Claude MCP Quickstart (1-Pager)

Last updated: August 23, 2025

What is MCP?

Model Context Protocol (MCP) is an open standard that lets Claude connect to tools and data-think **USB-C for AI**.

Install Claude Desktop

- Download **Claude Desktop** (macOS/Windows). Open **Settings -> Tools -> MCP**.

Add Desktop Commander (File system + Terminal)

1. Install the **Desktop Commander** MCP tool (follow its README).
2. In Claude Desktop, add it under **MCP servers**.
3. Test: "Open my `Records/` folder and list files."

Example `mcpSettings.json`

```
{ "mcpServers": { "desktop-commander": { "command": "desktop-commander", "args": []
} } }
```

Gmail Access (Built-in; No Server Needed)

- Use Claude's **Gmail integration** in Settings/Integrations. Then ask:
"Search my inbox for agency replies since Monday and summarize deadlines."

Optional advanced path
- Only if you need **automations on attachments** or bespoke flows, add a **custom Gmail MCP server**. Otherwise, skip this-built-in Gmail covers searching/reading messages.

Troubleshooting

- **Cannot start server** -> check PATH and required runtime (Node/Python).
- **Auth fails** -> re-run integration auth and verify scopes.
- **Claude can't see Desktop Commander** -> restart Claude Desktop after config changes.