

Mode 1: Subscribe + Built-in Interface

The fastest way to start using AI
with zero coding.

WHAT YOU GET

- ChatGPT vs Claude vs Gemini compared (features, price, strengths)
- Step-by-step sign-up + setup for each platform
- A tour of the chat interface (input, history, upload, voice)
- 5 student use cases: from paper summaries to language practice
- Basic prompt engineering tips + pitfalls to avoid
- A bridge into Module 03 (Mode 2 API + CLI)

Nicky Pandelaki

AI Engineer & Creator · Tangerang, 2026

Series: [Module 01 \(Overview\)](#) -> [02 \(Mode 1\)](#) · [03 \(Mode 2\)](#) · [04 \(Mode 3\)](#)

Introduction

Welcome to Module 02. If you have read Module 01, you already know there are 3 ways to access AI: subscribe UI, API/CLI, and custom app. This module is a deep dive into Mode 1, the fastest and best-fit option if you have never written a line of code.

Goal: by the end of this module, you can start using AI today. Sign up to any platform, navigate the UI, and walk away with real use cases you can put into practice.

Who this module is for

- Students unsure how to start using AI for studying
- Professionals outside of IT who are curious about AI
- Creatives who have heard about ChatGPT or Claude but never tried them seriously
- Anyone with zero technical skills who needs a straight-to-the-point guide

What you need

- An active email (Gmail is easiest)
- A browser (Chrome, Firefox, Edge, or Safari)
- A stable internet connection
- (Optional) A credit or debit card if you want to upgrade to a paid plan

Your guide persona: Alex

Meet Alex Chen, a junior Communications major at a US university.

Alex is 20 years old, with zero coding background and zero IT experience. Their days are full of classes, group projects, and a growing pile of assignments: 30-page academic papers to summarize, 2000-word essays, group presentations, and a senior thesis coming up. Friends mention ChatGPT, but Alex has no idea how to start. This module walks them from zero to Mode 1 power user.

Section 1: Three Main Players

There are many AI products out there, but only three are worth considering for Mode 1: ChatGPT, Claude, and Gemini. Each has its own strengths.

1.1 ChatGPT (OpenAI)

The most popular and has the widest ecosystem. Image generation (DALL-E), custom GPTs, plugin and tool access, smooth voice mode, and many experimental features that ship first here. URL: chatgpt.com

- Free tier: access to GPT-5-mini, limited messages per hour
- Plus (20 USD per month): full GPT-5, image gen, voice, more quota
- Best for: general brainstorming, image gen, trying new features first

1.2 Claude (Anthropic)

Best for long-form writing, document analysis, and code review. The largest context window (millions of tokens), so you can upload 100+ page documents to discuss. URL: claude.ai

- Free tier: Claude Sonnet, daily message limit
- Pro (20 USD per month): Claude Opus, 5x more quota, project mode
- Best for: summarizing long documents, longform writing, serious analysis, coding

1.3 Gemini (Google)

Best for multimodal work (image, video, audio in one chat) and tightly integrated with Workspace (Gmail, Docs, Drive). Largest context window and the most generous free tier. URL: gemini.google.com

- Free tier: Gemini 2.5 Pro, reasonable daily quota for beginners
- Google AI Pro (20 USD per month): full access, Workspace integration, deep research
- Best for: multimodal tasks, Google account integration, a serious free tier

1.4 Quick Comparison Table

| | ChatGPT | Claude | Gemini |
|------------------|---|---|---|
| URL | chatgpt.com | claude.ai | gemini.google.com |
| Free tier | Limited | Limited | More generous |
| Paid (per month) | \$20 | \$20 | \$20 |
| Image gen | Yes (DALL-E) | No | Yes (Imagen) |
| Voice chat | Yes, smooth | No | Yes |
| Context window | Medium | Largest | Large |
| Best at | General brainstorm | Long documents | Multimodal |

Section 2: Sign Up Step-by-Step

Start with the easiest option for students: Gemini, because you can sign in with your existing Google account. But all three follow a similar flow: visit the website, sign up with email, start chatting. Here is the detail.

2.1 Sign Up for ChatGPT (chatgpt.com)

1. Open a browser and visit chatgpt.com
2. Click 'Sign up' in the upper right
3. Choose 'Continue with Google' (easiest) or enter your email
4. Verify your email by clicking the confirmation link OpenAI sends
5. Fill in your full name, date of birth, and accept the terms of service
6. Done. You land on the chat page. Try typing 'Hello' in the input box at the bottom

To upgrade to Plus, click 'Upgrade' in the left sidebar and enter a credit or debit card. Most US bank cards work without issue.

2.2 Sign Up for Claude (claude.ai)

1. Open a browser and visit claude.ai
2. Click 'Sign up' in the middle of the page
3. Choose 'Continue with Google' or enter a custom email
4. Verify your phone number via SMS (Anthropic uses this for anti-bot)
5. Fill in basic profile info (name, role, intended use)
6. Done. You land on the chat page with Claude

To upgrade to Pro, click your name in the lower left, then 'Upgrade plan'. Same setup: a regular US credit or debit card works.

2.3 Sign Up for Gemini (gemini.google.com)

1. Open a browser and visit gemini.google.com
2. Log in with your existing Google account (or create a new one)
3. Accept the Google AI terms of service
4. Done. You land directly in the chat. The free tier is enough for early experiments

For Google AI Pro, click the upgrade banner in the sidebar or go to one.google.com/about. You can pay with any standard US debit or credit card via Google Pay.

Section 3: Interface Anatomy

Even though the platforms are different, the chat layouts are very similar. Once you know one, the rest are easy. Here are the universal components.

3.1 Main Components

Input Box (bottom of the screen)

Where you type your question. Press Enter to send, Shift+Enter for a new line. There is usually a button for file upload, mic (voice), and image attachment.

Send Button

An up arrow or send icon next to the input box. You can also just press Enter.

Chat History (left sidebar)

All your past chats live here, sorted by most recent. Click an old chat to continue it. You can rename chats for organization (for example: 'Thesis Chapter 2', 'Weekly Meal Plan').

New Chat Button

Usually a '+' or 'New chat' button at the top of the sidebar. Click it to start a fresh conversation. Important: a new chat means the AI does not remember the previous one. Different topic = different chat.

Settings (sidebar bottom / profile)

Where you manage preferences: dark/light theme, model picker (choose GPT-5 vs GPT-5-mini), subscription management, privacy settings.

3.2 Platform-Specific Features

| | ChatGPT | Claude | Gemini |
|----------------|--------------|----------|----------------|
| Upload PDF | Yes (Plus) | Yes | Yes |
| Upload image | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| Generate image | Yes (DALL-E) | No | Yes (Imagen) |
| Voice mode | Yes, smooth | No | Yes |
| Project mode | Custom GPTs | Projects | Gems |
| Web search | Yes (Plus) | Yes | Yes (built-in) |

Section 4: Alex's Use Cases

Now follow Alex through 5 real scenarios. Each use case gives you a prompt template you can copy, adapt, and use right away.

4.1 Use Case #1: Academic Paper Summary

Alex has a 30-page academic paper to summarize before class tomorrow.

Best platform: Claude (the strongest for long documents). Alex opens claude.ai, clicks the attach file button (paperclip), and uploads the PDF. Then types the prompt below.

Prompt Alex uses:

Please summarize the paper I uploaded, using this structure:

1. Research background (max 3 sentences)
2. Research methods (max 3 sentences)
3. Key findings (bullet points)
4. Conclusions and implications

Use academic style but make it easy to read.

4.2 Use Case #2: Brainstorm Essay Topics

Alex has a 2000-word essay due on the impact of social media and needs a fresh angle.

Best platform: ChatGPT or Claude. Alex uses conversation mode (not single-shot) so they can iterate until they land on a topic they like.

Prompt Alex uses:

I am a junior Communications major. Help me brainstorm 5 essay topics (2000 words) on the impact of social media that are underexplored but have concrete data. The topics must be:

- Specific (not generic 'social media impact on teens')
- Have a new or controversial angle
- Have available data or case studies

After I pick one, let us outline it together.

4.3 Use Case #3: Translate / Decode a Dense Paper

Alex finds a great paper but the writing is dense. They want it broken down section by section.

Best platform: Gemini or Claude. Alex uploads the PDF and asks for a section-by-section plain English breakdown.

Prompt Alex uses:

Please rewrite this paper in plain English, with these rules:

- Keep technical terms in their original form (with a one-line definition in parentheses)
- Go paragraph by paragraph, do not summarize
- Keep all references and citations in original format

Start with the Abstract and Introduction.

4.4 Use Case #4: Writing Practice Feedback

Alex is preparing for the GRE Analytical Writing section and wants daily essay feedback.

Best platform: ChatGPT (because you can save the prompt as a Custom GPT or project).

Prompt Alex uses (to start the session):

You are a GRE Analytical Writing tutor. I will send you a 30-minute essay each day.

For each essay, give feedback with this structure:

1. Estimated score (1-6)
2. Argument Analysis: feedback
3. Structure & Coherence: feedback
4. Vocabulary: feedback
5. Grammar Range: feedback with example sentences
6. 3 specific suggestions for improvement.

Start by asking me to send the first essay.

4.5 Use Case #5: Coding Assignment (For Beginners Learning to Code)

Alex is taking an Intro to Programming elective and needs to build a simple calculator.

Best platform: Claude (great at code) or ChatGPT. Do not just copy-paste. Ask for the explanation so you actually learn.

Prompt Alex uses:

I am a Python beginner. Help me build a simple calculator that:

- Takes 2 numbers from the user
- Lets them pick: add, subtract, multiply, or divide
- Outputs the result

Write the code first, then explain each line in plain English.

Also tell me what errors I should handle (e.g. divide by zero).

Academic Integrity: Very Important

AI helps you work faster, it does not replace your brain. Healthy ground rules:

- Do not copy-paste an assignment without reading and revising it yourself
- Use AI as a brainstorming partner, not as your final author
- Check your school's policy on AI usage (some professors are strict)
- Cite AI when you actually used it (transparency = professionalism)
- AI can hallucinate. Always verify important facts at primary sources

Section 5: Prompt Engineering Tips

A prompt is the instruction you give the AI. Quality prompt = quality output. Here are 5 principles that immediately raise your output quality.

5.1 Specific > Vague

Bad prompt: 'Help me write an essay.'

Good prompt: 'Help me write a 1500-word essay on the economic impact of the gig economy in the US, with intro-3 body paragraphs-conclusion, formal academic tone, target audience: undergraduate students.'

5.2 Give a Role / Persona

AI performs better when you assign a persona. Example: 'You are a Communications professor reviewing a student essay.' or 'You are a strict academic journal editor.'

5.3 Provide Examples (Few-Shot)

If you want a specific style, show one. Example: 'Write an Instagram caption in the style of this example: [paste example]. Topic: [new topic].'

5.4 Iterate, Do Not One-Shot

The first output is rarely perfect. Say 'shorter', 'more casual tone', 'change the ending', 'give me 3 alternatives'. The AI can adjust in real time. Conversation > single message.

5.5 Ask for Explicit Structure

If you need a specific format (table, bullets, numbered list, JSON), ask explicitly. Example: 'Answer as a bulleted list with 5 items, each at most 2 sentences.'

Bonus: Universal Template

```
[Role] - you are ...  
[Goal] - I want ...  
[Context] - I am [who], situation [what]  
[Constraint] - length [how much], style [what], format [what]  
[Example] - like [example]  
[Output] - give me [the result I want]
```

Section 6: Common Pitfalls

Before you go too deep, know the limits of AI. This helps you avoid embarrassing moments with professors or clients.

6.1 Hallucination

AI sometimes makes things up confidently. Examples: invented book titles, journal names, or historical figures that do not exist. Solution: always verify important facts at primary sources. Never trust quotes or references directly from AI.

6.2 Outdated Information

Free tiers often do not have live web search. The data has a cutoff (for example, GPT-5 cutoff 2025). If you need current data, use a paid tier with web search (Plus / Pro / Gemini).

6.3 Style Drift in Non-English Languages

AI output in non-English languages can feel less polished than English. Two tricks for the best result: (1) prompt in English and translate manually after, or (2) prompt in your language but add 'use natural, non-literal phrasing, avoid translated-from-English style'.

6.4 Context Limits

Super long chats can make the AI forget earlier turns. Solution: start a new chat for new topics. Or, in the middle of a long thread, ask: 'Before we continue, recap every decision we made in this chat as 5 bullet points.'

6.5 Privacy

What you share in chat can be used for training on some platforms. Safe: assignments, brainstorming, learning. Avoid: sensitive personal data (SSN, bank info, passwords), confidential client data, personal medical info.

Signals That AI Is Hallucinating

- Very confident but cannot cite a specific source
- Statistics that are suspiciously round (e.g. '67% of millennials...') with no source
- Book or journal titles that sound real but you have never heard of
- Long answers that do not actually address the core question

Section 7: What's Next?

You are now a Mode 1 expert. You can use AI for almost any daily task. But Mode 1 has limits you will feel over time.

Mode 1 Limits Alex Hits

After a week on claude.ai, Alex notices a few things.

- Summarizing 10 papers = upload one by one, copy-paste each result by hand
- Generating 30 Instagram captions for an internship project = 30 separate chats
- Daily writing practice = has to remember to open claude.ai every day, no reminders
- Wants to build an AI tool for their group = can't, only single-user usage

Every one of these limits is solved by Mode 2 and Mode 3. Mode 2 gives you the power to automate repetitive tasks with API + scripts. Mode 3 gives you the power to build your own AI tools that anyone can use, anytime.

Preview: Module 03 (Mode 2: API + CLI)

In Module 03, Alex learns:

- Install Python on their laptop (Windows/Mac), a one-time 30-minute setup
- Get an API key from Anthropic (Claude API) or Google (Gemini API)
- Write their first Python script that calls AI, reads a file, and produces output automatically
- Real project: a script that auto-summarizes 10 PDF papers into 1-page notes each

By the end of Module 03, Alex has a personal tool they can run anytime, saving hours of repetitive work.

Action Items Before You Continue

Before you open Module 03, do this so the learning actually sticks:

1. Sign up for one platform (recommendation: claude.ai), use the free tier for a week
2. Try the 5 use cases in Section 4 with the prompt templates. Adapt them to your needs
3. Invent one new use case relevant to your life (work, hobby, school)
4. Note: which tasks are you getting bored of doing manually? Those are the ones you will automate in Module 03

Nicky Pandelaki

AI Engineer & Creator

Next: Module 03 (Mode 2: API + CLI Deep Dive)