

No. 85

AI TRENDS

AI Coding Tools

Claude Code, Cursor, GitHub Copilot, Codex and other AI coding assistants and agents, explained for beginners

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The information in this book is provided for general education. AI products, features, plans, prices and policies change frequently; always confirm details in the vendor's current documentation. Screens marked “Illustration” are simplified drawings, not captures of real software. Company and person names in examples are fictional.

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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.

AI coding tools help people write, understand, fix and test software. They range from smart autocomplete that suggests the next line, to **coding agents** that take a whole task, such as "fix this bug and add a test", plan it, edit many files, run the tests and hand back the result for review.

These tools have spread remarkably fast. JetBrains' Developer Ecosystem Survey 2026 reported that 90% of professional developers used AI coding agents at work at least weekly, and 68% daily. Searches for tutorials grew just as quickly: searches for "claude code tutorial" rose from about 170 a month in April 2025 to about 4,400 a month in March 2026.

This book is a beginner's guide to the main tools in 2026, especially **Claude Code**, **Cursor**, **GitHub Copilot** and **OpenAI Codex**, and to the habits that make AI-written code safe and maintainable.

What this book covers

- The kinds of AI coding tools and how coding agents work.
- Getting started with the leading tools.
- Writing good tasks, giving context and reviewing results.
- Security, privacy and team practices.

Tools and prices change monthly. Check each vendor's documentation for current details.

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Who this book is for

- **New and junior developers** starting with AI tools.
- **Experienced developers** new to agents.
- **Students** and **technical managers** who want to understand the landscape.
- Readers of **Vibe Coding** ready to work closer to the code.

How the book is organized

- **Part I — Foundations** (Chapters 1–6): what AI coding tools are, the types, how agents work, the market, choosing a tool, and setting up.
- **Part II — The main tools** (Chapters 7–12): Claude Code, Cursor, GitHub Copilot, Codex, Google's tools, and others.
- **Part III — Working well** (Chapters 13–18): writing tasks, context and instruction files, reviewing code, testing, Git habits, and connecting tools with MCP.
- **Part IV — Safety and teams** (Chapters 19–23): security, privacy and data, team adoption, learning while using AI, and worked examples.
- **Reference**: checklists, glossary and further reading.

Callouts

TIP

Practical advice you can use straight away.

IN PRACTICE

How things work in specific tools.

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 real tools. Code examples are short and illustrative.

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PART I

Foundations

These chapters explain what AI coding tools are, the main types, how coding agents work, what the market looks like in 2026, and how to choose where to start.

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CHAPTER 1

What AI coding tools are

AI coding tools use large language models trained on code to help with software work.

A short history



Figure 1.1 From autocomplete to agents

- **2021**: GitHub Copilot popularizes AI autocomplete in the editor.
- **2023**: chat assistants explain and write code on request.
- **2024**: AI-first editors such as Cursor make multi-file edits from instructions.
- **2025–2026**: **coding agents** such as Claude Code, Codex and Copilot's coding agent take whole tasks, run commands and tests, and open pull requests.

What they help with

- Understanding unfamiliar code.
- Writing new features and boilerplate.
- Fixing bugs and errors.
- Writing tests and documentation.
- Refactoring and upgrading old code.
- Reviewing pull requests.

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What they do not replace

- Knowing what the software should do.
- Judging whether code is correct, secure and maintainable.
- Responsibility for what ships.

KEY IDEA

AI coding tools speed up the typing and searching. Understanding and judgement are still the developer's job.

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CHAPTER 2

Types of tools

Tools differ mainly in how much they do on their own and where they run.

Type	Examples	How you work
Inline completion	GitHub Copilot, Cursor Tab	accept suggestions as you type
AI editor	Cursor, Windsurf, VS Code + Copilot	chat and agent inside the editor
Terminal agent	Claude Code, Codex CLI, Gemini CLI	give tasks in the command line
Cloud agent	Copilot coding agent, Codex cloud, Claude Code on the we	assign a task, review a pull request
Agent-first IDE	Google Antigravity	manage several agents

Figure 2.1 The main kinds of AI coding tools

Inline completion

As you type, the tool suggests the rest of the line or block. You press a key to accept. Low risk, small help, very fast.

AI editors

Editors such as **Cursor** and **Windsurf**, or VS Code with **GitHub Copilot**, add chat and agent modes that edit across files in your project.

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