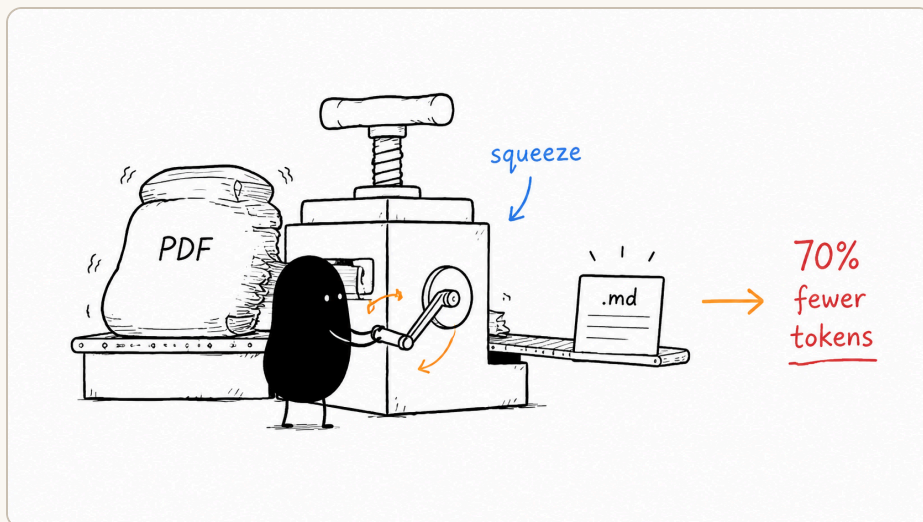


# MarkItDown MCP for *Claude Desktop*

*Connect Microsoft's free converter so every file you upload becomes clean Markdown — and Claude reads it with up to 70% fewer tokens.*



STEPS

4

READ TIME

~2 min

TOKEN CUT

up to 70%

SKILL LEVEL

Beginner

# Contents

---

**01** What you'll have

---

**02** Before you start

---

**03** **Read this first**

---

**04** **The setup — four steps**

---

**05** Tips & tricks

---

**06** Common gotchas

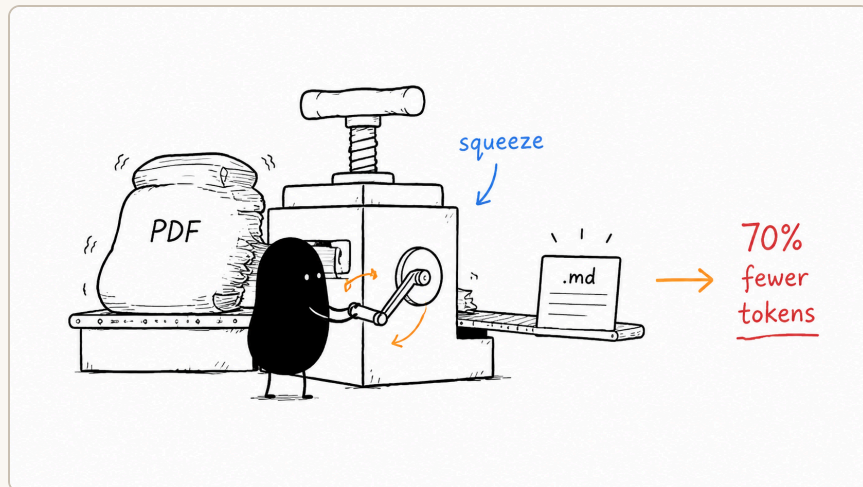
---

## OVERVIEW

# What you'll have

By the end, MarkItDown runs as an MCP server inside Claude Desktop and every file you drop in is converted automatically.

- 01 Every uploaded file — PDF, Word, Excel, PowerPoint, images, even YouTube links — auto-converts to clean Markdown.
- 02 Up to 70% fewer tokens per document, so longer files fit and cost less.
- 03 Better answers — Claude was trained on millions of Markdown files and reads the format natively.
- 04 A one-time, ~2-minute setup. No subscription, no code.



ONE CONVERSION → UP TO 70% FEWER TOKENS

## PREREQUISITES

# Before you start

Three things, all free. This is a beginner setup — nothing to compile.

WHAT	WHY YOU NEED IT	WHERE
<b>Claude Desktop</b>	The desktop app (not the web) is what runs MCP servers	<a href="https://claude.ai/download">claude.ai/download</a>
<b>Python 3.10+</b>	uv and MarkItDown run on it	<a href="https://python.org">python.org</a>
<b>A terminal</b>	To paste two install commands	Terminal (Mac) / Command Prompt (Win)

### TIP

On Windows, tick “**Add Python to PATH**” in the Python installer. It prevents the single most common error later.



READ THIS FIRST

---

# The one thing people get wrong

*Skip this and the server silently won't load.*

## THE ONE RULE

Fully *quit* Claude Desktop after editing the config — closing the window is not enough. The MCP server only starts on a clean launch.

Two smaller things quietly break the setup too: a mistyped config and a stale terminal.

Paste the JSON block **exactly** — one stray comma or quote and Claude won't start the server. And if a command comes back “not found”, open a fresh terminal so the new `PATH` is picked up.

# 01

STEP ONE

---

## Install Python & uv

Markdown runs through `uv`, a fast Python tool runner. Get Python first, then uv.

### A — Install Python 3.10 or newer

Download the installer from [python.org](https://python.org) and run it (Windows: tick “Add Python to PATH”). Confirm it worked:

```
terminal
> python3 --version
Python 3.12.3
```

### B — Install the uv package manager

Open your terminal and paste the line for your OS:

```
install uv
# macOS / Linux
> curl -LsSf https://astral.sh/uv/install.sh | sh

# Windows (PowerShell)
> powershell -c "irm https://astral.sh/uv/install.ps1 | iex"
```

# 02

STEP TWO

## Add Markdown to Claude Desktop

*One small config block tells Claude Desktop to launch the converter.*

### A — Open the config

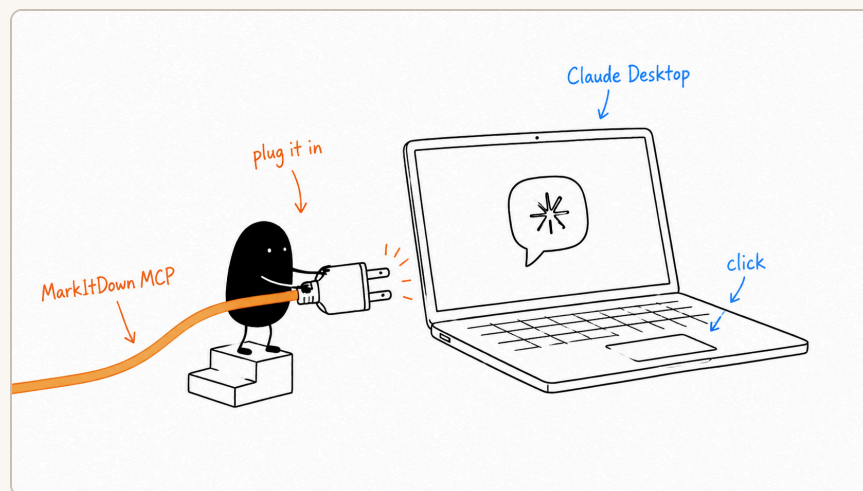
In Claude Desktop, click the **Claude** menu (top-left) → **Settings** → **Developer**, then click **Edit Config**.

### B — Paste this exact block

Replace everything in `claude_desktop_config.json` with the block below, then save and close.

```
claude_desktop_config.json

{"mcpServers":{"markdown":{"command":"uvx","args":["markdown-mcp"]}}}
```



THE MARKITDOWN MCP PLUGS INTO CLAUDE DESKTOP

# 03

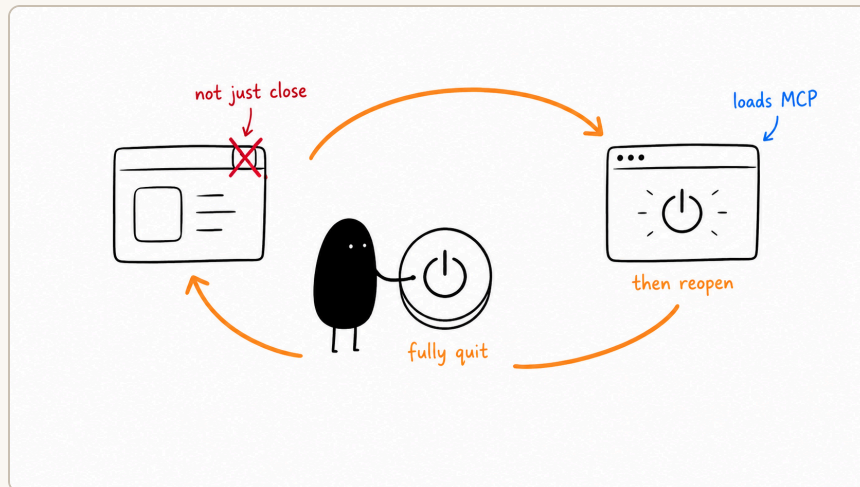
STEP THREE

## Restart Claude Desktop

*The server only loads on a fresh launch.*

### A — Fully quit, then reopen

Quit the app completely — `Cmd/Ctrl + Q`, not just the window's close button — then open it again. Markdown is now connected.



CLOSING THE WINDOW ISN'T ENOUGH — FULLY QUIT, THEN REOPEN

# 04

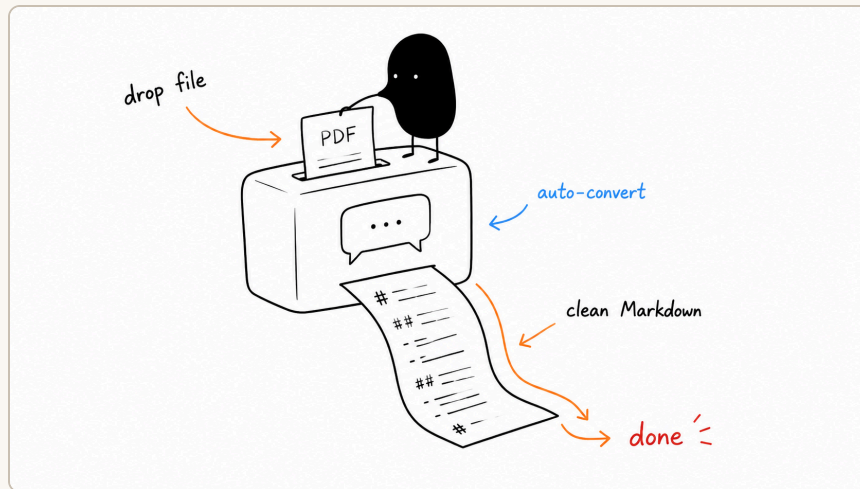
## STEP FOUR

### Test it

*Prove it works in ten seconds.*

#### A — Drop a file into the chat

Attach a PDF or Word doc. Markdown converts it to clean Markdown before Claude reads it, so you get tighter, cheaper answers. That's it — every file you upload now arrives as Markdown.



DROP A FILE IN — CLEAN MARKDOWN COMES OUT

#### TIP

Reopen **Settings** → **Developer** any time to confirm **markdown** is listed as a running server.

## TIPS & TRICKS

# Tips & tricks

Small things that make MarkItDown nicer to live with.

### TRICK

### WHY IT WORKS

---

**It's not just PDFs**

Word, Excel, PowerPoint, images (OCR), audio, and YouTube links all convert too

---

**Feed it the big files**

70% fewer tokens means long PDFs that used to overflow now fit in context

---

**No special prompt**

Conversion happens automatically on upload — just attach the file and ask your question

---

## COMMON GOTCHAS

# Common gotchas

### “UVX: COMMAND NOT FOUND”

uv isn't on your PATH yet. Close the terminal and open a new one; if it persists, re-run the uv install line for your OS.

### MARKITDOWN ISN'T IN THE MENU

You didn't fully quit Claude Desktop. Press `Cmd/Ctrl + Q` and reopen — closing the window doesn't reload MCP servers.

### CLAUDE WON'T START AFTER EDITING THE CONFIG

The JSON is malformed. Paste the exact block from Step 2 — a single stray comma or quote breaks it.

# *convert.*

*Now every file you hand Claude arrives as clean  
Markdown.*

*Fewer tokens, better answers — two minutes of setup.*

· MADE WITH CLAUDE · A CARSON GUIDE · 2026 ·