The AI Bootcamp

31

Get AI Work Out of the Chat Window

In this chapter you'll learn

The 3 routes out of the chat window, where formatting breaks, and the standard before you send

The AI Bootcamp

THE PROBLEM

Most AI education is a pile of disconnected tips. A LinkedIn carousel here, a YouTube tutorial there, a $2,000 cohort course that goes out of date before the refund window closes. None of it is built to be read in order, so nothing compounds. You finish twelve videos and can recite twelve facts, not perform one new skill.

THE FIX

The AI Bootcamp is built the other way. 90 skills, packed 2 to 3 per chapter, 36 chapters, 3 tracks. Every chapter states what it needs from you and what it hands to the chapter after it, so skill 47 only works because skill 12 already landed. Read it in order and by the end you are not collecting facts about AI, you are running work through it.

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

We built this because we kept meeting smart people who felt behind on AI for no reason other than nobody had organized the material for them.

This book does not assume you are technical, and it does not water anything down either. Every chapter earns its place: a real skill, a real exercise, a one-page companion you can flip back to in month three when you have forgotten the details but still need the answer.

If a chapter loses you, or a chapter changes how you work, I want to hear about it either way.

Kris

Editor, AI Central

Write to me at **editor@thecentral.ai**

THE 3 TRACKS

AI 101

Get running

Pick a tool, set it up, write a clear instruction, use it safely at work.

AI 202

Prompt properly

The framework behind every good instruction, and catching AI when it is wrong.

AI 303

Build without watching it

Connect AI to your tools, and automations that run while you are not looking.

IN THIS LESSON YOU'LL LEARN

By the end of this chapter you can name the 3 routes out of a chat window and pick the right one for a given piece of work, get a document, a spreadsheet or a deck to arrive with its structure intact instead of flattened, and state the standard that has to be true before you put AI-assisted work in front of a colleague.

Everything up to here has been about getting good work out of an assistant. None of it counts yet. A senior professional's value is largely in what reaches other people, and an assistant producing excellent material into a window nobody else can open has changed nothing at all about your organisation. This is the last mile, and it is where a great deal of AI-assisted work quietly dies.

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TOPICS REQUIRED

Chapters 26 and 30. You need the connections you granted in Chapter 26, and ideally the inbox or calendar automation you built in Chapter 30. Most useful of all: one piece of work that is finished inside a chat window and has still not reached a single colleague. Go and find it before you read on.

AFTER THIS CHAPTER

Chapter 32 assumes you have moved at least one real piece of work out to where your team can see it, because the thing worth packaging into your own assistant is a route you have already walked more than once.

31.1 Work that stays in the chat window has not reached anyone

You can produce something genuinely good in a private window and change nothing about how your organisation runs. The distance between that window and the place your colleagues already open is short, unglamorous, and where most of the loss happens.

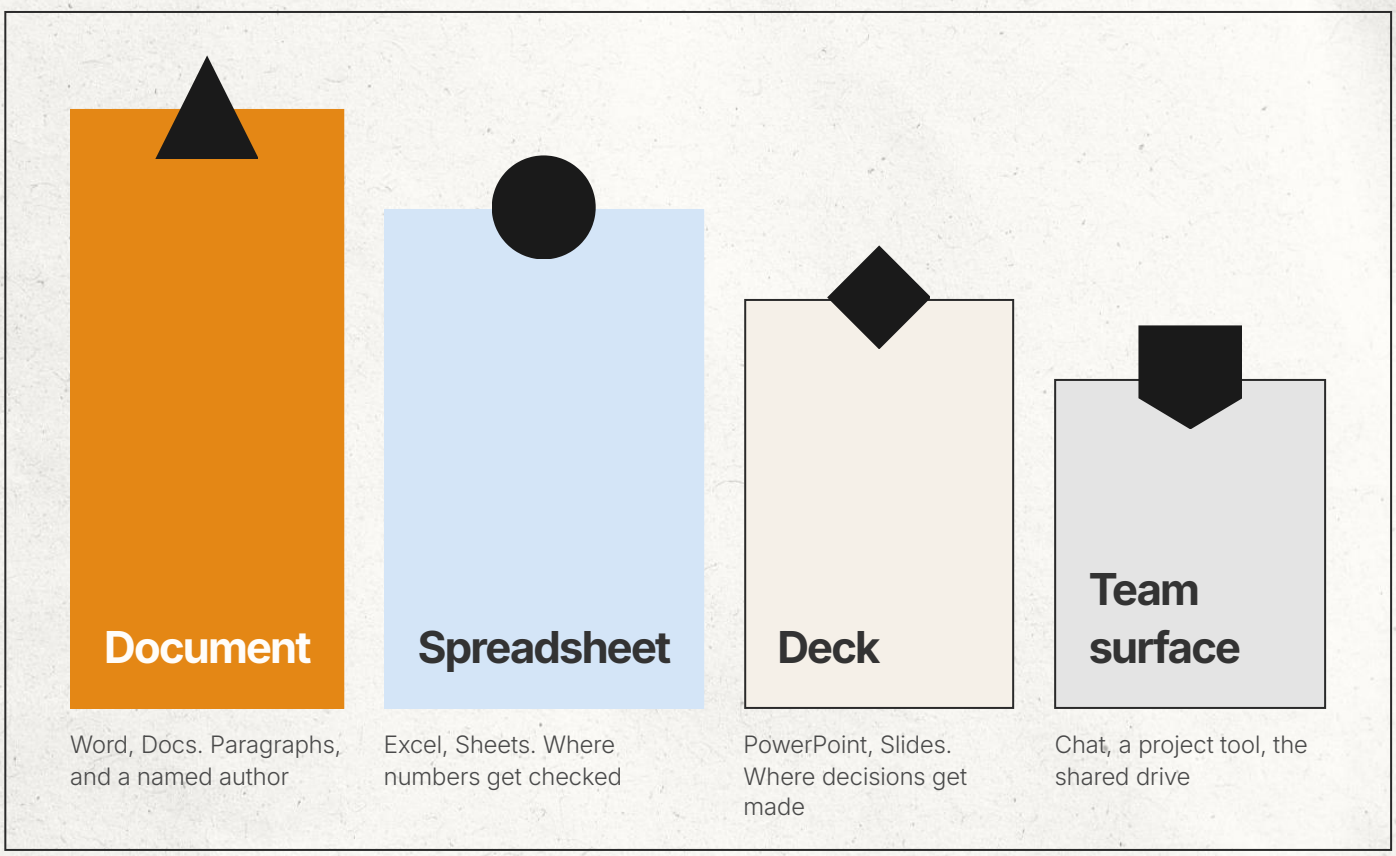


Fig 31.1 The 4 places work actually gets read. Almost nothing your assistant makes is finished until it is sitting in one of them. The bar heights are visual rhythm, not a ranking.

31.1

The test. If a colleague cannot find it without you sending it to them, it is still a draft.

Their format, not yours. The destination sets the shape. A brief that has to be 4 slides is 4 slides.

Different direction. Chapter 26 was about letting it reach into your systems. This chapter is the way out.

Here is the problem this chapter exists to fix, and you can probably see it in your own history right now. Over the last few chapters you have got an assistant doing real work. Almost all of that work is still sitting in a chat window that exactly one person can open, and that person is you.

That matters more at your level than at any other. A great deal of what you are paid for is not the thinking, it is the thinking arriving somewhere: in the paper the board reads, in the model finance actually uses, in the deck that settles an argument. An assistant that produces excellent material into a private window has changed your afternoon and nothing else.

This is the least interesting part of the whole subject and the part that decides whether any of it counts. Nobody writes about the last mile because there is nothing clever in it. It is also, reliably, where work stops: a good analysis that never became a document, a clean set of numbers that never became a sheet, a summary somebody meant to post and did not.

The destination is not an afterthought either, because it changes what you should have asked for in the first place. A document tolerates paragraphs. A spreadsheet needs columns and one fact per cell. A deck needs 6 lines a slide and a title that states the point. Chapter 5 told you to name the format in the ask; this is what that was for. Name the destination, and the shape follows.

Two neighbouring jobs are not this one. Getting an assistant permission to reach into your drive, your mail and your notes was Chapter 26, and it points inward. Mail and calendar as a running system was Chapter 30. Making several apps behave as one workflow is Chapter 33. This chapter is narrower and more immediately useful: one finished thing, out of the window, into the place people look.

So pick the piece of work you found before you started reading. It is going somewhere by the end of this chapter.

31.2 There are 3 routes out, and the one everybody defaults to is the worst

Ask for the file. Work inside the file. Or copy and paste, and then repair what the paste broke. Most people only know the third one, which is why so much of this work arrives looking careless.

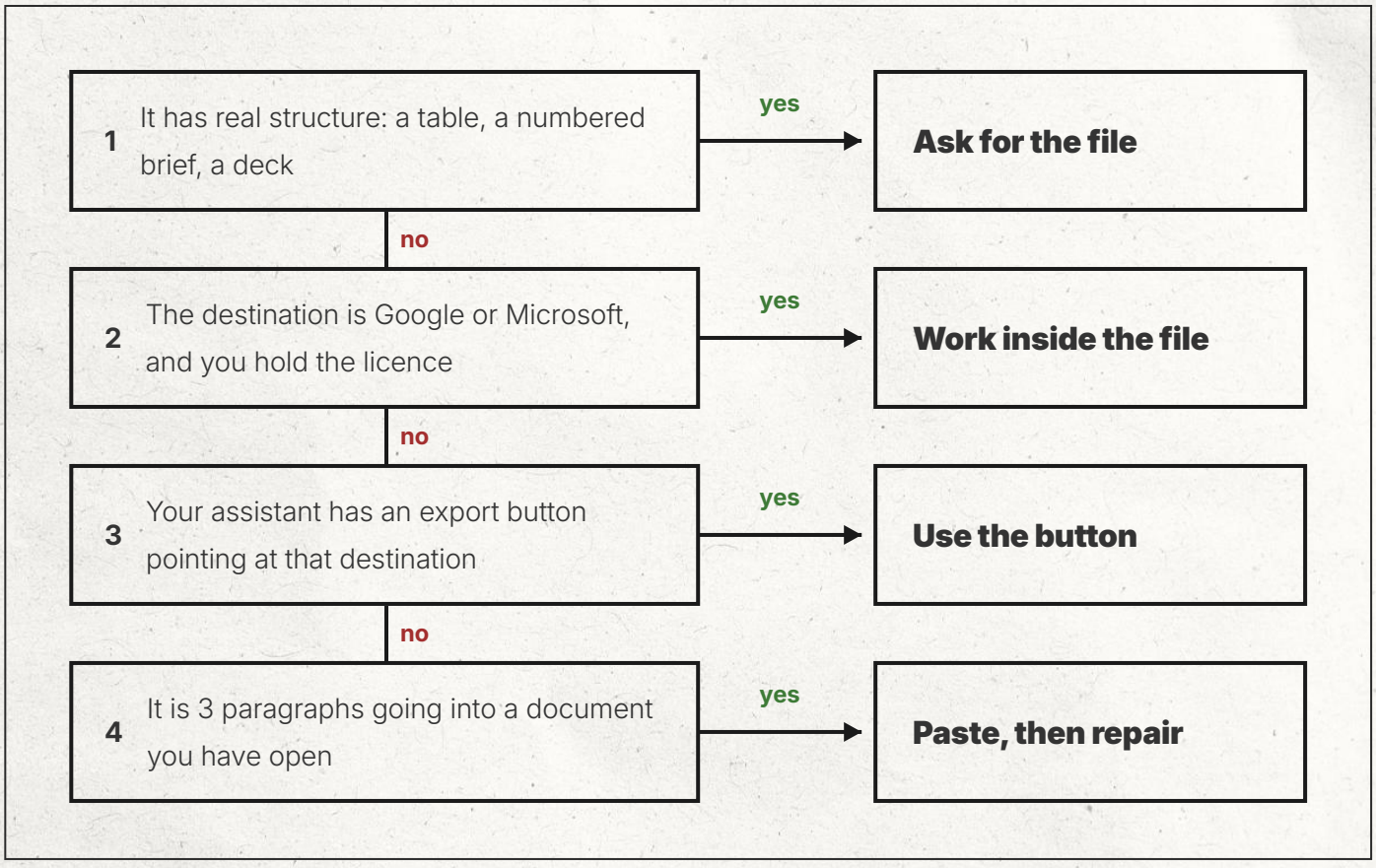


Fig 31.2 Read down until a line is true. Pasting sits last on purpose: it is the quickest route out of the window and the slowest route to something finished.

31.2

ChatGPT Builds the file itself: Word, PowerPoint, spreadsheets, PDF, Markdown and HTML, previewed before you download it.

Claude Same idea, on every plan: .xlsx, .pptx, .docx and PDF, up to 30MB a file. Markdown and diagrams come back as artifacts.

Gemini Share and export gives you Export to Docs and Draft in Gmail. Any table it produces carries its own Export to Sheets.

Copilot Strongest inside the file. Word, Excel and PowerPoint, where the output is already in the format it has to arrive in.

There are 3 routes out, and it is worth knowing all of them, because picking the wrong one is the difference between 20 seconds and an hour of tidying.

The first route is to ask for the file. All four assistants now build real files rather than describing them. ChatGPT produces Word documents, PowerPoint decks, spreadsheets, PDFs and Markdown, and shows you a preview before you download. Claude does the same across .xlsx, .pptx, .docx and PDF, on every plan including the free one, up to 30MB a file. Gemini will generate a Docs or Sheets file, or a DOCX, XLSX, CSV or PDF, and either download it or put it in your Drive. This is the route people skip, and it is the one that keeps your tables as tables.

The second route is to stop moving anything and work inside the file. If your organisation runs on Microsoft, Copilot sits in Word, Excel and PowerPoint: it will draft a document referencing as many as 20 of your own files, emails or meetings, edit worksheets and build PivotTables in Excel, and turn a prompt or an existing Word document into a deck on your company template. If it runs on Google, Gemini does the equivalent job inside Docs, Sheets and Slides. Nothing has to travel, so nothing can break on the way. The catch is the licence: this route only exists if your employer has bought it, and that is a question for whoever holds the budget.

The third route is the export button, and it is worth checking for one before you reach for the clipboard. Gemini's Share and export menu will push a response straight into a new Google Doc or a Gmail draft, and any table it produces has its own Export to Sheets tucked at the bottom right of the table. One click, structure preserved. It has edges, as everything here does: tables with images in them will not go to Sheets at all.

The fourth thing people do is copy and paste, and it is not on that list of 3 because it is not really a route, it is a habit. It has one honest use, which is a few paragraphs of prose going into a document you already have open. Everything else it touches, it damages, and the next section is entirely about how.

Go and look at your assistant now, on the thing you picked in 31.1, and find out which of these 3 it actually offers you. That takes a minute and you will use the answer for years.

31.3 Everything survives the paste except the parts you cared about

Assistants compose in Markdown, a plain-text convention for marking up structure. Very little that your colleagues use reads it the same way, so what arrives is your structure with the structure taken out.

Survives the paste

Plain prose and light emphasis usually arrive intact, wherever you put them.

TRAITS

· Paragraphs and line breaks

· Bold, italic and strikethrough, in most destinations

· Links, where the destination understands Markdown at all

PROS

+ Fast, and genuinely fine for a few paragraphs

+ No licence, no setup, no download

CONS

– Often drags the chat window's own font and spacing in with it

– Works well enough to tempt you into pasting more

Breaks the paste

Anything that was doing structural work is the thing most likely to arrive wrong.

TRAITS

· Tables, the worst offender, in every destination

· Headings, arriving as literal hash marks or as nothing

· Nested lists and numbering, flattened or restarted at 1

PROS

+ The damage is visible the moment you look for it

+ Every one of these has a route that avoids it entirely

CONS

– Easy to miss on a phone, or on a quick skim before sending

– A broken table in someone else's document reads as carelessness

Fig 31.3 The rule underneath both cards: emphasis is decoration and travels, structure is meaning and does not. Anything carrying meaning needs a file or an export, never a clipboard.

31.3

Google Docs. Tools, then Preferences, then Enable Markdown. Right-click gives you Paste from Markdown: headings, bold, italic, strikethrough and links convert. Tables are not on that list.

Team chat. Slack's own formatting covers bold, italic, code, quotes and lists. It has no headings and no tables, so a pasted brief lands as a wall.

Spreadsheets. Never paste a Markdown table into a sheet. Ask for CSV, or for the .xlsx itself, and the columns land as columns.

This is the friction nobody warns you about, and it is not a small one. Material that looks immaculate in the chat window arrives in a colleague's document with its headings turned into hash marks, its numbering restarted at 1 halfway down, and its table rendered as a row of pipe characters running off the page.

The reason is worth 30 seconds of your attention because it tells you exactly what will break. Assistants write in Markdown, a convention for marking structure in plain text: a hash mark makes a heading, asterisks make bold, pipes and dashes make a table. The chat window renders that beautifully. What lands on your clipboard is closer to the raw marks, and whether they survive depends entirely on whether the destination speaks the same convention.

So sort it by what the formatting is doing. Emphasis is decoration: bold, italic, a strikethrough. It usually travels, and when it does not, nothing is lost but a little polish. Structure is meaning: a heading says this is a section, a numbered list says this is an order, a table says these values belong to these columns. When structure breaks, the reader has to reconstruct your argument, and tables are where this bites hardest because a table with its columns gone is not degraded, it is unreadable.

Two destinations are worth knowing precisely. Google Docs will do the conversion for you if you let it: turn on Markdown under Tools, then Preferences, and use Paste from Markdown rather than an ordinary paste. Google's own documentation lists what converts, and it is headings, bold, italic, strikethrough and links. Tables are not in that list. Read that as the standing warning it is.

Team chat is the other one, and it is stricter than people assume. Slack formats bold, italic, code, block quotes and lists, and it has no headings and no tables at all. Which means a 400-word structured brief pasted into a channel arrives as an undifferentiated wall that nobody reads to the end. For chat, do not paste the output. Write 3 sentences yourself and attach or link the real thing.

The habit to build is one question, asked before your hand reaches the clipboard: is any of this carrying meaning rather than decoration? If yes, go back to 31.2 and take one of the first 3 routes. Try it on the last table you pasted anywhere, and see what your colleague actually received.

31.4 What has to be true before a colleague sees it

There is a genuine professional risk in handing someone AI-assisted work, and it is not the one people brace for. It is not that you used the tool. It is that you sent something you had not read.

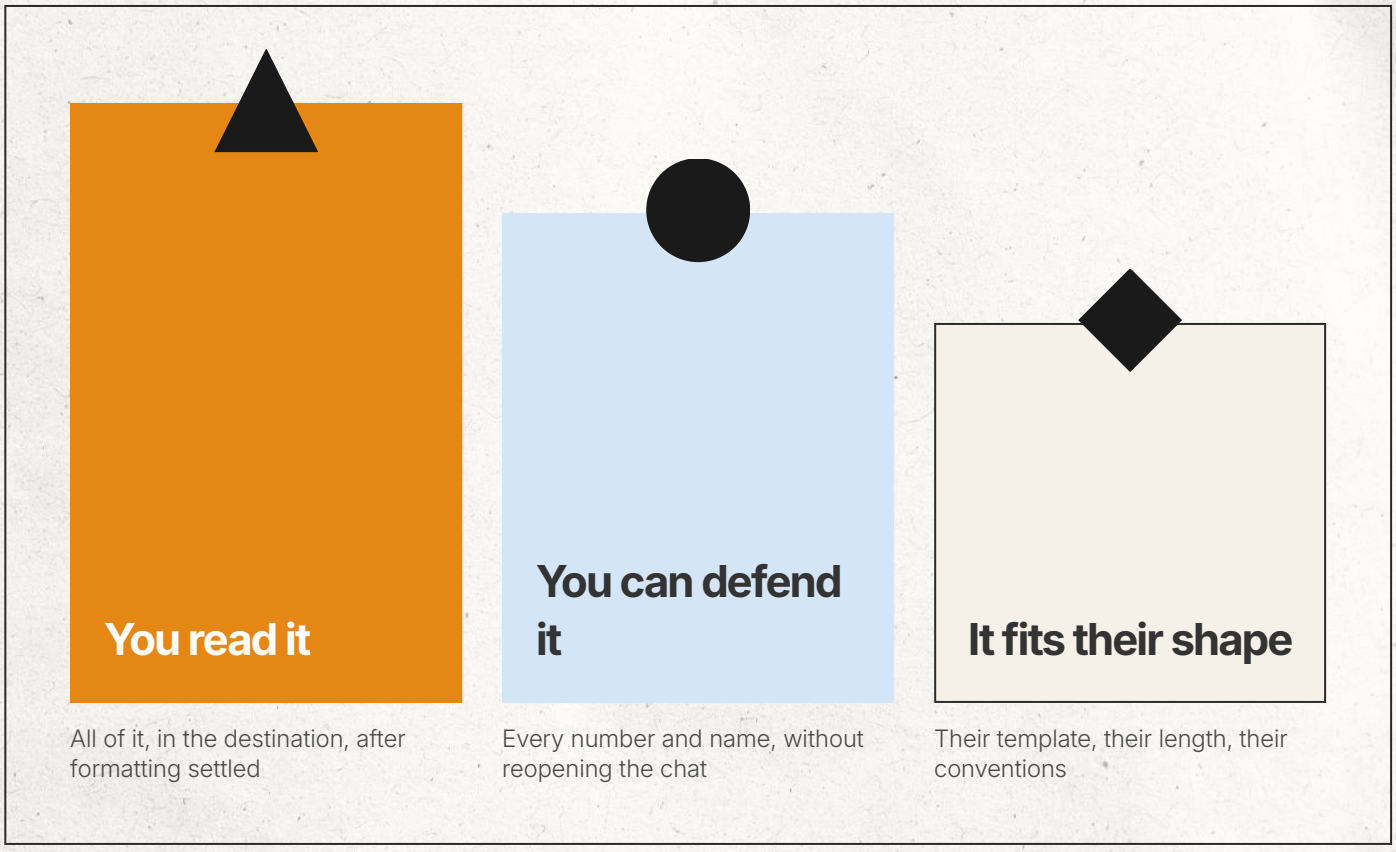


Fig 31.4 Three conditions, all of which have to be true before it leaves your hands. The heights are visual rhythm, not weighting: failing any one of them produces the same result at the other end.

31.4

How common it is. A September 2025 survey of 1,150 full-time US desk workers by BetterUp Labs and the Stanford Social Media Lab: 40% had been sent low-effort AI-generated work in the previous month.

Who pays for it. Each instance took the receiver just under 2 hours to sort out. The sender never sees that cost, which is exactly why it keeps happening.

What it costs you. 42% thought the sender less trustworthy afterwards, 37% less intelligent. The judgement was about the effort, not about the tool.

Most books skip this and they should not, because it is the part with your name on it. In September 2025, BetterUp Labs and the Stanford Social Media Lab surveyed 1,150 full-time US desk workers about what their colleagues were actually sending them. 40% had received, in the previous month alone, work that looked finished and was not: polished output that had been passed along without being read, and that quietly moved the thinking onto whoever opened it.

The cost lands entirely on the receiver, which is the whole mechanism. Each instance took the person on the other end just under 2 hours to sort out. The researchers put that at roughly 186 dollars per employee per month, and around 9 million a year for a company of 10,000 people. None of it shows up on the clock of the person who sent it, which is precisely why the habit spreads.

Then the part that should concentrate the mind of anyone senior. 42% of the people who received work like that said they thought the sender less trustworthy afterwards. 37% said less intelligent. Read what that is actually measuring, because it is easy to read it wrong: they were not judging the use of a tool, they were judging an act of not bothering. The tool was simply what made not bothering fast enough to notice.

So the standard is about accountability, not abstinence, and it is short enough to remember. The person whose name is on it owns it. Using an assistant to produce it is not the failure and never was. Sending something you have not read is the failure, and it would be a failure if a junior colleague had written it, or an agency, or you at midnight. Microsoft says as much in its own PowerPoint documentation, on its own product: the output is a draft, and a human is expected to review and edit it before it goes anywhere.

Three conditions, then, and all 3 have to hold. You have read the whole thing in the destination, not in the chat window, because that is where the formatting has actually settled and where your reader will meet it. You can defend every number, name and claim in it without reopening the conversation it came from, which is Chapter 8 and Chapter 19 arriving with consequences attached. And it fits their shape: their template, their length, the conventions the team already uses, rather than the assistant's default of headings and medium-length prose.

Whether you say out loud that you used AI is a separate question, and the answer is set by your organisation rather than by this book: that is Chapter 9. What is not optional is the reading. Do it on the thing you moved in 31.2, in its destination, before you send it to anybody.

READING ENDS HERE

Everything before was reading. Everything after is doing.

3 exercises, About 20 minutes and one real decision that opens Chapter 32.

Do these before Chapter 32

3 exercises. About 20 minutes

Take the piece of work you found before this chapter, still sitting in your history. Do not move it yet. Fill in the 3 things that decide how it gets out.

WHAT IT ACTUALLY IS	WHERE IT HAS TO LAND	WHICH OF THE 3 ROUTES

Now get it there, by the route you just chose. Open it in the destination, on the device your colleague will use, and write down the first thing that looks wrong.

Run the 3 conditions from 31.4 on it before you send it. Write down the one you nearly skipped: that is the one you skip habitually, and it is the one worth watching from here on.

Chapter 31 on one page

THE 3 ROUTES OUT	Ask for the file · work inside the file with the suite's own assistant · use the export button. Copy and paste is not a fourth route, it is a habit
PER ASSISTANT	ChatGPT and Claude build the file itself (.docx, .pptx, .xlsx, PDF) · Gemini has Share and export, plus Export to Sheets on any table · Copilot works inside Word, Excel and PowerPoint
WHAT BREAKS IN A PASTE	Tables first, then headings, then nested numbering. Emphasis is decoration and travels. Structure is meaning and does not
TWO DESTINATIONS, PRECISELY	Google Docs: Tools, Preferences, Enable Markdown, then Paste from Markdown, and tables still will not convert · Slack: no headings, no tables, so write 3 sentences and link the real thing
BEFORE IT LEAVES YOUR HANDS	You read all of it in the destination · you can defend every number without reopening the chat · it fits their template, not the assistant's

BRING TO CHAPTER 32

One piece of work that now lives where your team looks, and the route you used to get it there. Chapter 32 turns a route you keep repeating into something you stop rebuilding.

BOTTOM LINE

You can get work out of the chat window into a document, a sheet, a deck or a team surface with its structure intact, and you know what has to be true before a colleague sees it.

NEXT CHAPTER

Build Your Own AI Assistant

Chapter 32 takes a job you now do the same way every time and packages it: your own small assistant, carrying its own instructions and its own sources, so you stop setting up the same thing from scratch every week.

BRING WITH YOU

- ☐ One route out of the chat window that you have now used more than once
- ☐ The job you find yourself re-explaining from scratch every time you start it

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Every guide, prompt pack and playbook AI Central has published, in one place. The reference shelf this course keeps pointing you to.

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