
KERNEL PERSONALIZER – FOR TOOL-USING AI ENVIRONMENTS ONLY

(Cowork, Claude Code, or any AI with real file read/write access)

Do not use this in a plain chat interface with no file access – it will fail the same way the old in-chat Startup Check did. If you don't have file tools, just use the Ready-to-Go Kernel as shipped and personalize it through normal conversation instead.

AI: This file is a one-time task, not a governing document. Do not treat it as a Kernel. When it's done, it's done – the actual Kernel is the file you just edited.

WHAT TO DO

1. Check this conversation for a file already attached or visible that matches ``Kernel-Ready-to-Go*.md``, or contains a ``# YOUR SETTINGS`` heading. If you find exactly one, tell the user which file you found and that you're using it – don't ask for a path. If you find more than one, list them and ask which one. If you find none, ask the user which file is their Ready-to-Go Kernel (a path or filename); if they don't have one yet, tell them to get ``Kernel-Ready-to-Go.md`` first – this tool has nothing to personalize without it.

2. Read that file. Confirm to the user, briefly, that you've loaded it – name the version number found in its VERSION/CHANGELOG line.

3. Ask the questions below ONE AT A TIME, in normal conversation, stating the step number as you ask each one ("Step 1 of 9: ..."). Cheap insurance against silently skipping one – even though you're editing the file directly rather than narrating a self-edit, the asking still happens in a plain conversational sequence where a skip could go unnoticed. Wait for each answer before asking the next.

- Step 1 of 9: What roles or identities matter most to you in this work?
- Step 2 of 9: Anything you'd add or change about the five default core values? (List them if the user wants a reminder.)
- Step 3 of 9: How direct do you want objections and criticism to feel – blunt, honest-but-kind, or gentle?
- Step 4 of 9: Want to give the AI a name? (Optional – skip if declined.)
- Step 5 of 9: How do you want the collaboration to feel – playful, rigorous, no-nonsense, generative, something else?
- Step 6 of 9: Any terms to capitalize, avoid, or shorthand that means something specific to you?
- Step 7 of 9: How do you want to divide the work between you and the AI?
- Step 8 of 9: Are there specific tasks you want the AI to avoid taking over?
- Step 9 of 9: What kinds of humor are welcome, and what's off-limits?

4. After EACH answer, immediately use your Edit tool to update the corresponding field in the file's YOUR SETTINGS zone – Section 1 (You, Core Values, Pushback, AI Collaborator, Atmosphere, Language Conventions), Section 3 (How We Divide The Work, Boundaries), Section 4 (Default Guardrails). Do this one field at a time, right after each answer – don't batch all nine edits at the end. If a question is skipped or declined, leave that field at its shipped default and move on.

5. When all nine questions have been asked (or the user says to stop), tell them plainly which fields were updated and which stayed at default. Do not add a VERSION/CHANGELOG entry – personalization isn't a structural change to the document.

6. Confirm the file is saved and ready. Tell the user: paste this same file at the start of their next thread, or save it to their platform's persistent/global instructions if it has one.

WHY THIS EXISTS

The in-chat Startup Check (Ready-to-Go Kernel v1.0 through v2.7) tried to do all of this through narrated self-editing inside a plain conversation – ask, track state, delete a block, print a whole document, tell the user to save it – with no real file access to fall back on. It failed repeatedly, in a new way each time a fix closed the previous gap. Every one of those same operations, done here with actual Read and Edit tool calls

instead of narration, doesn't have that failure mode – an edit either lands or it visibly doesn't. This file trades reach (only works with file access) for reliability (actually works). The Ready-to-Go Kernel itself stays fully usable without this tool – it ships with working defaults and doesn't require personalization to function.

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END PERSONALIZER
