
ELLM

How to Apply Skills to a Session

Learn how to apply skills to a session for consistent, house-style results without repeating instructions. Discover how to manage and activate skills, including adding team-specific ones, and troubleshoot common issues.

AUTHOR

Paul Flanders

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Estimated time: 3 minutes

Difficulty: Beginner

Why you'd use this

A skill is a reusable guide that teaches the assistant how to do one kind of work well, for example building n8n automations or writing Moodle plugins, in the Agent Skills layout of a folder with a `SKILL.md`. When you apply a skill it is included with every request for the session, so you get consistent, house-style results without pasting instructions each time. The extension ships with a library of more than ninety skills, and you can add your team's own.

Before you start

Permissions required:

- None for built-in skills. Write access to `.project-ai/skills/` to add workspace skills.

You'll need:

- For your own skills: a folder `<name>/SKILL.md` with YAML front matter (`name` and `description`) followed by markdown instructions, or a single `<name>.md` file.

Steps

1. Type `/skills` in the composer, or press `/` and choose **Skills (apply / remove)**.
2. A pick list opens with a checkbox per skill and its description. Tick the ones to enable and press **Enter**. Untick to remove.

3. A skills bar appears under the header listing the active skills, with a **Manage** link to reopen the list.
4. Ask for work in that domain. When a reply draws on a skill, a "Skill applied" chip appears on it.
5. To add a team skill, create `.project-ai/skills/<name>/SKILL.md` in the workspace, or point the `ellmCode.skillsPath` setting at a shared folder (absolute or workspace-relative). Workspace skills override a shared-library skill of the same name, which overrides a built-in.
6. In Plan Mode, watch for a "Suggested skills for this project" box after the first planning turn. Tick the suggestions and click **Enable selected**, or **Skip**.

What you should see

Active skills are remembered per workspace and are listed in the audit log for every request they were sent with, which is how you confirm a skill was in effect for a given change.

Troubleshooting

- **A new skill file is not listed:** check the front matter has a `name` line and the folder sits directly under the skills path. Reopen the picker after saving.
- **Replies got slower with many skills on:** each skill adds to every request. Keep two or three active for the task at hand and remove the rest.

Related guides

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- How to Plan and Build a Feature with Plan Mode
- How to Show the Audit Log and Debug Trace