

CLAUDE CERTIFIED ASSOCIATE FOUNDATIONS (CCAO-F)

The Ultimate Study Guide

A complete, exam-aligned reference covering every topic, competency, and decision pattern tested on the Claude Certified Associate — Foundations exam.

How to Use This Guide

This guide is organized into ten parts that follow the natural order in which the exam's competencies build on one another: from what Claude is and how it behaves, through how to work with it responsibly and effectively, to how organizations govern and scale its use. Read Parts I–IV first to build a foundation, then Parts V–VIII to master the judgment-based scenario questions that make up the majority of the exam, and use Part IX–X for final review.

Part	Title	Focus
I	Foundations of Claude & Generative AI	What Claude is, hallucinations, context window, model tiers
II	The AI Fluency Framework (4 D's)	Delegation, Description, Discernment, Diligence
III	Prompt Engineering	Anatomy of a prompt, failure patterns, iteration
IV	Claude Platform Features	Projects, Artifacts, Skills, Code Execution, Connectors, Memory
V	Workflow Design	Decomposition, integration, optimization, long conversations
VI	Evaluation & Quality Assurance	Criteria, verification, escalation, review
VII	Data Handling & Privacy	Classification, redaction, sensitive data, trust decisions
VIII	Governance, Ethics & Responsible Use	Policy, bias, high-impact decisions, stakeholder communication
IX	Worked Scenario Patterns	How to recognize and answer common question archetypes
X	Final Quick-Review Cheat Sheet	One-page recall summary before the exam

Part I — Foundations of Claude & Generative AI

1.1 What Claude Is (and Is Not)

Claude is a large language model (LLM) built by Anthropic. It generates text (and can execute code, browse connected data, and produce structured artifacts) by predicting the most probable continuation of the text it is given, informed by patterns learned during training. This matters for the exam because it explains why Claude behaves the way it does:

- Claude is a probabilistic text generator, not a database lookup — it does not "know" facts the way a search engine retrieves indexed records.
- Claude's output quality depends heavily on the quality of the input (the prompt, the provided context, and any attached source material).
- Claude has a training-data cutoff, so it may not know about very recent events unless given current information (e.g., via search, connectors, or pasted content).
- Claude does not retain accountability — the human using it remains responsible for how outputs are used. This principle underlies nearly every governance and ethics question on the exam.

Exam takeaway: Whenever a question asks "who is accountable" or "who should verify the output," the answer is always the human, never Claude itself.

1.2 Hallucinations

A hallucination is when Claude generates incorrect or unsupported information and presents it as though it were factual. This is one of the most heavily tested concepts on the exam.

Why hallucinations happen

- The prompt does not constrain Claude to rely only on source-grounded facts (the most common and most-tested root cause).
- The model is asked to be comprehensive on a topic where the supplied material is incomplete, and it fills gaps with plausible-sounding but unverified content.
- No authoritative source was provided at all, forcing Claude to rely purely on general patterns.

How to respond to a suspected hallucination — correct order

1. Pinpoint the specific claim that appears unsupported by the available evidence (always the first step — do this before discarding, escalating, or documenting anything).
2. Verify that claim against a primary or authoritative source.
3. Correct or remove the unsupported claim.
4. Document the pattern if it is recurring, so the team can adjust prompting or review practices going forward.

Exam takeaway: "First response step when a hallucination is suspected" → always pinpoint/identify the specific unsupported claim. Do NOT jump straight to regenerating the whole output, escalating publicly, or logging it before you've isolated the claim.

1.3 The Context Window

The context window is a bounded amount of text and information the model can consider at once — including the system/Project instructions, any attached documents or knowledge base content, the conversation history, and the current turn. It is not simply "conversation history," and it is not automatically saved across sessions unless a feature like Memory or a Project is used.

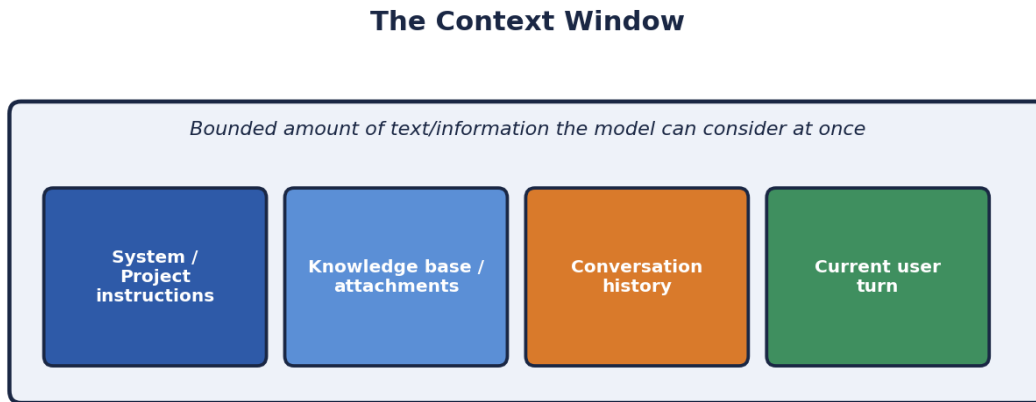


Figure 1.1 — Everything that shares the context window budget.

Best practices for using the context window efficiently

- Extract only the relevant sections of long source documents rather than pasting entire documents when only parts apply.
- Mark each source clearly with delimiters so the model can attribute claims to the correct source.
- Place the most reference-critical material near the beginning or end of the context (recency/primacy effects) rather than burying it in the middle.
- Avoid mixing unrelated sources into a single undifferentiated block.
- Periodically summarize decisions made so far in a long conversation to compress the "working state" rather than repeating every prior word verbatim.

Exam takeaway: For long/degrading conversations, the best first recovery step is to summarize the current state and continue with a focused follow-up prompt — not to discard everything and start over, and not to escalate to a different model/vendor.

1.4 Claude Model Tiers

Claude is offered in tiers that trade off speed, cost, and reasoning depth. The exam expects you to match a task's requirements to the right tier.

Claude Model Tiers: Speed vs. Capability

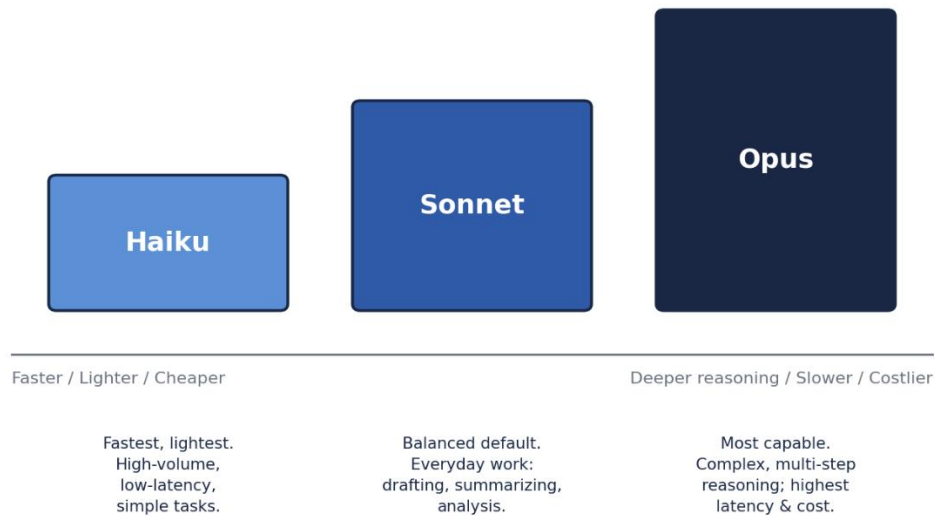


Figure 1.2 — The three-tier model lineup.

Tier	Best for	Tradeoff
Haiku	High-volume, low-latency, light-reasoning tasks (quick FAQ replies, simple classification, interactive turns that must respond fast)	Fastest and lightest; lowest rate-limit consumption; least reasoning depth
Sonnet	Everyday work — drafting, summarizing, general analysis, most recurring production workloads	Balanced default: solid quality at moderate latency and resource cost
Opus	One-off, genuinely complex, multi-step reasoning problems	Most capable; highest latency and resource/rate-limit consumption

The general cost/speed/quality rule

More capable models generally consume more of the rate limit and can run slower, while lighter models are generally faster and use fewer resources. Speed and rate-limit consumption are NOT independent of capability — this is a commonly tested wrong-answer trap.

Exam takeaway: Model selection process, in order: (1) define the quality bar, latency tolerance, and expected volume → (2) choose a candidate model based on those requirements → (3) run a representative sample and measure quality/latency → (4) select the lightest model that consistently meets the bar → (5) retest when a new model version becomes available. Never skip straight to testing before requirements are defined, and never assume the selected model needs no future retesting.

Part II — The AI Fluency Framework (The 4 D's)

The AI Fluency Framework is a recurring, heavily tested model on the exam. It defines four competencies a responsible Claude user should apply. Expect scenario questions that name one of the four D's explicitly and ask which action best reflects that competency.

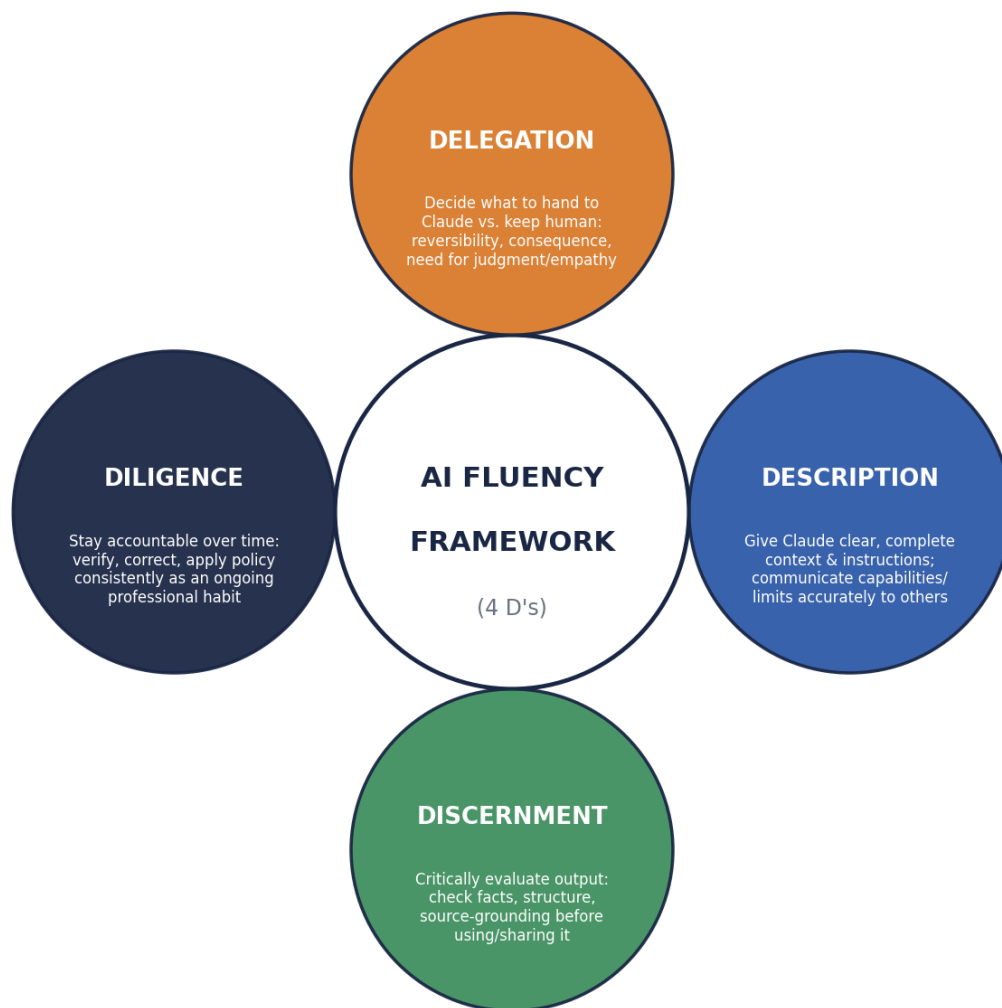


Figure 2.1 — The four AI Fluency competencies.

2.1 Delegation

Delegation is about deciding what to hand to Claude versus what a human must retain. The two criteria the exam tests most directly are:

- The need for human creativity, empathy, or judgment in the step — some tasks require capabilities Claude cannot provide.
- The reversibility of the task and the consequence of an error — low-reversibility, high-consequence steps (e.g., final hiring decisions, binding legal/contractual commitments, credit approvals) should stay with a human decision-maker, even if Claude assists with analysis.

Distractor criteria that are NOT valid Delegation considerations: the seniority of the person currently doing the task, the visual complexity of a workflow diagram, or how long a process has existed.

Exam takeaway: Full autonomous delegation is inappropriate wherever human judgment, accountability, or significant consequence is involved (e.g., final hiring decisions, sole credit-approval authority). The correct pattern is Claude assisting while a human retains the decision — not "light sampling-based review after the fact."

2.2 Description

Description covers two related skills: (1) writing prompts that clearly specify the task, audience, format, and constraints, and (2) communicating Claude's capabilities and limitations accurately to other stakeholders.

Description applied to prompting

- Specify the task scope, required output format, audience, and relevant constraints with enough clarity to get a reliable, useful result on the next run.
- Do not remove context to "simplify" a prompt, and do not pad a prompt with filler that doesn't add scope, format, audience, or constraint information.

Description applied to stakeholder communication

- Describe what Claude can reliably produce, the known limitations, and the human oversight that will remain in place — calibrated to the audience's familiarity with AI.
- Never systematically understate or overstate capabilities in either direction.

Exam takeaway: Accurate, two-sided, audience-calibrated communication (capabilities + limitations + human oversight) is always the correct Description answer — not silence about oversight, not "reassure now, clarify later if asked."

2.3 Discernment

Discernment is the critical evaluation of Claude's output before it is used or shared — checking it against task requirements, source material, and professional standards, rather than accepting it because it "reads fluently" or matches the reviewer's prior beliefs.

- Conduct a systematic check of the output against the task requirements, the source material, and professional standards before sharing it.
- Do not rely on tone, logical flow, or the fact that the topic aligns with your own expertise as a proxy for factual accuracy.
- Do not assume the opening and closing paragraphs represent the quality of the whole document — review comprehensively.

Exam takeaway: Discernment = verify against requirements + source + standards, every time — fluency and plausibility are not evidence of accuracy.

2.4 Diligence

Diligence is sustained, ongoing accountability — not a one-time check. It means applying organizational AI policy consistently as a professional habit, identifying gaps between actual usage and policy over time, and owning corrections.

- Identify elements of a work product that need independent verification or correction, and take ownership of those verifications — this is the textbook Diligence answer for external/board-facing work.
- Apply policies consistently as a sustained habit; identify gaps between usage and policy; take corrective action over time (not just during onboarding).
- Never delegate accountability to Claude itself, never skip verification because output "looks plausible," and never apply policy only in high-visibility situations.

Exam takeaway: Diligence $\neq$ a single point-in-time check or an onboarding record. It is continuous, sustained verification and correction over the life of the workflow.

Quick comparison: telling the 4 D's apart on the exam

Competency	Core question it answers	Signal phrase in the question
Delegation	Should this step go to Claude or stay with a human?	"what to delegate," "human ownership," "reversibility"
Description	Is the task/communication clearly and accurately specified?	"prompt clarity," "stakeholder communication," "capabilities and limits"
Discernment	Is this output actually correct before I use it?	"evaluate/review the output before sharing"
Diligence	Am I staying accountable over time?	"ongoing," "sustained," "ownership," "verification obligation"

Part III — Prompt Engineering

3.1 Anatomy of a Strong Prompt

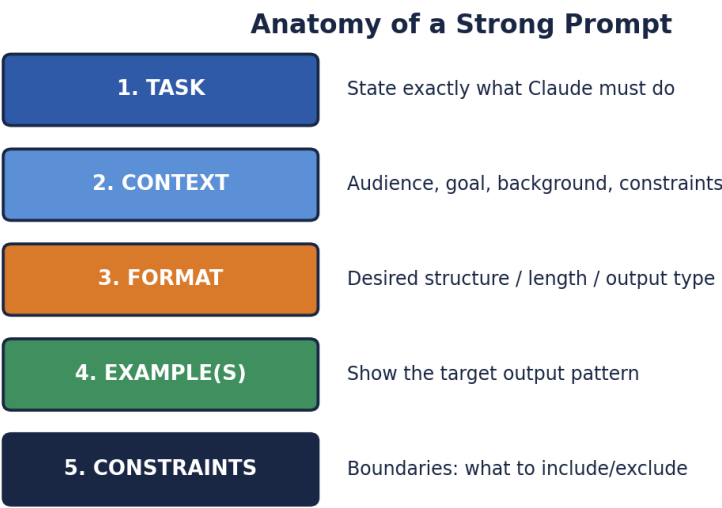


Figure 3.1 — The five building blocks of a well-structured prompt.

A well-structured business prompt always includes, at minimum, two non-negotiable elements tested repeatedly across all three question sets:

- A clear statement of the task the model must perform.
- Relevant context — the audience and the goal of the task.

Additional strengthening elements: the desired output format/structure, an example of the target output, explicit constraints (length, tone, what to include/exclude), and — when multiple distinct requirements exist — an explicit enumeration of each one Claude must address.

- Distractors that do NOT belong in a business prompt: a personal anecdote to sound conversational, an instruction to be generically "friendly," an arbitrary word-count target, or a comprehensive, unfocused dump of company information "just in case."

3.2 Common Prompt Failure Patterns

Symptom	Most likely root cause	Fix
Vague or off-target output	Prompt names a topic but not the task, audience, or output structure	State the task, audience, and format explicitly
Response skips one of several required elements	Task statement does not explicitly enumerate every required item	Explicitly list each required question/element and require an answer to each
Output drifts from the house style/terminology	No authoritative glossary or style reference was provided	Provide the glossary/style guide and instruct Claude to use only those terms

Inconsistent output on a recurring weekly task with stable input structure	Prompt under-specifies audience, tone, format, or required sections	Add explicit format/tone/section requirements (not just "accept variation as normal")
Claude introduces facts not in the supplied source	Prompt does not constrain Claude to source-grounded facts only	Explicitly instruct Claude to use only the provided source material

3.3 Iteration and Refinement

The exam tests a specific, disciplined iteration methodology. Learn this sequence cold:

5. Identify the specific weakness(es) in the current output (never skip straight to changing the prompt).
6. Change one identifiable element per iteration, and capture what changed and its effect — do not bundle multiple unrelated changes into a single iteration.
7. Compare the new output against the original acceptance criteria.
8. Only adjust a second element after the first change's effect is understood/settled.

Handling a plateau

If quality has plateaued across several consecutive iterations (e.g., no improvement in the last four of eight attempts), the correct conclusion is that iteration has reached diminishing returns and the next step should be human review or a different approach entirely — not indefinite continued iteration, not silent abandonment, and not accepting the output as-is without review.

Handling drift away from the target

If successive changes are making the output drift further from the requested template, revert to the version of the prompt that produced the closest match and adjust from that baseline — do not keep piling on large simultaneous changes hoping they will eventually align, and do not discard all history.

Incorporating reviewer feedback

- Map each specific piece of feedback to a specific, targeted change.
- Ask clarifying questions when feedback is ambiguous, before acting on it.
- Address the two (or however many) named issues directly, leave unrelated accepted parts unchanged, and document the changes for the next review.
- Do NOT rewrite from scratch when only specific issues were flagged, do NOT bundle in extra self-identified changes the reviewer didn't ask for, and do NOT revise unrelated sections "for consistency" beyond what was requested.

Exam takeaway: The exam's favorite trap answer for iteration questions is the option that does something extra and unrequested (rewrite everything, add a third improvement, touch unrelated sections). The correct answer is almost always the narrowest, most targeted, most traceable change.

3.4 Output Format Selection

Choose the output format that best matches how the result will be used and reused:

Situation	Best format
Large volume of repeated records/metrics across categories (e.g., 200 weekly records across regions)	A structured table — one record per row, one metric per column

A stable, reusable, editable reference document the team will maintain across many cycles	An Artifact
Deterministic, verifiable numeric calculations and charts from an uploaded file	Code Execution (never estimate from a preview or describe a chart in prose)
A quarterly investor-style update where the audience has limited time	Lead with the headline result, then concise drivers, then the forward outlook (not chronological, not outlook-first)
A polished board memo that must be scannable, verified, and terminology-consistent	Consistent headings + tightened wording + aligned terminology + independent fact verification against source — all four, not a subset

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Part IV — Claude Platform Features

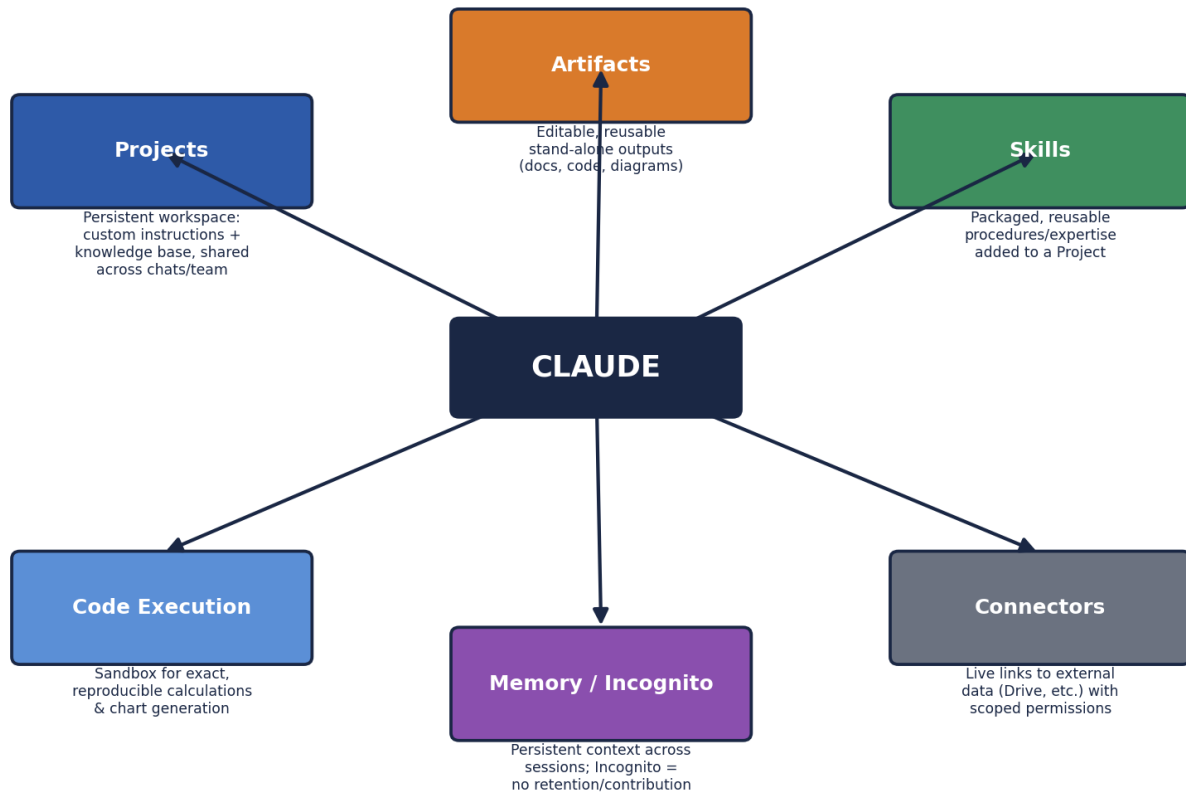


Figure 4.1 — The Claude feature set and what each is for.

4.1 Projects

A Project is a persistent workspace with its own knowledge base and custom instructions, shared across many chats and multiple team members. Projects are the correct answer whenever a scenario describes recurring work with stable reference material used by more than one person or across more than one conversation (e.g., an HR team referencing a handbook, leveling guide, and policy FAQ across many separate chats).

What belongs in a Project's knowledge base

- The current, authoritative versions of documents the work actually depends on (current handbook, current policy library, current glossary/brand guide).
- The summary format and audience expectations the recurring output must meet.
- NOT: unrelated documents from a different workstream, years of superseded historical versions "just in case," or a firehose of every email ever sent on the topic.

Writing system-level/custom instructions for a Project — correct order

9. Define the purpose of the Project and the boundaries the instructions must respect (always first).
10. Draft the instructions.
11. Validate the drafted instructions against representative requests for the Project.
12. Refine the instructions based on observed gaps from validation.

Fixing a Project whose custom instructions are producing bad output

Example pattern: instructions say "be empathetic and casual, keep it short, offer a goodwill credit," but drafts are too brief, over-promise credits, and use contractions that violate the brand guide. The correct fix specifies concrete brand-voice attributes (e.g., empathetic, formal, no contractions), sets a minimum length, and makes the goodwill credit conditional on the attached eligibility policy — not a vague instruction to "consult the guide" while leaving the same underspecified wording in place.

Maintaining Projects over time

- Review and update Project configuration periodically, because policies, terminology, and source documents can go stale even before any visible quality drop — "works once, works forever" is a wrong-answer belief the exam explicitly tests against.
- The clearest signal a Project needs updating: outputs increasingly reference outdated terminology, sources, or guidance.
- If a Project's outputs have drifted from current expectations, the first maintenance action is to review the Project's instructions and reference material against current standards — not to rebuild from scratch or switch models.

Preventing context bleed between two Projects

Give each Project its own distinct knowledge base, instructions, and memory context, and verify that information from one Project does not surface in the other's responses. Sharing memory/knowledge "to save setup time" is exactly the configuration that causes context bleed between unrelated client engagements.

4.2 Artifacts

An Artifact is a stand-alone, editable, reusable output (a document, piece of code, diagram, etc.) that persists outside the flow of the chat. Use an Artifact when the deliverable will be opened, edited, and reused/updated repeatedly over time (e.g., a one-page operating procedure the team will reuse and revise across many onboarding cycles) — as opposed to a plain chat response or a full saved chat transcript.

4.3 Skills

A Skill is a packaged, reusable procedure or body of expertise that can be added to a Project (or used standalone) so Claude doesn't have to reconstruct the same process manually every time.

Configuring a Project well with a Skill

Add the relevant Skill to the Project, upload the supporting knowledge sources, and write custom instructions that reference both the Skill and the knowledge — omitting supporting knowledge, disabling the Skill, or writing instructions that contradict the Skill's documented purpose all produce a broken configuration.

Trusting a third-party Skill

- Verify the Skill's source against the organization's approved-Skill list before enabling it.
- Review the permissions/capabilities the Skill requests and confirm they are appropriate for the task.
- Do NOT treat public popularity, strong reviews, or "it probably can't exceed the workflow's boundaries" as substitutes for verifying source and permissions.

4.4 Code Execution

Code Execution runs code in a sandbox to perform exact, reproducible, verifiable calculations (and to generate charts) on uploaded data. It is the correct feature whenever a task calls for deterministic math — never a plain chat response, never a narrative description in place of real numbers, and never an estimate from a brief file preview.

- Best practice: use Code Execution to perform the calculations/chart, then verify the computed results against the source data before sharing the output.
- Reliable integration of Code Execution into a recurring workflow: standardize the input file format so runs are comparable, and keep a human verification step that sanity-checks the computed result against an expected range — do not remove human review just because code ran without errors, and do not let input formats vary freely from run to run.

4.5 Connectors

Connectors link Claude to live external data sources (e.g., a shared drive, a project-management workspace).

Safe, appropriate Connector setups

- Read-only connectors to public/reference content.
- Connectors scoped to an approved, relevant workspace under approved scope.
- NOT appropriate: connecting personnel/payroll systems for routine scheduling/expense tasks, or linking a personal cloud-storage account that mixes personal files with team working drafts.

Planning steps before authorizing a new Connector — must happen BEFORE authorization

- Confirm the Connector is on the approved-vendor list.
- Confirm the data classification of the source and the team's permission to use it.
- (Formal training rollout and legacy-system decommissioning are good practices but are not prerequisites that must happen before authorization.)

Stale/outdated connector results

If a connector-based summary reflects an older version of a document even though a revision was saved hours earlier, the most likely explanation is that the connector's search index has not yet refreshed to reflect the recent revision — not a permissions issue, not session-level caching, and not the model "choosing" the older version.

4.6 Memory and Incognito Mode

Memory lets Claude retain relevant context across sessions, reducing repetitive context-setting on a long-running project. Memory can be imported from another AI service as a starting point for new work.

Memory import limitations

Memory import is documented as experimental — Claude may not successfully incorporate every imported detail, and missing content does not necessarily reflect a deliberate choice. The correct response to missing imported details is to use the available memory-management process to address it, not to assume a hidden rule or that everything was deliberately dropped.

Memory maintenance

- Export current memories as a backup before making changes, in case a maintenance edit unintentionally removes needed information.
- Identify and edit/delete stale, inaccurate, or no-longer-relevant entries, and add context the workflow still needs but Claude hasn't automatically captured.
- Do NOT wholesale-delete all memories "for a clean slate," and do NOT leave everything untouched indefinitely just because no problems have been reported yet.

Privacy-sensitive conversations

Before discussing confidential information (e.g., a pre-announcement financial figure) with Claude, the two best-aligned settings are: (1) disable Memory contribution for that conversation if Incognito mode is not used, so the confidential detail is not retained as persistent context, and/or (2) open the conversation in Incognito mode, which prevents the conversation from contributing to Memory at all. Proceeding with default settings and assuming a brief mention "probably" won't be retained is the wrong answer.

Policy-prohibited information

If organizational policy explicitly states that certain information (e.g., details of an ongoing investigation) must not be entered into AI tools, the correct response is to refrain from entering that information at all and escalate to the appropriate authority (e.g., HR leadership) for an approved alternative. Paraphrasing to remove identifying details, using Incognito mode, or waiting until the investigation closes are all attempts to work around an explicit prohibition, and all of them are wrong.

Part V — Workflow Design: Decomposition, Integration & Optimization

5.1 When (and How) to Decompose a Task

Decomposition means breaking a large request into smaller, well-defined sub-tasks or prompts. The clearest signal that a task should be decomposed is that it requires multiple distinct outputs or spans multiple separate data owners/sources (e.g., a report covering finance, operations, and customer outcomes, each with a different owner and source documents) — not simply that the task is long or unfamiliar.

Recommended decomposition pattern for a multi-section deliverable

Define the report goals → gather inputs per section → draft each section in its own focused prompt → synthesize the executive summary from the completed, drafted sections. Drafting the executive summary first (and forcing sections to support a narrative already fixed) inverts the correct dependency order and risks cherry-picking evidence to fit a predetermined conclusion. Pure parallel drafting with a light "concatenate and edit" pass, or one giant single-pass prompt covering everything including the summary, both under-serve complex, multi-owner deliverables.

Fixing over-decomposition

If a task was broken into too many tiny, disconnected steps and the output now feels disjointed because related ideas were split apart, the fix is to consolidate related steps into fewer, cohesive sections that group naturally connected ideas — not to add headings over the same fragments, not to reorder by sequence alone, and not to further subdivide.

Sequencing sub-tasks correctly

Where sub-tasks have dependencies, always establish scope/definition steps first, then data gathering, then synthesis, then validation, then final documentation. Example (requirements analysis): gather and label sources for traceability → group related requirements and flag conflicts → submit consolidated inputs with a structured extraction prompt → validate the structured output against original sources → document the final requirements with traceability and status.

5.2 Integrating Claude into an Existing Workflow

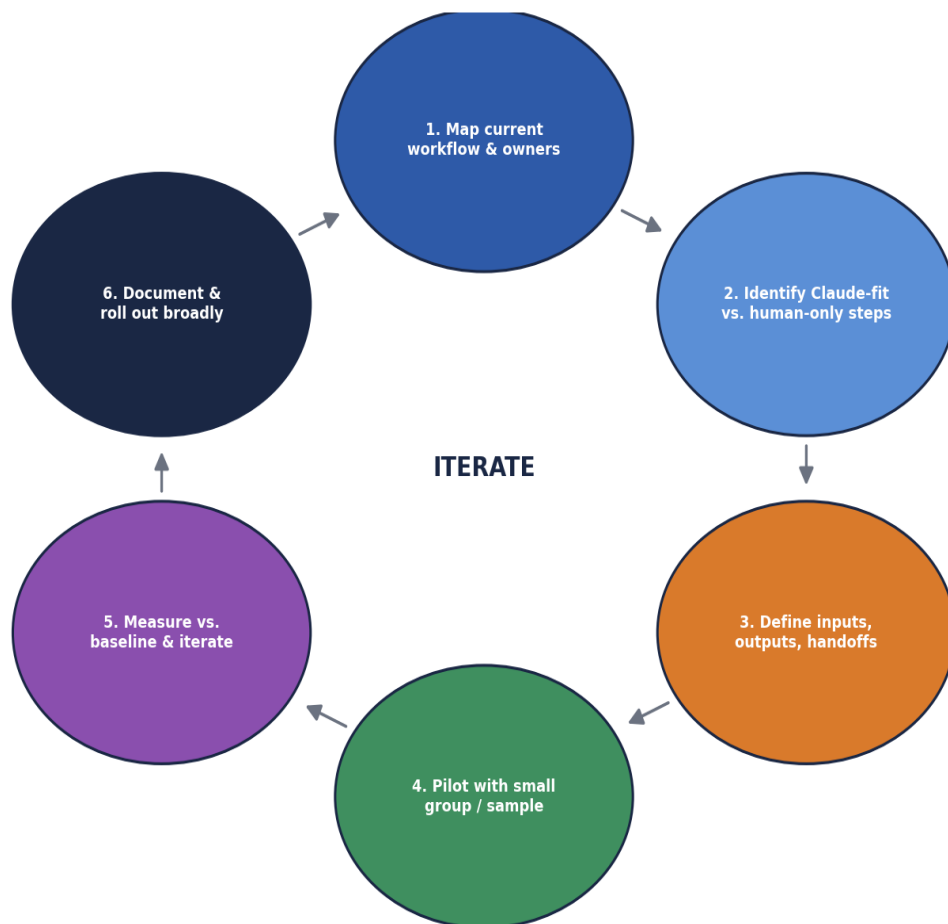


Figure 5.1 — The recurring workflow-integration cycle.

Correct integration order:

13. Document the current workflow's steps, owners, and decision points.
14. Identify the steps where Claude can augment work and where humans must remain (this — not documentation or piloting — is the step that should be performed first among the higher-level integration decisions once the current state is mapped).
15. Define the inputs Claude needs, the outputs it returns, and the hand-offs around each step.
16. Pilot the integrated workflow with a small group on representative work.
17. Update the documented workflow and roll it out to the broader team.

Exam takeaway: When a question asks which integration step "should be performed first," among options like documenting, iterating, defining Claude's value/hand-offs, and piloting — the answer is identifying where Claude adds value and where each hand-off to a human occurs, once the current workflow is already mapped.

5.3 Process Optimization with Claude

For an existing workflow with documentation and cycle-time data already available, the best-supported approach is: map the current process, identify likely bottlenecks based on the cycle-time data, and propose optimization options for human review. Do not skip straight to generating a benchmark-based "ideal" process, do not have Claude interview

every team member and redesign unsupervised, and do not have Claude rank projected impacts as if that were a substitute for human decision-making.

Identifying the true bottleneck

The most direct signal of a bottleneck is the step with the longest queue/largest backlog waiting to enter it, or (depending on the data given) the step with the highest average cycle time across recent runs — not self-reported workload perception, and not simply the most recently changed step.

5.4 Managing a Long-Running or Degrading Conversation

Weekly feedback-and-adjustment cycle order: capture specific feedback from the review → translate feedback into one or two targeted adjustments → run the next cycle and compare results against the prior cycle → document what changed, what effect it produced, and any remaining issues → decide whether to continue iterating, switch approach, or escalate.

Transitioning out of a long, drifting conversation into a fresh session: summarize the goals, key decisions, and open questions → identify which references should persist beyond the current chat → move persistent references into a Project's knowledge base (or attach as needed) → begin a new chat and paste the summary as its starting context → confirm the new chat is on-task before continuing.

Keeping a long planning conversation productive: restate constraints and goals when the focus shifts to a new subtopic, and periodically summarize decisions made so far to compress the working state. Avoid summarizing to "retain every original word" (defeats the purpose), avoid opening a new thread for every minor follow-up, and avoid switching context aggressively between unrelated topics within one thread.

Part VI — Evaluation, Verification & Quality Assurance

6.1 Building an Evaluation Framework

Before scoring or evaluating any Claude output, two things must be defined first:

- The evaluation criteria that actually matter for the task.
- The threshold that distinguishes acceptable from unacceptable output.

Only after both exist should you score outputs, document the rubric/comments, forward unacceptable outputs for a second-pass review, or promote an approved output to production.

Valid evaluation criteria for a business brief/report

- Factual accuracy against the supplied source material.
- Alignment with the requested output format and length constraints.
- Distractors that are NOT valid evaluation criteria: total word count relative to industry benchmarks, mere presence of an executive summary as a proxy for completeness, or consistency of tone alone without checking accuracy/format.

6.2 Fact-Checking and Source Verification

- When two sources conflict (e.g., two different dates for the same event), locate the primary or authoritative source — never average the values, never simply prefer the more recent source, and never prefer whichever source has the most detailed-looking citation.
- An unsourced but confident-sounding claim (e.g., a "well-known industry standard" cited with no source) should be treated as unverified, and either sourced from an authoritative reference or removed — never republished as-is, and never strengthened with more confident wording.
- If a figure is repeated across multiple secondary sources (e.g., three trade-press articles) but none link to the underlying study, locate the original study and verify the figure in the primary source. Repetition across secondary sources does not establish accuracy.
- The single best question to separate plausibility from actual verification: can each specific claim be traced to a credible source or to the supplied input material? (Not: does it read comprehensively, open with a clear framing, or use varied sentence structure — those are style signals, not accuracy signals.)

6.3 Assessing Completeness Against a Specification

A subtle, frequently tested pattern: a deliverable may satisfy topic-level/structural requirements (e.g., "all five required topics are present") while one section is under-scoped relative to the detailed specification (e.g., a renewal-risk section that names only one risk factor when the spec requires three dimensions). The correct conclusion in this pattern is: the report meets the topic-level requirement, but the under-scoped section should be expanded before delivery — not a blanket pass, not a blanket fail, and not punting the judgment entirely to the customer.

Selective use of source material

If a Claude-generated recommendation cites only the sources that support its conclusion while omitting material counter-considerations that are present in the same source set (e.g., transition costs, a stakeholder service-level concern), this is selective use of the source material and the recommendation should be re-prompted to incorporate the

missing considerations before it is used — not accepted "for a first round" with the gap patched into an appendix, and not rejected outright simply for citing few sources.

6.4 Escalation Criteria

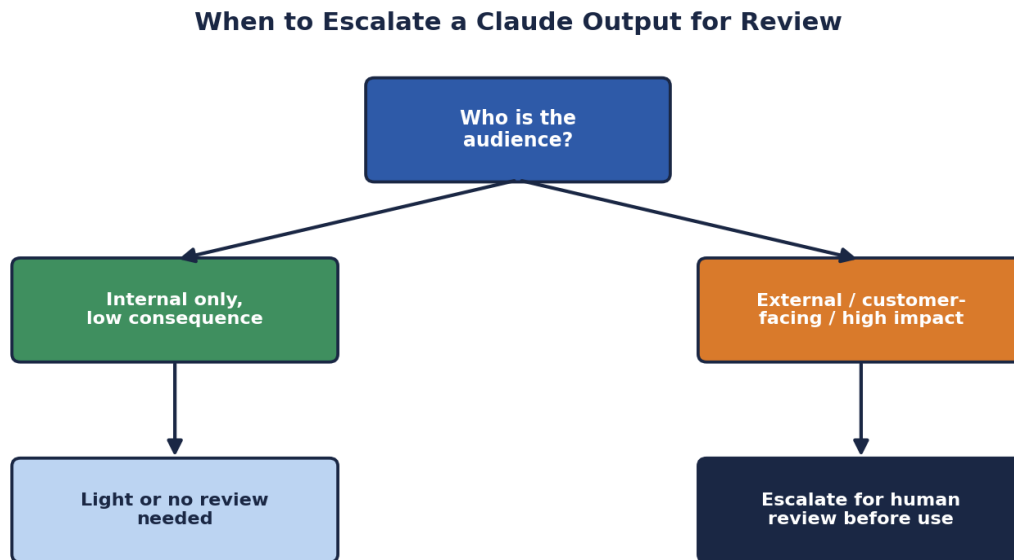


Figure 6.1 — Escalation hinges on audience and consequence, not on how the draft reads.

An output most clearly warrants escalation/human review before use when it is customer-facing/external, unchanged from the draft, and contains a binding commitment (e.g., a service-level commitment to a paying customer). Internal, low-consequence, personal-reference, or casual-status outputs generally do not require the same level of scrutiny.

Full escalation decision order: identify the audience and the impact of the output if it is wrong → assess the output's accuracy, completeness, and any unverified claims → compare the output's risk profile to the organization's escalation criteria → decide whether to use, iterate further, or escalate → document the decision and the rationale.

6.5 Designing a Reliable Human Hand-off

When a workflow analyst is designing a Claude-to-human hand-off, the best approach defines explicit criteria for both what Claude's output must satisfy and what the human reviewer must check before approval, and documents both in the workflow — not leaving human checks unspecified, and not letting each reviewer improvise their own criteria.

Part VII — Data Handling, Privacy & Security

7.1 Classifying and Handling Sensitive Data

Data Sensitivity: Handling Before Use with Claude

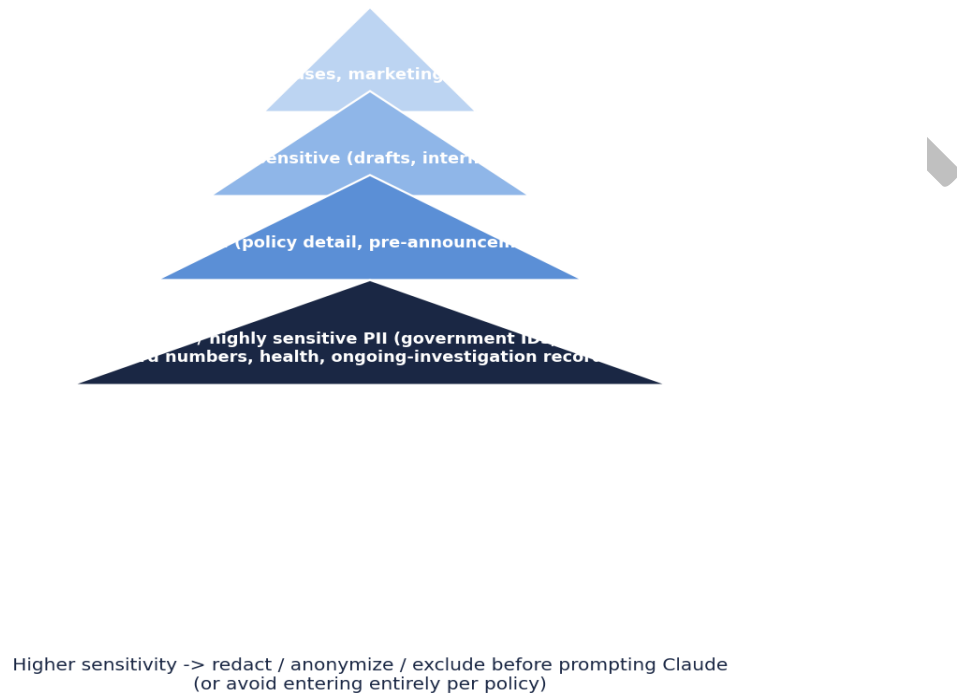


Figure 7.1 — Sensitivity tiers and how they change what you can safely prompt with.

Before using any document with mixed-sensitivity content, the first step is always to classify the content and identify which fields are sensitive — only after classification should you redact those fields, submit the redacted document, and (where warranted) have a peer confirm the redaction is complete.

Clearly sensitive data types

- Government identifiers and full payment-card numbers tied to named individuals.
- Compensation bands tied to specific named individuals; accommodation-request notes from an HR file.
- Information the organization's AI policy explicitly prohibits from entering an AI tool (e.g., ongoing-investigation details).

Lower-sensitivity / generally acceptable data

- Public job titles from an organizational chart, generic marketing copy, already-published press releases.
- Redacted job descriptions and anonymized policy summaries used for rephrasing.

Preparing a customer file for Code Execution or any analysis

- Confirm the planned task aligns with the organization's data-classification policy, and escalate if sensitivity exceeds approved use.

- Review the file for sensitive/regulated fields before upload and remove or redact anything not required for the analysis.
- A sandboxed execution environment does NOT exempt you from data-classification policy — this is a commonly tested wrong-answer trap.

Extracting only what's needed

When a source file mixes needed content with personal details (e.g., customer feedback quotations mixed with contact details), the correct approach is to extract only the content needed for the task and redact/anonymize the personal details before submitting the trimmed input — not submitting the full file unchanged, and not submitting only the personal details.

7.2 Connector and Skill Trust Decisions

(See Part IV.4 and IV.5 for full detail.) In short: verify source against an approved list, and review requested permissions/capabilities against what the task actually needs — for both Connectors and Skills.

Part VIII — Governance, Ethics & Responsible Use

8.1 What an AI Governance Framework Is

An organizational AI governance framework defines approved tools, allowed data, required reviews, and reporting paths so AI is used consistently and accountably across the organization. It is broader than pure regulatory compliance, is not simply a licensed-tool cost list, and is not simply an onboarding training checklist.

8.2 Applying Policy to a Proposed Use Case

Use-Case Assessment Sequence



Figure 8.1 — The standard use-case assessment sequence.

The tested assessment order is:

18. Identify the audience, decision impact, and reversibility of the outputs.
19. Identify the data types involved and whether sensitive data is implicated.
20. Compare the use case against organizational policy and relevant regulatory considerations.
21. Decide whether the use case proceeds, requires modification, or is declined.
22. Document the assessment outcome and rationale for traceability.

When a compliance specialist applies existing policy to a use case specifically, the first step is to identify the applicable policy provisions — before comparing the use case against them or deciding an outcome.

8.3 Ethical Risk in High-Impact Domains

The exam repeatedly distinguishes cosmetic issues (typos, dash-style inconsistency, tone variation) from substantive ethical risks. Substantive risks include:

- Outputs that systematically disadvantage members of a protected group.

- Decisions that materially affect a person's employment (or other high-stakes outcome) without human accountability.
- Unsupported demographic generalizations applied to individuals (e.g., a customer-segment description asserting group-level purchasing behavior that doesn't hold for individuals) — the fix is to revise toward observed behaviors and validate against actual data, not to add a disclaimer and leave the generalization in place, not to delete all segmentation outright, and not to excuse it because it's "only internal."

8.4 Acceptable vs. Inappropriate Use Cases

Generally acceptable (lower risk)	Requires strong controls / human ownership (higher risk)
Drafting an internal training summary from approved internal documents	Deciding promotion or termination outcomes based solely on model judgment
Synthesizing themes across approved customer feedback under aggregation rules	Issuing final, binding hiring or credit-approval decisions without human review
Drafting a legal summary an attorney will review and edit before client use	Approving a final external press release with no human review
Preliminary/administrative support that a qualified human reviews before it drives an outcome	Sole decision-making authority on customer-facing financial approvals (e.g., credit lines)

Exam takeaway: Pattern to memorize: Claude assisting a human who retains the decision = acceptable. Claude as the sole, final decision-maker on a high-impact, low-reversibility outcome (employment, credit, legal, clinical, contractual) = not acceptable, regardless of how good the model's judgment might be.

8.5 Stakeholder Communication About Claude's Role

When a stakeholder (even a senior executive who controls budget) overstates Claude's capabilities — e.g., claiming it eliminates the need for any human review on customer-facing content — the appropriate response acknowledges the real productivity gains, then explains clearly why human review remains essential (accuracy and brand/consequence risk), backed by specific examples. Simply deferring to authority and removing the safeguard, or escalating past the person entirely without engaging, are both wrong answers.

Appropriate stakeholder messages: an honest description of where Claude assists and where humans retain decisions, and a clear statement of limits and known failure modes. Inappropriate messages: claiming Claude handles everything with no human involvement, claiming the model never errs and needs no review, or a vague "the AI is taking care of it" reassurance with no real detail.

Part IX — Worked Scenario Patterns (How to Recognize the Right Answer Fast)

Most exam questions are scenario-based, not pure recall. The scenarios repeat a small number of underlying patterns. Recognizing the pattern is faster than re-deriving the logic each time.

Pattern 1 — "What should happen FIRST?" ordering questions

These almost always follow: Define/Scope → Gather/Identify → Draft/Execute → Validate/Verify → Document. Whatever option matches "define scope/purpose/criteria before anything else" is usually correct. Whatever option jumps straight to execution, rollout, or scoring without first defining criteria is usually the trap.

Pattern 2 — "Select two" complete-solution questions

Both correct options are usually the two most substantive, directly-relevant actions; the three wrong options are typically: (a) something cosmetic/irrelevant, (b) something that skips a necessary safeguard, and (c) something that goes too far / removes human oversight.

Pattern 3 — "Which is the correct classification/limitation?" questions

The correct answer virtually always names a real, substantive limitation or risk (confident-sounding but unsupported output; systematic bias; loss of human accountability) rather than a superficial one (response length, run-to-run wording variation, training-cutoff trivia) — unless the scenario is specifically about time-sensitive claims, in which case the cutoff answer becomes correct.

Pattern 4 — targeted vs. sweeping revision questions

When reviewer feedback names specific issues, the correct action addresses exactly those issues, leaves the rest untouched, and documents the change. Any option that rewrites everything, adds unrequested extras, or touches unrelated sections is a trap.

Pattern 5 — feature-selection questions

Match the noun in the question to the feature built for it: recurring team workspace + shared knowledge → Project. Editable, reusable stand-alone output → Artifact. Exact/verifiable calculation → Code Execution. Reusable packaged procedure → Skill. Live external data → Connector. Persisting context across sessions → Memory (with Incognito for anything that must not persist).

Pattern 6 — "most appropriate response to a policy conflict" questions

If there is an explicit organizational prohibition, the correct answer always follows the prohibition and escalates for an approved alternative — never a workaround (paraphrasing, Incognito, waiting it out, expanding scope quietly).

Part X — Final Quick-Review Cheat Sheet

Skim this section in the final hour before the exam.

Core definitions

- Hallucination = incorrect/unsupported info presented as fact. First response: pinpoint the specific unsupported claim.
- Context window = the bounded text/info the model can consider at once (instructions + knowledge/attachments + history + current turn).
- Governance framework = approved tools + allowed data + required reviews + reporting paths.

Models

- Haiku = fast/light/high-volume. Sonnet = balanced everyday default. Opus = most capable, complex multi-step reasoning, higher latency/cost.
- More capable → more resource/rate-limit use and generally slower. Lighter → faster and cheaper.
- Selection order: define quality/latency/volume bar → choose candidate → test on representative sample → pick lightest model that meets the bar → retest on new releases.

AI Fluency 4 D's

- Delegation = what to hand to Claude vs. keep human (reversibility + consequence + need for judgment/empathy).
- Description = clear prompts + accurate, audience-calibrated capability/limitation communication.
- Discernment = systematically verify output against requirements/source/standards before use.
- Diligence = sustained, ongoing accountability and policy application over time.

Prompting

- Minimum strong-prompt elements: clear task statement + relevant context (audience/goal).
- Iterate: identify specific weakness → change one element → compare to original criteria. Plateau → escalate/change approach. Drift → revert to best-known baseline.
- Feedback: map each item to a specific change; ask clarifying questions if ambiguous; never bundle in unrequested extras.

Features

- Project = persistent shared workspace + knowledge base + instructions for recurring team work.
- Artifact = stand-alone, editable, reusable output.
- Code Execution = deterministic, verifiable calculations/charts — always verify against source after running.
- Skill = packaged reusable procedure; verify source + permissions before trusting a third-party Skill.
- Connector = live external data link; confirm approved vendor + data classification before authorizing; watch for index-refresh lag.
- Memory = cross-session context; use Incognito / disable contribution for confidential one-off discussions; imports are experimental and may be incomplete.

Workflow design

- Decompose when a task needs multiple distinct outputs or spans multiple owners/sources.

- Multi-section deliverable: define goals → gather inputs per section → draft each section separately → synthesize summary last.
- Integration order: map current workflow → identify Claude-fit vs. human-only steps → define inputs/outputs/hand-offs → pilot → roll out & document.
- Process optimization: map current process → find bottlenecks from real cycle-time/queue data → propose options for human review.

Evaluation & escalation

- Before scoring: define criteria AND acceptance threshold first.
- Conflicting facts → find the primary/authoritative source, never average or default to "most recent."
- Escalate when: external audience + binding commitment + high consequence + low reversibility.
- Escalation order: audience/impact → assess accuracy/completeness → compare to escalation criteria → decide → document.

Data & privacy

- Classify sensitivity FIRST, then redact, then submit, then (if warranted) peer-check the redaction.
- Sandboxing does not exempt data from classification policy.
- Explicit policy prohibition → never work around it; escalate for an approved alternative.

Governance & ethics

- Use-case assessment: audience/impact/reversibility → data sensitivity → policy/regulatory comparison → decide → document.
- Substantive ethical risk = systematic disadvantage to a protected group, or high-impact decisions without human accountability. Cosmetic issues (typos, tone, dash style) are not substantive risks.
- Claude assists, human decides = acceptable for high-impact domains (HR, legal, clinical, financial). Claude as sole final decision-maker on high-impact/low-reversibility outcomes = not acceptable.
- Stakeholder communication must be two-sided: real capabilities AND real limitations AND the human oversight retained.

Good luck on the Claude Certified Associate — Foundations exam.