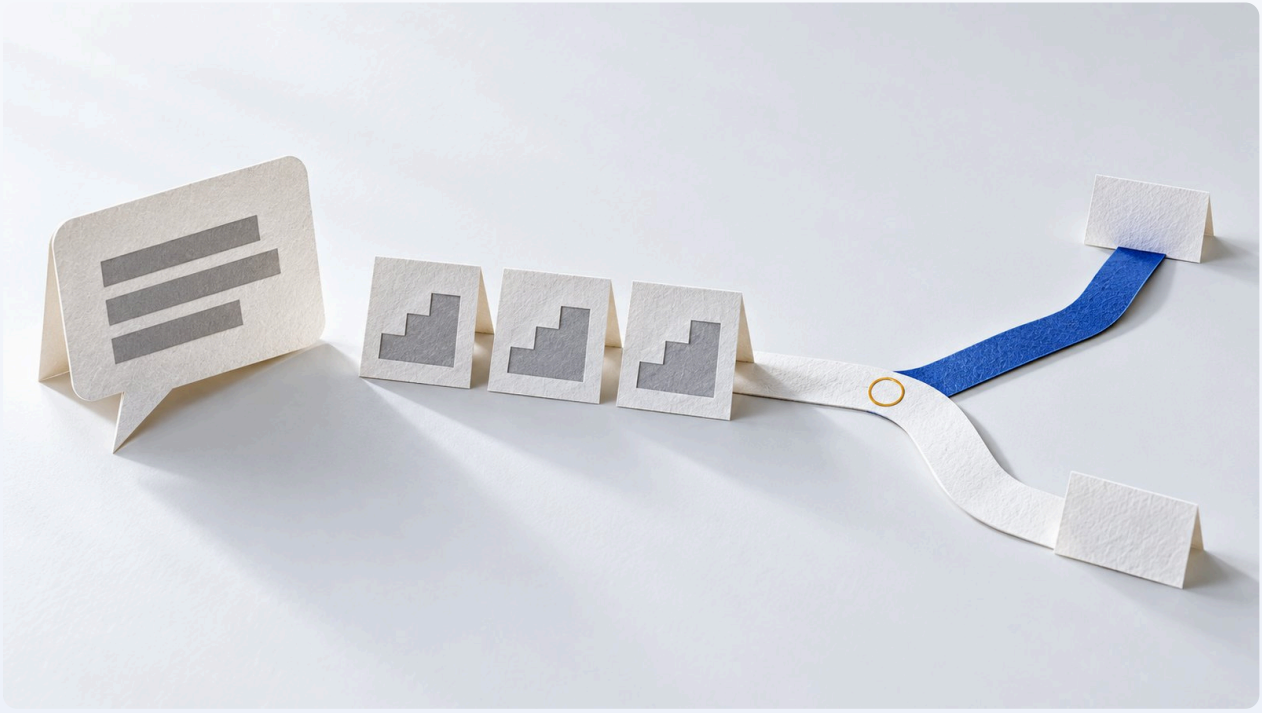
INTRODUCTION TO AGENTIC AI AND AI AGENTS

Tell Agentic AI, Chatbots and Workflows Apart

Look at how the work is done, not at what the product is called

This guide goes beside the Section 3 videos. Keep it open on your phone while you watch. Each lecture has the ideas to keep, a few steps to try on a product you use, and one question to answer before you move on. The supplier prices, the shop and the invoices are teaching examples.





Arun Nagarathanam

7 lectures · prompts, ideas and checks

BEFORE YOU START

How to use this guide

Keep it open on your phone or a second screen while the lecture plays on your main screen.

ONE

Keep it beside the video.

Watch the lecture, then try the steps yourself.

TWO

Use the prompts.

Every dark window holds a prompt from the lecture. Select the text and copy it.

THREE

Check yourself.

Each lecture ends with one question. Answer it before you move on.

ALL LINKS AND COPY BUTTONS

Every link for this section, and every prompt with a working Copy button, is on one page of our website.

Open the Section 3 page

IN THIS SECTION

7 lectures

3.0	Is Everything Called an Agent Really One?	Page 4
3.1	Is ChatGPT an AI Agent?	Page 6
3.2	How Do Chatbots, Fixed Workflows and AI Agents Fit Together?	Page 9
3.3	What Starts an AI Agent?	Page 12
3.4	How Do AI Agents, Agentic AI, Assistants and Automation Differ?	Page 15
3.4A	How Do You Talk About AI Agents in a Meeting?	Page 18
3.6	Which Shape Was That?	Page 23

3.0

Is Everything Called an Agent Really One?

Set the goal for the section: when a colleague calls a product an assistant, an agent or an automation tool, you can say what it actually does.



IDEAS TO KEEP

01

ChatGPT can answer a question, search a website or carry out several actions. You need an explanation that fits the work you are looking at.

02

By the end of the section you can explain when ChatGPT is acting as an agent.

03

For any AI product, ask how its steps are chosen. Does it follow a sequence somebody prepared, or can the model choose another action after reading a result?

04

That question connects the name on the product to what the product does.

FOLLOW ALONG

1. Think of one AI product someone at work has called an agent.
2. Write down what you have actually seen it do.
3. Keep that note. You will test it against the questions in the next lectures.

FILES AND LINKS

Section 3 study guide (PDF)

CHECK YOURSELF

What question about steps helps you decide whether a product is acting as an agent?

LECTURE 3.1

Is ChatGPT an AI Agent?

3.1

Watch ChatGPT search for a subscription price, and see what makes that work agentic.



IDEAS TO KEEP

01

Asked for a current monthly price, ChatGPT could answer from what the model learned in training. Without checking the pricing page, it may give you an older price.

02

With web tools available, ChatGPT can search for the price instead and give you the source page, such as the Notion pricing page in the recording.

03

Notion's pricing page opens on yearly billing, so the page shows $20 beside ChatGPT's $24 monthly answer. Open the source and read which billing option it shows.

04

When the model chooses a next action from what it finds, and uses tools to continue toward your result, the work is agentic and the system doing it is an agent.

05

Finding the pages, reading the prices and preparing the answer form a workflow. When the model chooses and takes actions inside it, it is an agentic workflow.

06

Judge the task it performs, the tools it uses and the choices it makes, not the product name.

FOLLOW ALONG

1. Ask ChatGPT, with web search on, for the current monthly price of a subscription you know.
2. Open the source page it gives you and compare the price and the billing period.
3. Note whether it searched, and whether it chose another page after the first one.

FILES AND LINKS

Links and copy buttons on the website

CHECK YOURSELF

ChatGPT answers a price question from its training alone. Is that agentic work? What would make it agentic?

LECTURE 3.2

3.2

How Do Chatbots, Fixed Workflows and AI Agents Fit Together?

Compare one supplier-price job done by prepared software steps and by an agent that chooses its own next actions.



IDEAS TO KEEP

01

A chat window tells you how you talk to the software. It does not tell you how the software chooses its steps.

02

A fixed workflow opens each saved page, reads the price, compares it with last week's price and writes the report. If a page has no price, it marks the price as missing. Someone prepared those steps before the job began.

03

An agent works on the same job with more freedom. In the recording, a saved page had lost its price, the agent reported Not confirmed, and the activity log showed it chose to search the supplier's website.

04

A long list of steps in a prompt does not tell you which kind of system carries them out. Both kinds can use web tools, and either can start from a chat.

05

They can work together: an agent finds the prices, then a fixed calculation works out how much each price changed.

06

More freedom helps when you cannot know every step in advance, and it also gives the agent more choices to get wrong. Prepared steps make mistakes too, so check both.

FOLLOW ALONG

1. Pick a repeated job you do, such as checking prices or collecting figures.
2. Write the steps you could prepare in advance.
3. Mark the points where an agent might need to choose a different next action.
4. Before using any report, check that each price belongs to the right product and that each calculated change is correct.

Request · The agent's request in the supplier-price job — PROMPT

```
Find the current prices and show me what changed.
```

Use in: An agent with web tools, such as Claude Code, after you give it the product list, saved prices and links

FILES AND LINKS

Links and copy buttons on the website

CHECK YOURSELF

Which two questions tell you more about a system than whether you see a chat window?

3.3

What Starts an AI Agent?

Name what starts a job, and keep that separate from how the steps are chosen and from what the job finishes.



IDEAS TO KEEP

01

A manual start: you open an application and ask, so your request starts the job.

02

A scheduled start: a system that supports scheduled work runs the comparison every Monday at 9 a.m. Writing every Monday at 9 a.m. in a message does not set up a schedule.

03

An event start: a service configured to detect invoice emails starts the work as each one arrives.

04

The request, time or event that starts a job is its trigger. The trigger tells you when work begins, not how the steps are chosen.

05

Two Monday price checks share a scheduled trigger. The one where the model chooses another page to search is the agentic one.

06

A message saying A new invoice arrived is a notification. The work is done only when the invoice details are in your spreadsheet.

FOLLOW ALONG

1. Choose one job you would like an agent to do.
2. Decide its trigger: your request, a scheduled time or an event.
3. Write the result you expect, and how you will check it happened.

Request · A job description with a start and a result

PROMPT

When an invoice email arrives, add its details to this spreadsheet.

Use in: A service that can detect incoming emails and has access to your spreadsheet

?

CHECK YOURSELF

You get a notification that a new invoice arrived. Does that show the details were added to your spreadsheet?

LECTURE 3.4

3.4

How Do AI Agents, Agentic AI, Assistants and Automation Differ?

Use a customer's order email to see how assistant, agent, agentic AI and automation can all describe one product.



IDEAS TO KEEP

01

A customer emails your online shop: Where is my order? An AI product that helps you prepare the reply is an assistant, because it helps you with your work.

02

The model looks up the order, finds the delivery is late, and chooses to check the delivery company's latest tracking update before writing. The system doing that is an agent, and its way of working is agentic.

03

Agentic AI means AI choosing and taking actions toward a goal.

04

If the software prepares a reply whenever a customer email arrives, that is automation. An automated process can follow fixed steps or use an agent.

05

Reading an order, preparing a message and sending it are separate actions. You can allow the product to prepare replies and still require your approval before it sends one.

FOLLOW ALONG

1. Take one job of your own.
2. Name the result you want.
3. Name one choice the model might make along the way.
4. Name the tool action needed to carry out that choice.

FILES AND LINKS

quiz-3.4.md

Links and copy buttons on the website

CHECK YOURSELF

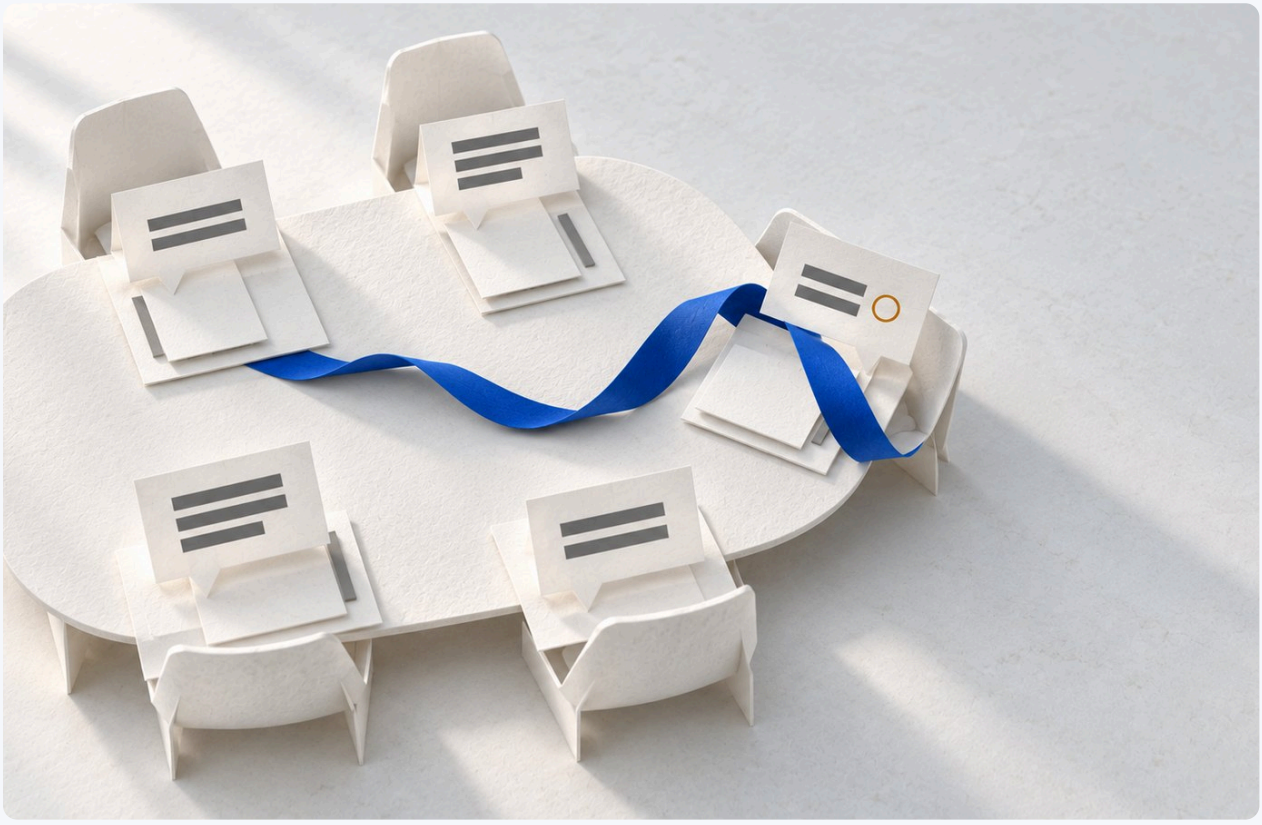
?

An email helper prepares replies automatically but waits for your approval to send. Which labels fit it, and which action is still yours?

3.4A

How Do You Talk About AI Agents in a Meeting?

Practise twelve sentences that help a team decide what an AI should do, or why a result needs attention.



IDEAS TO KEEP

01

In a meeting you rarely need a definition. You need a sentence that helps people decide.

02

The word agentic is useful when you give the action and the reason: it chose another search because the first page did not answer the question.

03

Agent-washing is the gap between what an advertisement promises and what the demonstration shows.

04

Questions about connectors, tools and APIs ask what a connection can actually do, such as create a calendar event or accept a cancellation request.

05

Separate how the work proceeds from what starts it: prepared steps or model choices, and which trigger.

06

All twelve sentences are on the next sheet, with the lecture where each idea was explained.

FOLLOW ALONG

1. Read the twelve sentences on the next sheet.
2. Pick two that fit a discussion you expect at work.
3. Put them into your own words, keeping the meaning.

FILES AND LINKS

Links and copy buttons on the website

CHECK YOURSELF

A demonstration only shows a draft reply, but the advertisement says it handles customer support. What would you say?

Meeting vocabulary companion

Choose a sentence that fits the discussion. Adapt the example to your work, keeping the meaning. Each row names the lecture where the idea was explained.

AI AGENT

“What goal can this AI agent complete, and which steps can it choose?”

Revisit: Lecture 1.1 · What Can an AI Agent Do Beyond Giving You an Answer?

AGENTIC

“The work is agentic: it chose another search because the first page did not answer the question.”

Revisit: Lecture 3.1 · Is ChatGPT an AI Agent?

AGENT-WASHING

“That may be agent-washing: the advertisement promises customer support, but the demonstration only shows a draft reply.”

Revisit: Lecture 3.1 · Is ChatGPT an AI Agent?

MODEL

“Let’s try another model with the same files and request.”

Revisit: Lecture 2.1 · Why Can AI Explain a Job Without Doing It? (Models and Actions)

TOOLS

“Which tool actually creates the appointment?”

Revisit: Lecture 2.2 · How Does an AI Agent Take Action? (Tools and Connectors)

CONNECTOR

“Does the calendar connector let us create events?”

Revisit: Lecture 2.2 · How Does an AI Agent Take Action? (Tools and Connectors)

API

“Can our order system accept a cancellation request through its API?”

Revisit: Lecture 2.3 · What Is an API? (How Software Requests Information and Actions)

CONTEXT WINDOW

“The context window is nearly full. Let’s save the key instructions in a file and ask the app to read them again after compaction.”

Revisit: Lecture 2.6 · What Does an AI Agent Remember? (Context Window and Memory)

TOKENS

“The token count includes pieces of the text supplied to the model and the text it generates.”

Revisit: Lecture 2.6 · What Does an AI Agent Remember? (Context Window and Memory)

TRIGGER

“What is the trigger: our request, a scheduled time or an incoming message?”

Revisit: Lecture 3.3 · What Starts an AI Agent? (Manual, Scheduled and Event Triggers)

WORKFLOW

“Does this workflow follow prepared steps, or can the model choose what to do next?”

Revisit: Lecture 3.2 · How Do Chatbots, Fixed Workflows and AI Agents Fit Together?

LLM

“The LLM drafts the reply, but we still need to check the order status against the tracking update.”

Revisit: Lecture 2.7 · What Is an LLM in an AI Agent?

3.6

Which Shape Was That?

Return to the shop email and name each part of the work in ordinary language.



IDEAS TO KEEP

01

A prepared workflow could look up the order and draft a reply with fixed steps.

02

In the agentic version, the model found the delivery was late and chose an extra tracking check before writing.

03

A tool supplied the current information. Sending stayed a separate action that needs permission.

04

The email's arrival could start the process automatically, or a person could start it. The trigger tells you when the job begins; the later choices tell you how it works.

05

Neither the word assistant nor a chat window settles those questions.

FOLLOW ALONG

1. Go back to the product you noted in Lecture 3.0.
2. Describe its trigger, how its steps are chosen, and which actions need permission.
3. Check your description against the twelve meeting sentences.

FILES AND LINKS

summary.md

Section 3 study guide (PDF)

?

CHECK YOURSELF

For the shop email, what tells you when the job begins, and what tells you how it works?

REFERENCE

Words used in this section

Chatbot

Software you talk to in a chat. The chat shows how you communicate with it, not how it chooses its steps.

Agentic

Work in which the model chooses a next action from what it finds and uses tools to continue toward your requested result.

AI agent

The system carrying out agentic work.

Workflow

A sequence of work, such as finding pages, reading prices and preparing an answer.

Agentic workflow

A workflow in which the model chooses and takes actions.

Fixed workflow

Software that follows steps and rules prepared before the job began, including what to do when something is missing.

Trigger

The request, scheduled time or event that starts a job. It tells you when work begins, not how the steps are chosen.

Notification

A message that something happened, such as a new invoice arriving. It does not show that the requested work was done.

Assistant

An AI product described by what it does for you: it helps you with your work.

Agentic AI

AI choosing and taking actions toward a goal.

Automation

Software carrying out work automatically. It can follow fixed steps or use an agent, and a person or a trigger can start it.

Agent-washing

Calling a product an agent when what it can show is less, such as an advertisement promising customer support while the demonstration only shows a draft reply.

Check how AI uses company data

Next comes Section 4, where a customer's cancellation request shows which information an AI may read and which actions it may perform.

All course resources | Section 3 on the website | aruntastic.com





aruntastic

Written by Arun Nagarathanam

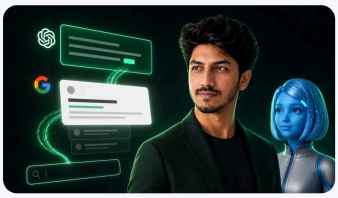
Part of Introduction to Agentic AI and AI Agents



KEEP BUILDING

More from Aruntastic

Practical courses for people who want to build useful things with AI.



AI SEO Course 2026: From Zero to Page-One Results

Research search demand, structure useful pages, and work through technical and off-page SEO.

Open the course



AEO, GEO, AI SEO: Get Cited by ChatGPT, Google, Perplexity

Study how AI search finds information, and make your pages clear enough to be cited.

Open the course



Claude Code Without Coding: AI That Does Real Work for You

Start with the installation, give Claude Code a real project, and learn how to check what it changes as you build.

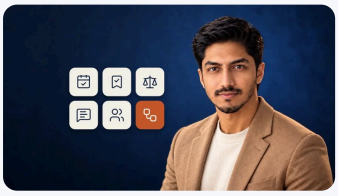
Open the course



Microsoft PowerPoint Presentation 2026 for Professionals

Learn visual hierarchy, slide composition, typography and animation through practical work.

Open the course



AI Agents for Leaders Who Have No Time to Learn AI

If you can delegate to a person, you can delegate to an AI agent. You keep the judgment. For managers and founders.

Open the course

Go deeper



TOOLKIT

SEO Accelerator Toolkit

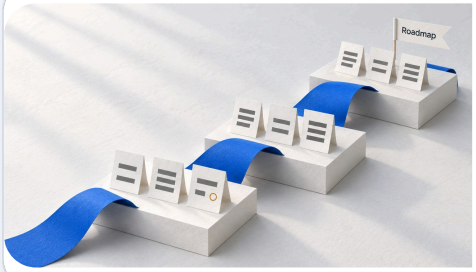
150+ copy-paste AI prompts for audience research, keywords, content, technical SEO and link building.



TOOLKIT

GEO Accelerator Toolkit

100 detailed AI prompts for GEO audits, entity building, content structure and client reporting.



PROGRAMME

GEO Authority Accelerator

A complete GEO programme on our learner platform: nine modules and a 30, 60, 90 day roadmap. The GEO Accelerator Toolkit is included.

Learn more

CLAUDE CERTIFICATION PRACTICE

Preparing for a Claude certification?

Practice exams written by Arun: 600 questions across 4 mock exams and 2 drill banks. Unofficial preparation, not affiliated with Anthropic.



CCAR-F
Architect Foundations



CCAO-F
Associate Foundations



CCDV-F
Developer Foundations



CCAR-P
Architect Professional