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# Working with AI

A practical team rulebook

## WHY THIS EXISTS

# Good results are driven, not given

An AI agent does roughly what you set it up to do. Drive it well and it's fast and accurate. Leave it vague and trust it blindly, and it drifts. A handful of habits make the difference — that's this book.

## NEARLY EVERYTHING TRACES TO TWO THINGS

**It guessed** instead of checking.

**It said "done"** without proving it.

Each habit ahead defends against one or both.

# 01

## Plan before you prompt

Say what you want, what to leave alone, and when to stop — before the agent starts. A clear frame prevents wasted work and constant course-correction.

**Do** — "Build the export endpoint. Mock auth if it's missing. Stop after a smoke test and show me the output."

**Don't** — "Add export support."

# 02

## Show, don't tell

An agent can't see what it builds. For anything visual, hand it a screenshot, a link, or a sketch up front — otherwise you'll burn turns describing the look by feel.

**Do** — "Match this screen [screenshot]. Keep our spacing and the navy header."

**Don't** — "Make the dashboard look nicer."

# 03

## Make "done" prove itself

Treat "done" as a claim, not a fact. The proof is the verification actually running — the full test suite or the end-to-end flow — with its result shown, not a one-line summary. Some tools do this for you; when they don't, ask.

**Do** — "Run the full suite (or the E2E flow) and show me the result."

**Don't** — settle for "all tests pass" with nothing to show.

# 04

## Check what it assumes

Agents guess — file locations, what exists, how things connect. The code is the source of truth. Have it verify the load-bearing facts, cover the edge cases, and stay in scope instead of inventing extra.

**Do** — "Confirm this against the code before you change anything."

**Don't** — let it act on an out-of-date doc or a hunch.

# 05

## Guard the irreversible

Commits, pushes, installs, deleting files, anything that touches a live system — never let the agent do these on its own. Ask for them explicitly, and keep it working in a sandbox.

### FROM EXPERIENCE

An agent left to its own devices once ran an update that changed a live setup. Approve the irreversible steps yourself — every time.

# 06

## Run clean sessions

Keep each session to one focused piece of work with a tidy structure, and ask for regular checkpoints and a clear stopping point — so you can steer and review as you go instead of untangling a sprawling session afterward.

**Do** — "Check in at each milestone, and stop when this task is done."

**Don't** — let one session sprawl across unrelated changes with no checkpoints.

### BEFORE YOU START

- Intent, constraints, and a stop condition?
- A reference for any visual work?
- Plan first, or safe to execute?
- A stop point and budget for long runs?
- The only session in these files?

### BEFORE YOU ACCEPT "DONE"

- Did it show proof?
- Did it stay in scope?
- Did it document the change?