what happens after the request.

When this book refers to “ChatGPT” in a comparison, it often means the familiar use of Chat: you ask for advice and then act on the answer yourself.

Codex can be assigned the work itself.

That distinction must not be exaggerated. At the time of writing, ChatGPT also includes Work for creating documents, spreadsheets, presentations, and other deliverables, and it offers computer-use capabilities in supported contexts. It would therefore be inaccurate to say that “ChatGPT cannot create deliverables” or “ChatGPT cannot operate a computer.”

This book is not trying to make one product name defeat another.

It is contrasting two working patterns: asking in a normal chat how to do something and then performing the steps yourself, versus giving Codex a defined workspace and asking it to inspect files, make changes, run tools, test the result, and prepare the work for review.

OpenAI’s current documentation similarly presents Chat as a place to ask questions and explore ideas, Work as a way to create useful deliverables from goals and files, and Codex as a way to understand codebases, build and test features, fix bugs, and review changes.

Official reference: <https://learn.chatgpt.com/>



Actual Codex workspace used to edit this book

The original Japanese interface is preserved as evidence. Personal and sensitive information was redacted in the source image.

Actual screen. Codex editing the planning file for this book

This is not a fictional mockup made only for the explanation.

The author gave Codex the revision policy for this book, and Codex edited the actual planning file.

The original screen shows the changed file and amount of change near the top. The center contains the author's request and Codex's work. The project area appears to the side. Project names and personal information that are not needed for publication have been hidden.

The important point is that Codex did not merely write an answer. It located the planning file, changed its contents, and left the result in a form the author could inspect.

Screens, feature names, and supported environments may change. This screen is presented as evidence from the time the book was produced, and current behavior should be checked in official OpenAI documentation.

What Does Codex Do Inside a Workspace?



Supporting figure. Six kinds of work Codex can perform in a workspace

When you assign work to Codex, you give it a folder, project, or set of files as the working area.

Within the permitted scope, Codex can inspect relevant files, create documents and pages, process existing data, run necessary tools, test counts or behavior, and revise the work when a problem is found.

That connected sequence is a major difference from asking a normal chat for instructions alone.

Not every task uses all six kinds of work.

For an Excel task, Codex might inspect the workbook, process the data, and verify the number of rows.

For a website, it might inspect the structure, make a change, and verify the display in a browser.

For a small system, it might create the necessary files, run the application, operate it, and fix the problems it finds.

This does not mean giving Codex unlimited access to everything. You decide where it may work and what it must not change.

Chapter 2 explains how to prepare that boundary.

When You Asked ChatGPT for the Method

Imagine that you have an Excel customer list.

You want to add a phone-number column, review possible duplicate customers, and standardize the date format.

In the past, you might have asked ChatGPT:

Please explain how to remove duplicates in Excel.

ChatGPT can explain which menu to open, which columns to select, and which button to click.

The answer may be useful. But you still have to open Excel, select the columns, choose the settings, and check that nothing went wrong.

If your screen looks different from the explanation, you ask again. If an error appears, you copy the message and return to the chat.

You spend time reading the answer and time performing the operation.

The AI is acting as an advisor. The human is still the operator.

With Codex, You Provide the Excel File Itself

The request changes when you use Codex.

Instead of asking only for the method, you provide the workbook and say:

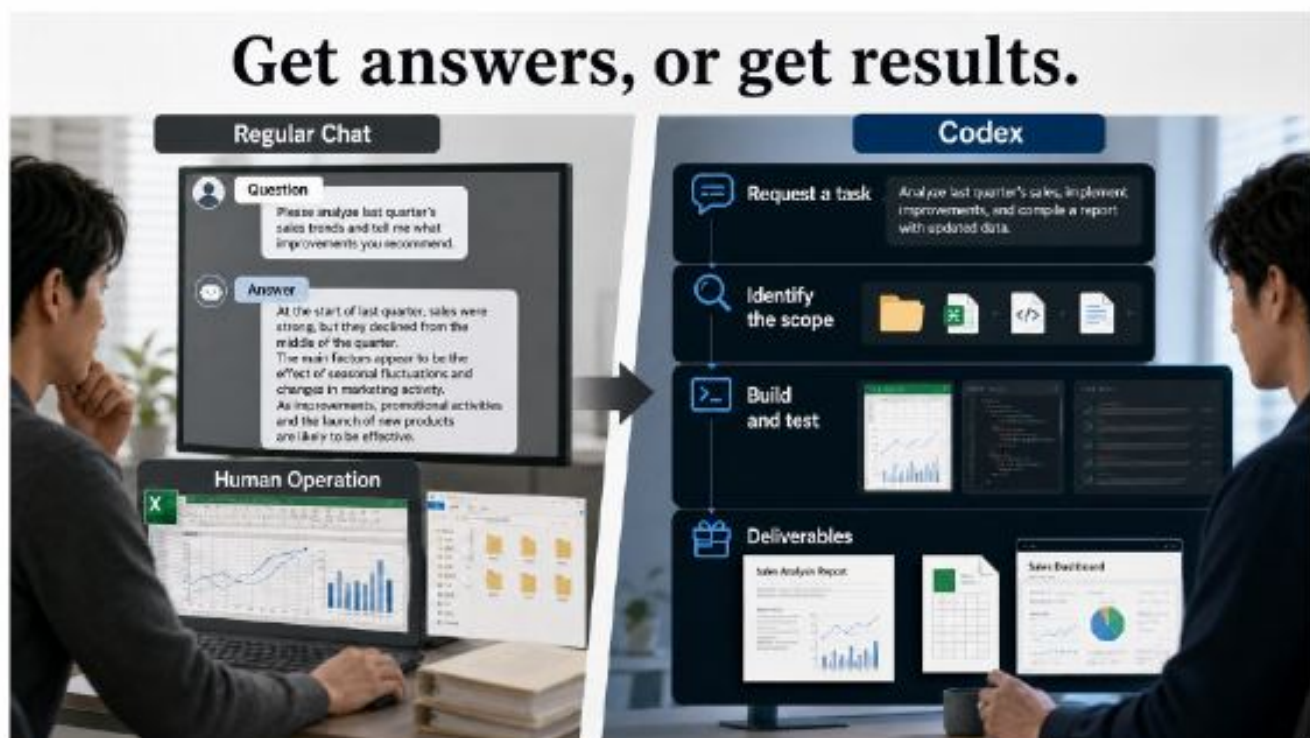
Add a phone-number column to this Excel workbook. Do not automatically delete customers who may be duplicates. Put them on a separate worksheet for review. Do not modify the original file. Save the completed workbook under a new name.

Codex inspects the file and determines which columns it contains. It carries out the requested processing, checks counts where needed, and creates a revised workbook.

Instead of repeating dozens of clicks from an explanation, you open the completed workbook and review it.

This is not a request to hand over every decision to AI. The human role moves from performing each mechanical step to reviewing the completed deliverable.

Receive Completed Work, Not Only an Answer



Supporting figure. Receiving an answer versus receiving a deliverable

When you consult ChatGPT, the main thing you receive is an answer.

When you assign work to Codex, the result can include more than an answer:

- a processed Excel workbook;
- an organized CSV file;
- a PowerPoint presentation;
- a revised website; or
- a small management system that runs in a browser.

The goal is a form you can actually use.

The available actions still depend on the task, environment, tools, permissions, and plan. Company security rules may block an operation. Required software or source material may be missing. Codex may need to stop and ask you for a decision.

Even with those limits, there is a meaningful difference between explaining how work could be done and carrying the work forward.

Ask for the PowerPoint File, Not Only Advice on How to Make It

The same distinction appears when you create a sales proposal.

Many people ask ChatGPT for an outline and then paste the resulting text into PowerPoint.

They paste the title.

They paste the body text.

They change font sizes.

They add diagrams.

They align the content on every slide.

AI reduces the burden of deciding what to say, but the production work remains.

With Codex, you can provide customer information, product material, a price sheet, and an earlier presentation, then ask for the PowerPoint file itself:

Create a sales proposal for Example Corporation. Use the product information and price sheet I provided. Preserve the general tone of the earlier proposal. Use only prices and performance figures that appear in the source material.

After the file is created, a person reviews it.

Does it address the customer's problem?

Are the prices correct?

Does it make claims that are too strong?

Will it be easy to explain in a sales meeting?

You can delegate the production without delegating responsibility for the proposal.

A Website Does Not End with Draft Copy

If you discuss a website with ChatGPT, it can propose copy and design ideas. That alone is useful.

But placing the copy on a real page, adjusting colors and spacing, making the page readable on a phone, and publishing the change all require additional work.

Some of that work requires specialist knowledge. Hiring a professional production company can also involve cost and waiting time.

Important websites often deserve professional help. But it may be difficult to approve a large budget for a new service page before you know whether the service will sell.

With Codex, you can use the text and images you already have to create a small page and inspect it.

You do not have to begin with a large finished website.

First, create something visible.

Show it inside the company.

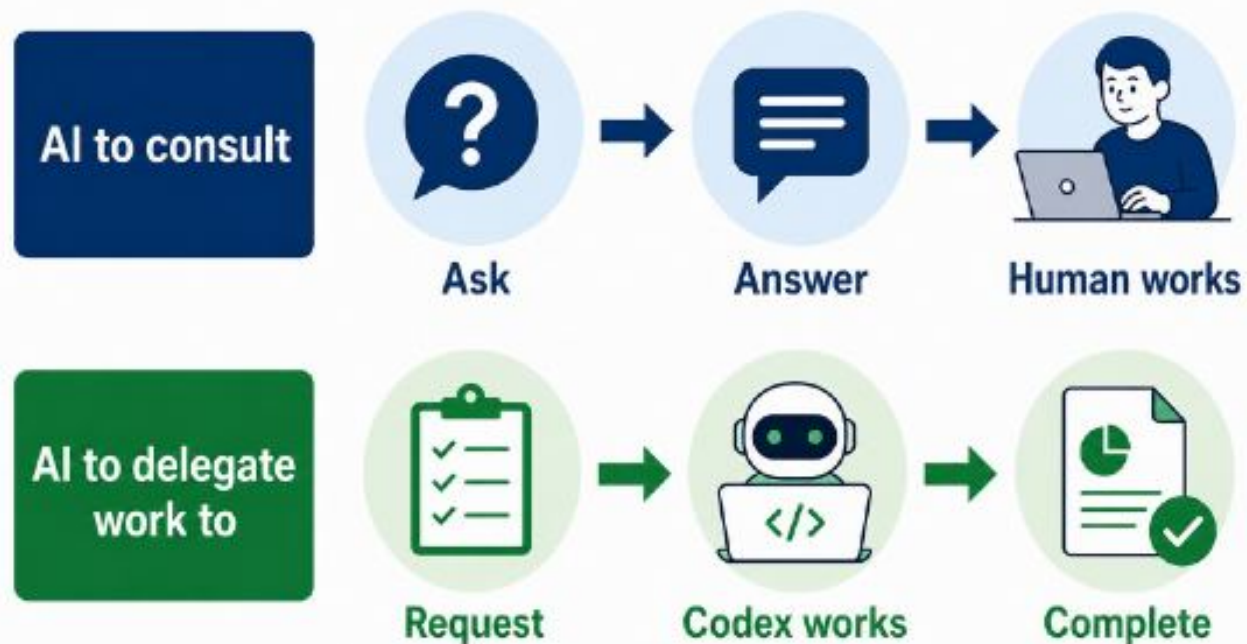
Correct what does not fit.

Then decide whether it deserves to be published or developed further.

A task that was previously stopped by “We do not have the budget to build it” may become “Let us build a small version and test it first.”

The program is not the main achievement. The achievement is having a page that can explain the new service.

From “AI Answers” to “AI Works”



Supporting figure. Consulting AI and assigning work to AI

The traditional flow looks like this:

1. A person asks a question.
2. ChatGPT answers.
3. The person reads the answer.
4. The person performs the work.
5. If it fails, the person asks another question.

With Codex, the flow changes:

1. A person explains the goal.
2. The person provides the required files and source material.
3. Codex inspects the target.
4. Codex creates, processes, or revises the work.
5. Codex runs relevant checks when possible.
6. A person reviews the deliverable.
7. The person requests corrections where needed.

The human role does not disappear. It moves.

Instead of spending all your time on detailed manual operations, you decide what should be built and whether the result is correct.

The change can be summarized in one sentence:

Move from consulting AI to assigning work to AI.

Codex Is Not Only for Programmers

Codex is often introduced as an AI that can work with software. That can make non-programmers assume it has nothing to do with them.

In everyday business, however, the important question is not which lines of code Codex wrote.

Did the Excel workbook become usable?

Was the proposal completed?

Was the website repaired?

Did the monthly reporting process become easier?

Is there now a management screen that people can search?

The completed work is what deserves evaluation.

Not everyone who drives a car needs to know how to build an engine. In the same way, you do not need to know how to write software before you can assign an appropriate task to Codex.

You still decide the destination.

What do you want to build?

Who will use it?

What would make it useful enough?

Those decisions remain human responsibilities.

Do Not Treat Codex as Omnipotent

Codex does not guarantee that every task will be completed successfully.

If the source data is wrong, the result may also be wrong.

If the instruction is ambiguous, the deliverable may differ from what you expected.

Codex cannot automatically know what a customer truly wants, nor can it know every internal rule or fact held only by one employee.

Contracts, law, accounting, personal information, and production servers require especially careful review.

That is why human verification remains necessary.

If Codex says the job is complete, open the Excel workbook. Check the number of records and the totals. Open the PowerPoint presentation. View the website in a browser. Operate the system yourself.

Keep the source file. Make a backup. Do not begin by changing production.

Codex can become a capable working partner. It is not a partner whose output should be accepted without review.

Use ChatGPT and Codex for Different Purposes

The question is not whether ChatGPT or Codex is universally better.

Choose according to the purpose.

Work That Is Easy to Discuss in ChatGPT

- organizing your thoughts;
- generating ideas;
- finding a better way to phrase something;
- explaining something you do not understand; and
- clarifying discussion points before a meeting.

Work That Is Natural to Assign to Codex

- processing a file you already have;
- combining several source files;
- creating a PowerPoint presentation or report;
- turning repeated steps into a reusable workflow;
- revising a website;
- building a small system; and
- checking or testing a deliverable.

In practice, discussion and execution can form one continuous loop.

You may begin by clarifying the goal. Once the direction is clear, you can ask for the deliverable. After inspecting it, you can return to discussion and request a revision.

That back-and-forth is itself a major advantage.

The Change the Author Experienced

The author had used ChatGPT for some time. The experience of using Codex nevertheless changed his view of AI.

My experience was one discovery after another: “Codex can do this, too?”

Each completed task suggested another possibility.

If Codex could process an Excel file, could it turn the monthly version into a repeatable workflow?

If it could repair a website, could it create a new page?

If it could create a page, could it build a small internal system?

If it could build a system, could it prepare that system for a place where people could actually use it?

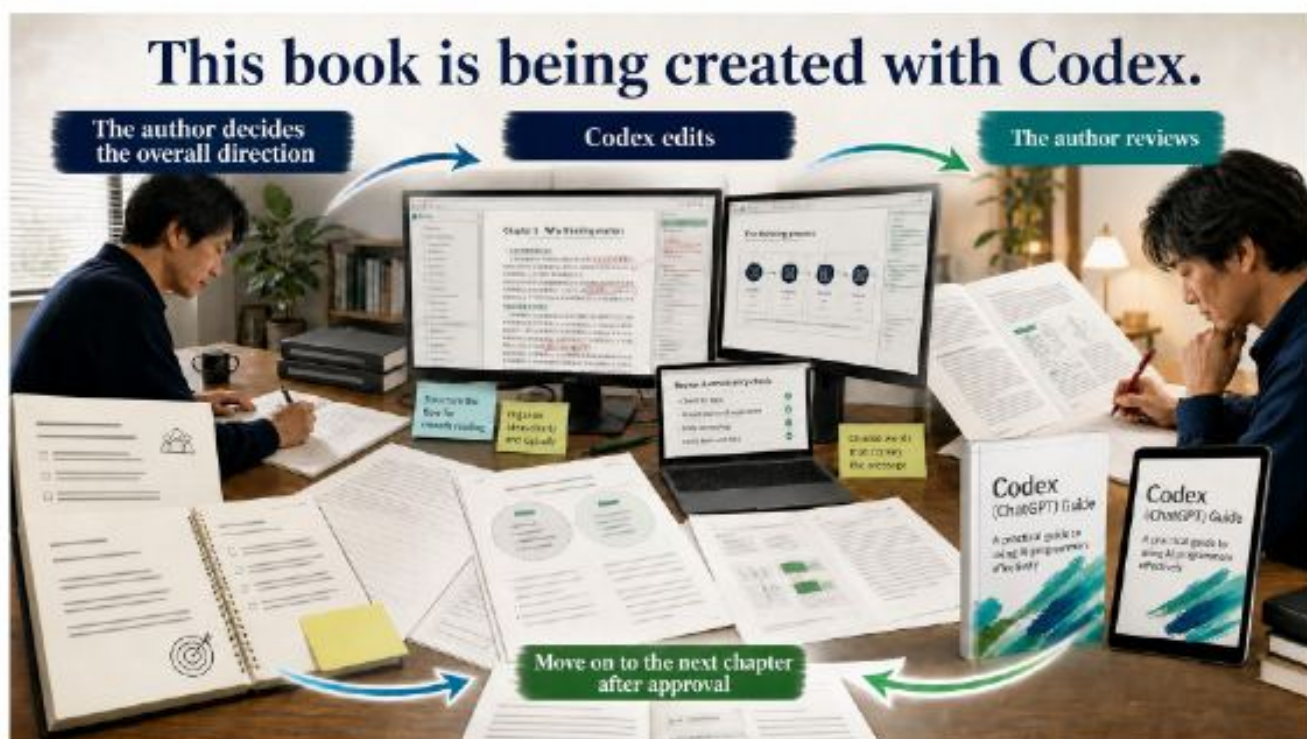
The chapters in this book follow that sense of expanding possibility.

AI had once been something that returned an answer. With Codex, AI carried out work inside the computer: processing Excel, creating a website, building a service page, creating a small system, and preparing the steps required for deployment.

The important change was the ability to move forward on work that once had to wait for a developer or production company.

This edition does not add guessed dates, costs, elapsed times, or outcomes to make the story sound more impressive. General examples remain general, and real examples are limited to facts that can be supported.

The Production of This Book Is Also an Example



Supporting figure. This book is being produced with Codex

The author and Codex also have separate roles in producing this book.

The author decides who should read it, what it should communicate, and which parts need revision.

Codex inspects the manuscript, diagrams, images, and publication data, then carries out the requested changes.

The author reviews the revised text and figures and decides whether they are readable, practical, and factually sound.

Avoiding large changes to later chapters before an earlier direction has been approved is part of that division of responsibility.

The workflow explained in this book is also being used to produce the book itself.

The Subject Is Finished Work, Not Code

Codex may use code while carrying out a task, but long code listings are not the focus of this book.

The reader does not need to memorize how the program was written.

The important transformations are these:

- an Excel workbook that could not be processed becomes usable;
- scattered material becomes one proposal;
- monthly manual work becomes a repeatable workflow;
- an abandoned website can be updated; and
- a process managed only in Excel becomes usable in a browser.

Even when code exists in the middle of the process, evaluate the deliverable.

Did the work become easier?

Was manual effort reduced?

Did waiting decrease?

Could you test an idea before outsourcing it?

Did you create something people can actually use?

That perspective runs through the entire book.

Chapter Summary

Remember three points from this chapter.

First:

Codex works on files, code, and projects through the ChatGPT desktop experience and other supported Codex surfaces.

This book focuses on Codex in the desktop app for Windows.

Second:

ChatGPT is an AI you can talk things through with. Codex is an AI you can assign work to.

You can ask for file processing and finished deliverables, not only instructions.

Third:

Even when AI performs the work, do not outsource the final verification.

Codex carries the task forward. People remain responsible for the purpose and quality.

Chapter 2 prepares you to begin using Codex. It covers more than opening the app: you will create a safe working folder, preserve source files, understand change permissions, and identify what to inspect first.

You now know that Codex can work with files. The next question is practical: “How do I begin safely on my own computer?”

The next chapter takes you from launching Codex to giving it a working folder and asking it to inspect the first file.

You are not preparing to ask AI another question. You are preparing to give AI a real task.