

How agents are using AI to code without a developer.

Build Your Own Tools

The build brief, the five-prompt loop, and the copy-paste prompt library that turn your most annoying repeated task into a tool you own. No developer. No budget. This week.

01 You Are the Developer Now

For thirty years, the thing standing between an agent and a custom tool was a developer. You had an idea, you got a quote, the quote was \$12,000, and the idea died on the spot. So you did the work by hand instead, forever.

That wall came down. Not because AI got better at chatting, but because AI got the ability to **act**. An AI agent does not just describe the tool it would write. It writes the files, runs them, reads the error message, fixes itself, and runs them again. It does the developer's whole loop, and it does it while you describe what you want in plain English.

Which means the bottleneck moved. It is no longer knowing how to code. It is knowing exactly what you want, in enough detail that a very fast, very literal assistant can build it correctly. That skill is called writing a brief, and every good agent in this room already has it. You write briefs for photographers, stagers, and transaction coordinators every week.

THE ONE IDEA TO TAKE OUT OF THIS ROOM

You are not learning to code. You are learning to **specify**. The quality of the tool you get back is almost entirely determined by the quality of the description you put in. Vague in, garbage out. Specific in, shipped tool.

Everything in this guide is built around that single fact. The templates, the prompts, the loop, they all exist to make you specific enough, fast enough, that you walk out of a working session with something real instead of a chat transcript.

02 Pick the Right First Tool

The most common way this goes wrong is not technical. It is choosing a first project that is too big to finish. People try to build "a CRM" and quit on day three. The agents who actually end up with tools they use every day started with something small enough to finish in one sitting.

Run your idea through three questions. If you cannot answer yes to all three, it is not your first tool. Put it on the list and pick something else.

1 Do I do this at least weekly?

One-time problems are not worth automating. You want the task you are quietly dreading right now because you have to do it again on Friday, and again the Friday after that.

2 Could I write down the rules on a napkin?

If you can explain the decision to a new assistant in under two minutes, an AI can do it. If the answer is "well, it depends, you just kind of know," that is judgment, and judgment stays with you for now.

3 Does the data already exist somewhere I can reach?

A spreadsheet, your CRM, your inbox, a public county record. If the information only lives in your head, the first version of the tool will just ask you to type it in, and you have not saved yourself anything.

TEN TOOLS AGENTS ACTUALLY FINISH

THE TOOL	WHAT IT KILLS	FIRST BUILD
Net sheet calculator	Rebuilding the same seller math in a spreadsheet for every appointment	1 hour
Listing description writer	Staring at a blank MLS remarks field for 40 minutes	1 hour
Lead triage sorter	Reading every inbound message yourself to decide who calls it	2 hours
Buyer showing itinerary	Manually building a route and a one-sheet for every tour	2 hours
Price reduction watcher	Forgetting which listings crossed 30 days on market	2 hours
Open house sign-in to CRM	Typing forty names off a clipboard on Sunday night	2 hours
Weekly seller update drafter	Writing the same status email to twelve sellers	3 hours
Transaction checklist builder	Setting up the same 40 tasks for every new file	3 hours
Neighborhood market one-pager	Pulling and formatting stats before every listing appointment	3 hours

THE TOOL	WHAT IT KILLS	FIRST BUILD
Database birthday and anniversary run	The past-client touch you keep meaning to do	3 hours

PICK NOW, NOT LATER

Circle one row before you leave this session. The agents who leave with a circled row build something this week. The agents who leave planning to "think about which one" build nothing. That is the entire difference, and it has nothing to do with technical ability.

03 The Build Brief

This is the template. Everything else in this guide supports it. Before you open any AI tool, fill in these six lines. It takes about four minutes and it is the difference between a tool that works and an afternoon of frustration.

TEMPLATE · THE BUILD BRIEF

WHAT IT IS: *A [tool type] that [does one specific job].*

WHO USES IT: *[me / my ISA / my TC / my clients], about [how many times per week].*

INPUT: *It starts with [the exact thing you hand it: a CSV, an address, a pasted email, a form].*

OUTPUT: *It gives me back [the exact thing you want: a PDF, a table on screen, a drafted email, a row added to a sheet].*

RULES: *[The 3 to 6 decisions it has to make, written as if-then statements.]*

DONE LOOKS LIKE: *I can [specific action] and get [specific result] without touching a spreadsheet.*

NEVER: *[What it must not do. Send anything to a client without my approval. Store client phone numbers. Guess at a price.]*

Why six lines and not a paragraph? Because the four things people leave out are always the same four things: what the input actually looks like, what the output should look like, what counts as done, and what the tool is not allowed to do. Those omissions are where builds go sideways.

A FILLED-IN EXAMPLE

Here is the same template completed for a net sheet calculator, the single most common first build for a listing agent. Notice how boring and literal it is. Boring and literal is correct.

EXAMPLE · SELLER NET SHEET

WHAT IT IS: *A one-page web tool that calculates a seller's estimated net proceeds.*

WHO USES IT: *Me, on my laptop, at listing appointments, about six times a week.*

INPUT: *I type in sale price, existing loan balance, my commission percent, and the buyer agent commission percent.*

OUTPUT: *A clean printable summary showing every deduction line by line and the final net to seller in large type.*

RULES: *Title and escrow fees estimate at 1.1 percent of sale price. Excise tax at my state rate. Include a field I can override for repairs and concessions. Round everything to the nearest dollar.*

DONE LOOKS LIKE: *I open one file on my laptop, type four numbers, and hand the screen to the seller.*

NEVER: *Present any number as a guarantee. Every output is labeled an estimate.*

04 The Five-Prompt Build Loop

Once the brief is written, the build itself is a loop you run over and over. It is the same five moves whether you are making a net sheet or a lead router. Learn the loop once and every future tool gets faster.



FIG. 01: The build loop. Most first tools finish in three or four trips around steps two through four.

The move most people get wrong is step two. They ask for the finished tool with every feature on the first prompt, get back something complicated and broken, and cannot tell which part failed. Ask for the smallest version that does one thing, confirm it works, then add.

Step four is the other one. When something breaks, do not try to read the code and diagnose it. Describe what you saw. "I typed 450000 and the net came back as a negative number" is a better bug report than any technical guess you could make, and the AI will find it faster from the symptom than from your theory.

05 The Prompt Library

These are the working prompts. Copy them as written, swap the bracketed parts, and paste. They are ordered the way you will use them.

PROMPT 01 · START THE BUILD

I want to build a small tool and I am not a developer, so explain choices in plain English and do not assume I know any technical terms. Here is my brief. [PASTE YOUR SIX-LINE BRIEF.] Before you write anything, tell me back in your own words what you are going to build, and ask me the three questions where my brief was unclear. Then wait for my answers.

PROMPT 02 · SMALLEST WORKING VERSION

Build the simplest version that does the main job and nothing else. Skip styling, skip extra features, skip anything optional. I want to confirm the core works before we add to it. When you are done, tell me exactly what to click or type to try it, step by step, as if I have never done this before.

PROMPT 03 · REPORT A PROBLEM

Here is what happened when I tried it. I did [exactly what you did]. I expected [what should have happened]. I got [what actually happened, copy any error text exactly]. Do not guess at the cause. Check the actual behavior first, tell me what is wrong in one sentence, then fix it.

PROMPT 04 · BREAK YOUR OWN TOOL

Act as a skeptical user trying to break this. What are the five most likely ways this fails with real data: blank fields, a huge number, a typo, a missing file, an unusual address format? For each one, tell me what happens right now and fix the ones that fail badly. Make it fail with a clear message rather than a crash.

EIGHT MORE, ONE LINE EACH

WHEN YOU NEED TO	SAY THIS
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Make it look professional	"Restyle this to look clean and modern enough to show a client on my laptop. Big readable numbers, lots of white space."
Add one feature safely	"Add [one feature] without changing anything that already works. Tell me what you touched."
Understand what you have	"Explain what each file does in one sentence, in plain English, like I am not technical."
Undo a bad change	"That made it worse. Put it back the way it was before the last change and we will try differently."
Handle your real data	"Here is a real export from my system. Make it work with this exact format, including the messy rows."
Stop it inventing numbers	"Never make up a value. If data is missing, leave it blank and label it as missing."
Get it running elsewhere	"Give me step-by-step instructions to put this online so I can open it from my phone. Assume I know nothing."
Hand it to your team	"Write a one-page instruction sheet for my assistant covering how to run this and what to do if it breaks."

06 Guardrails

You are moving fast now, which is the point, and it is also the risk. An AI will confidently do exactly what you asked, including the things you did not think through. These are the five rules that keep a productivity win from turning into a license complaint or a data problem.

THE RISK	THE RULE
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MLS and IDX data	Your MLS agreement governs what you can pull, store, and display. Building a tool does not change the license. Read the rules before any tool touches listing data, and never republish MLS data on a public page without checking.
Client personal information	Do not paste social security numbers, bank details, or full loan documents into any AI tool. For testing, use fake data. Real client data goes in only when you know where that tool stores it.

THE RISK**THE RULE**

API keys and passwords

Never type a password or key directly into a file the tool creates. Ask the AI to use environment variables or your system keychain, and never share a screenshot with a key visible.

Anything that talks to a client

Nothing sends on its own until you have watched it work for two weeks. Build tools that *draft* and wait for your approval. The one that emails 200 people unsupervised is the one that emails them twice.

Fair housing and advertising

AI-written listing copy and ads are still your ads, and you are still liable. Read every word before it goes out. The compliance rules did not change because a machine typed it.

THE APPROVAL RULE

A new tool gets **two weeks of supervision** before it is allowed to act on its own. Every run, you check its work. If it is right fourteen days in a row, let it off the leash. If it is wrong once, the clock restarts. This single rule prevents almost every horror story you have heard about AI in a business.

07 Getting It Off Your Laptop

A tool that only runs when you are sitting in front of it is a nicer version of a spreadsheet. The step that turns it into leverage is putting it somewhere it can run without you: on the web, or on a schedule.

You do not need to understand hosting. You need to know that the option exists and that you can ask for it. There are three levels, and most agents never need to go past the first two.

1 A file on your computer

Where every tool starts. You open it, you use it, you close it. Perfect for a net sheet or a calculator you use at appointments. Zero cost, zero setup, and honestly where most useful tools should stay.

2 A link you can open anywhere

Now your assistant can use it, and you can pull it up on your phone in a driveway. Ask the AI to walk you through putting it online. Free hosting tiers cover this for most small tools. This is the step that turns a personal trick into a team resource.

3 Something that runs on a schedule

The real prize. The tool wakes up every morning at seven, does the job, and messages you the result. This is where a tool stops saving you time and starts doing work you were never going to get to. Save it for your second or third build, once you trust the first one.

DO NOT SKIP TO LEVEL THREE

Every unattended automation is a decision you are no longer watching. Earn that by running the tool by hand enough times to know what it does when the data is weird. The agents who get burned are the ones who scheduled something on day one.

08 Your First Thirty Days

Ambition is not the constraint here. Finishing is. This is a pace that ends with three working tools and a habit, instead of eleven half-built projects and the belief that this does not work for you.

WEEK	WHAT YOU DO	WHAT YOU HAVE AT THE END
Week 1	Write the brief for the row you circled. Build the smallest version. Run the loop until it survives your real data.	One working tool you used at least twice
Week 2	Use only that tool. Fix what annoys you. Do not start anything new. Make it good enough to show someone.	A tool you trust, and a real sense of the loop
Week 3	Build number two, this time something your assistant or ISA uses instead of you. Write the one-page instruction sheet.	The first tool your team touches
Week 4	Put one tool online so it works from your phone. Pick the third build and write its brief.	Three tools, a repeatable process, no developer

The compounding is the part nobody expects. Your first tool takes a full afternoon and feels hard. The third one takes an hour, because you have stopped fighting the process and started just writing good briefs. By the sixth, you will catch yourself thinking "I should just build that" about problems you would have accepted as permanent a month earlier. That shift, more than any single tool, is what you came here for.

Before You Leave the Room

The only thing that separates the agents who walk out of an AI session and change their business from the ones who walk out impressed is whether they did the next three things before the momentum wore off. Do them today, not this weekend.

- 01 Circle one row in the ten-tools table in section 02. Not two rows. One. The one that made you wince because you have to do it again on Friday.
 - 02 Fill in the six-line build brief for it. Four minutes, on your phone, before you get to your car. A brief you actually wrote beats a perfect brief you planned to write.
 - 03 Open an AI tool tonight, paste Prompt 01, and run the loop until the smallest version works. One sitting. Then use it this week, on a real appointment, with real numbers.
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Your Build Brief *Fill this in before you leave, then paste it into Prompt 01.*

WHAT IT IS

WHO USES IT, AND HOW OFTEN

INPUT · WHAT I HAND IT

OUTPUT · WHAT I GET BACK

RULES · THE DECISIONS IT MAKES

DONE LOOKS LIKE

NEVER

Go build something,

Austin Hellickson

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