EcomLabs

PRACTICAL GUIDE

AGENTS.md for Claude Code: a template and the CLAUDE.md that imports it

A short AGENTS.md template, the three-line CLAUDE.md that imports it, what Claude Code reads depending on the files in your repository, and how to check it worked.

FOR	Teams using Claude Code that want one instructions file for several agents
TESTED WITH	The templates, validated as Markdown with Node 22 and markdown-it (no front matter, no HTML, no accidental imports); Claude Code was not run, its behavior comes from the documentation
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BEFORE YOU START

What changed and what Claude Code reads

Since version 2.1.277 (September 18, 2026), Claude Code reads AGENTS.md when the project has no CLAUDE.md. Per the memory documentation, this is what it reads by default:

YOUR REPOSITORY HAS	CLAUDE CODE READS
An AGENTS.md and no CLAUDE.md or CLAUDE.local.md in your directory or above it	Your AGENTS.md
An AGENTS.md and a CLAUDE.md or CLAUDE.local.md	The CLAUDE.md files only
A CLAUDE.md that imports AGENTS.md	Your CLAUDE.md, with AGENTS.md included

`CLAUDE.local.md` counts as a CLAUDE.md. To always read both files, set **Project instructions** to `claude-md-and-agents-md` with `/config`.

STEP 01

AGENTS.md: the template

For an example Next.js store. Replace every line with your project's and keep only what the agent can check.

```
# AGENTS.md

## Project
- Next.js store with the App Router and strict TypeScript.
- Code in `src/`, routes in `src/app/`, tests in `tests/`.

## Commands
- Install: `npm ci`
- Dev server: `npm run dev`
- Tests: `npm test`
- Lint and types: `npm run lint` and `npx tsc --noEmit`

## Code style
- One component per file, in PascalCase.
- Before creating a component, look for a similar one in `src/components/`.
- Do not add dependencies without asking.

## Testing
- Run `npm test` and `npm run lint` before calling a task done.
- If a test fails, fix the code: do not delete or skip the test.

## Security
- Do not read, print or edit `.env*` files.
- Do not run `git push` or deploy.
```

```
## Commits and PRs
- Small commits, with the message in the imperative mood.
- In the PR description, list the commands you ran and their results.
```

> **CAUTION**
> These rules are context, not a block: the Claude Code documentation says so. To stop something for real, like reading a `.env`, use a PreToolUse hook. And aim for under 200 lines.

STEP 02

CLAUDE.md that imports AGENTS.md

If the project already has a CLAUDE.md, put this next to AGENTS.md. Claude reads the imported file first, then the rest:

```
@AGENTS.md

## Claude Code
- Use plan mode for changes under `src/checkout/`.
```

- **The path** is relative to the importing file; up to four levels. It does not reduce context cost.
- **The at sign**: parsing skips code spans. To mention a path without importing it, wrap it in backticks.
- **Symlink** (`ln -s AGENTS.md CLAUDE.md`): Edit and Write do not write through it, and on Windows it needs administrator rights or Developer Mode. On mixed teams, use the import.

STEP 03

Check that it works

- `claude --version` shows 2.1.277 or later.
- With no CLAUDE.md, the interactive session shows `no CLAUDE.md found; AGENTS.md loaded: /path/AGENTS.md`.
- With the import, run `/context all` in your next session and confirm CLAUDE.md appears under **Memory files**.

WHEN YOU ARE DONE

Checklist

- [ ] AGENTS.md at the root, plain Markdown, under 200 lines, commands the agent can run.
- [ ] If there is a CLAUDE.md, its first line is `@AGENTS.md`.
- [ ] No `CLAUDE.local.md` in projects that rely only on AGENTS.md.
- [ ] No contradictory rules; anything critical has a hook.