

No. 76

AI ASSISTANTS

Getting Started with DeepSeek

Chat, reasoning, coding and open models from DeepSeek, with privacy explained, for beginners

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BEFORE YOU BEGIN

How to use this book

What this book covers, who it is for, and how to use it.

DeepSeek is an AI assistant and a family of AI models from a Chinese company based in Hangzhou. It became world news in January 2025, when its R1 model overtook ChatGPT as the most downloaded free app on Apple's US App Store. It remains one of the ten most visited AI tools in the world.

DeepSeek is popular for three reasons: its chat app is free, its models are strong at reasoning, maths and coding, and many of its models are **open-weight**, meaning anyone can download and run them. It is also controversial, because its official app stores user data on servers in China, and many governments have restricted it.

This book explains, for beginners, how to use DeepSeek well and safely: the app, thinking mode, search, long documents, coding, open models, running models on your own computer, and how to make sensible privacy choices.

Which versions this book covers

- The DeepSeek web chat and mobile apps in late 2026.
- The **DeepSeek V4** models: V4-Pro and V4-Flash, released as a preview in April 2026, with the official V4-Pro released in August 2026.
- Earlier models such as V3 and R1, which still appear in many tools.

AI products change quickly. Use this book for the ideas and habits, and check DeepSeek's own pages for the latest details.

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Who this book is for

- **Beginners** curious about DeepSeek.
- **Students and self-learners** who want a free AI tutor for maths, science and code.
- **Developers and hobbyists** interested in open models.
- **Managers** deciding whether DeepSeek is allowed at work.

How the book is organized

- **Part I — Foundations** (Chapters 1–5): what DeepSeek is, how it works, ways to use it, costs, and your first chat.
- **Part II — Everyday use** (Chapters 6–12): prompting, thinking mode, search, long documents, coding and maths, writing and languages, and the API.
- **Part III — Open models and privacy** (Chapters 13–18): open weights, running models locally, privacy, workplace and government rules, accuracy and censorship, and responsible use.
- **Part IV — Putting it to work** (Chapters 19–23): ideas by role, worked examples, comparing assistants, fixing problems and building habits.
- **Reference**: checklists, glossary and further reading.

Callouts

TIP
Practical advice you can use straight away.

IN DEEPSEEK
Details about how DeepSeek itself does something.

WATCH OUT
Common mistakes and risks.

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KEY IDEA

The one thing to remember from a section.

A note on screens and examples

Screens are **simplified illustrations**, not copies of the real app. Names in examples are invented.

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PART I

Foundations

These chapters explain what DeepSeek is, how its models work, the different ways to use them, what it costs and how to start your first conversation.

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CHAPTER 1

What DeepSeek is

DeepSeek is both a free chat assistant and a family of AI models that anyone can download.

Two things with one name

- The **DeepSeek app**: a chat assistant on the web and on phones, similar to ChatGPT.
- The **DeepSeek models**: the AI systems behind the app, many of which are published openly so others can use them.

A short history



Figure 1.1 Key DeepSeek milestones

- **December 2024**: DeepSeek **V3** gets attention for strong results at low training cost.
- **January 2025**: the **R1** reasoning model and app go viral. The app tops the US App Store's free chart.
- **2025**: steady updates to the V3 line improve reasoning, coding and languages.
- **April 24, 2026**: **DeepSeek V4 Preview** arrives in two versions, V4-Pro and V4-Flash, both open-weight under the MIT licence, with a one-million-token context window.

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- **August 2026**: the official **V4-Pro** release reaches the web, app and API, with improved agent abilities.

What it is good at

- **Reasoning** through maths, logic and science problems.
- **Coding**: writing, explaining and fixing code.
- **Long documents**, thanks to a very large context window.
- **Low cost** for developers using its API.

What to keep in mind

- The official app and API send your data to DeepSeek's servers in **China**.
- Many governments and companies **restrict** its use.
- Like all AI, it can be **wrong**, and on some political topics its answers follow Chinese content rules.

KEY IDEA

DeepSeek is a capable, low-cost AI. Where you use it, and what you share, matters more than with most assistants.

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CHAPTER 2

How DeepSeek works

A little background on how DeepSeek's models are built explains why they are both powerful and cheap.

A large language model

Like ChatGPT or Gemini, DeepSeek is a **large language model**: an AI trained on huge amounts of text and code to predict useful responses. It does not look facts up unless it uses web search.

Mixture of Experts

DeepSeek's models use a design called **Mixture of Experts (MoE)**. Instead of running the whole model for every word, a "router" picks a few specialist parts, the experts, to do the work.

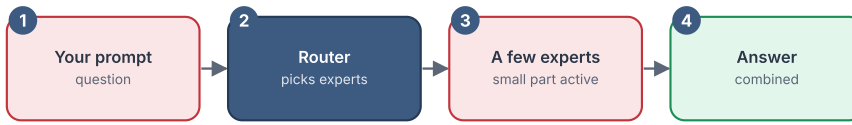


Figure 2.1 How Mixture of Experts works

This is why model sizes are given as two numbers. V4-Pro has about **1.6 trillion** parameters in total, but only about **49 billion** are active for each word. V4-Flash has about 284 billion in total and 13 billion active. Using fewer at a time makes the model cheaper and faster to run.

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