

How to edit agent job files

Change a standing instruction without changing the whole system. For owners whose handoff includes a safe way to edit these files.

BEFORE · EXAMPLE ONLY

Write detailed updates.

AFTER · DRAFT ONLY

Keep routine updates to five short bullets. If I ask for a full report, include the detail I need.

A small edit should have a small reach

A job file tells an agent how to work in a certain place. A good edit changes one clear behavior. It doesn't quietly give the agent more access or permission.

Your setup may use AGENTS.md, CLAUDE.md, SOUL.md, or another named file. Those names are clues, not a promise that every app reads them.



Edit one instruction. Keep the rest of the page intact.

No owner editor in your handoff?

Use the change request on page 8. ED can apply it through the right path. You don't need to install an editor or learn a command line.

YOUR ROUTE THROUGH THE EDIT	PAGE
Find the actual file and what it controls	2
Choose what belongs there	3
Keep a safe before copy and write the change	4
Avoid conflicts and unsafe instructions	5
Save and use the approved reload path	6
Check the changed behavior and undo if needed	7
Send or file a clear change request	8

A saved sentence isn't a live change.

The agent must read the right file, in the right scope, before the new behavior can work.

Find the file the agent really reads.

Start with your handoff, not a filename guess. A good rule in an unused folder changes nothing.

COMMON NAME	OFTEN USED FOR	WHAT YOU MUST CONFIRM
AGENTS.md	Shared project instructions for tools that support it.	Which folder and which agent read this copy?
CLAUDE.md	Instructions for Claude in supported setups.	Is this the project file or a wider personal file?
SOUL.md	Voice and behavior in setups that load it.	Does this agent load this file, and from where?
Other named file	A brief, skill, job, or app-specific guide.	What role did your builder give it?

Ask for evidence, not a yes

An agent saying “I’ll follow that” doesn’t prove it loaded a file. Ask it to name the file and quote the short instruction it read. Then check the behavior on page 7.

If the file is private, keep that answer in the approved private workspace. Don’t ask it to list every file or reveal hidden system rules.

Agent or app name

Exact owner–edit file location from our handoff

What this file controls

Project / work area

Approved save / reload method

Don't create a missing file

A missing SOUL.md doesn't mean the build is broken. Your app may use a different setup. Ask ED where that kind of change belongs.

Scope matters

A project rule should stay in that project. Don't put one customer’s details into a file that every agent or client job reads.

The folder is part of the instruction.

Keep the full location in your change note. Don't move the file to make it easier to find.

Put the change in the right home.

Most edits are one of four things: a standing rule, a voice choice, a project fact, or a one-time request.

01

Lasts across tasks?

A standing rule may fit a job file.

02

Only this job?

Keep it in the current task or brief.

03

Secret or customer data?

Use the approved private store, not a rule file.

These are choices, not instructions to create three new folders.

Standing rule

“Show me a draft before any external send.” This is a permission boundary. Change it only with the owner’s explicit approval.

Voice choice

“Use short paragraphs and plain words.” Put it in the voice file your setup actually reads, not in every file that mentions writing.

Project fact

“Support hours are listed in the approved service guide.” Use a pointer to the current source. Avoid copying a date or price that will go stale.

One-time request

“For this report, compare these two months.” Put that in the task. It shouldn’t become a permanent rule for every future report.

YOU WANT TO CHANGE...	SMALLEST USEFUL EDIT
Routine update length	Edit the existing update-style rule.
Next Saturday’s contact	Update the approved after-hours roster, not a personality file.
What a job can send	Ask the owner. This changes authority, not just wording.
A new repeated procedure	Use Where a New Thing Goes; a skill or job note may be the right home.

My desired change, without naming a file yet

If it changes money, access, or public output

Don’t treat it as a casual copy edit. Keep the existing safeguard and send the decision to the owner.

One source beats three copies.

Edit the rule where it lives. Link to it elsewhere only if your setup supports that reference.

Keep the before. Write the smallest after.

Use the approved editor or send this marked change to ED. Don't replace the entire file to change one paragraph.

01

Keep a dated before copy

Use your editor's history or the handoff's backup method. If you save a copy, keep it outside the active instruction folder so the agent doesn't read both versions.

02

Find the existing section

Read the nearby rules. Keep the heading, filenames, and unrelated text intact. If the section is unclear, ask before moving it.

03

Replace one thought

Say when the rule applies and what the agent should do. Keep necessary exceptions. Don't add a second rule that fights the first.

BEFORE · EXAMPLE ONLY

Always be brief. Never write more than one sentence.

AFTER · DRAFT ONLY

For routine status updates, use one short paragraph. For a requested report, use the detail needed to answer the request.

Before copy / history location

Section being changed

Exact new wording

Don't "clean up" the rest

An old-looking rule may protect a working connection or an approval boundary. Leave unrelated instructions alone. Ask ED about them in a separate note.

Keep the edit easy to undo.

You should be able to point to the old words and the new words without comparing a whole rewritten manual.

Read for conflict before saving.

A rule can sound clear alone and still break the instructions beside it. Check the whole decision, not just the grammar.

WATCH FOR	WHY IT CAUSES TROUBLE	BETTER MOVE
Two opposite rules	“Send at once” fights “show a draft first.”	Keep the approval rule. Ask the owner to resolve the conflict.
An absolute promise	“Always answer” may force a guess.	Name what to do when facts are missing.
A copied old fact	A date, price, or person may change later.	Point to the current approved source.
A wide permission	“Do whatever it takes” can allow harm.	State the allowed action and the stop point.
Untrusted text	A web page or email may contain orders to the agent.	Treat source material as data, not permission.

Keep secrets out

- No passwords, API keys, or recovery codes.
- No private sign-in links.
- No raw client records pasted as examples.
- Use made-up examples that can't identify a person.

Keep proof honest

“Say the check passed” isn't a check. Ask for the actual result. If the agent can't run a check, it should name the blocker instead of pretending.

- ☐ I read the related rule before editing.
- ☐ The new rule keeps the existing approval and privacy limits.
- ☐ There is a clear step for “not sure” or missing information.
- ☐ The example uses no real customer data.

Conflict found, or “none found”

Words don't create authority.

A job file can't make an unsafe action safe or give an agent access the owner hasn't approved.

Save it where the handoff says.

Saving, loading, and acting are different steps. Use your setup's approved path for each one.

01

Save

The right file contains the new words.

02

Load

The intended agent reads that saved version.

03

Observe

A safe task shows the changed behavior.

Don't use "the agent agreed" as the only proof.

Before you press Save

- Keep the exact filename and extension. Avoid a second hidden ".txt" ending.
- Keep the file in its approved folder.
- Check that you edited the client's copy, not a global file or another project.
- Use plain text if the handoff calls for it. Don't paste rich formatting into a job file.

After you save

Use the reload method in your handoff. Some setups need a new task, some need a refresh, and some use a managed update. Don't restart a live service just to see if it notices.

A running job may still have its old instructions. Let it finish or ask the job owner how to pause it safely.

SAFE REQUEST TO THE AGENT

"Read the approved owner-edit file for this project. Name that file and quote the routine-update rule. Don't change files, send anything, or start a live job."

Saved file / version

Saved at / by

Reload method used

File and short rule the agent reported

If it still shows the old wording

Stop. Check the saved copy and the confirmed file location. Don't paste the new rule into every nearby file or keep restarting the app.

A missing reload is a setup question.

Send the old and new wording to ED with the file location. No broad rewrite is needed.

Check the behavior you changed.

This is a small check after your later edit. It isn't a launch-week inspection of the build you already paid for.

CHECK	WHAT TO ASK IN A SAFE TASK	WHAT COUNTS AS A PASS
Normal case	Ask for a routine status update using made-up work.	The new update format appears.
Exception case	Ask for a full report on the same made-up work.	It gives needed detail without breaking the exception.
Boundary case	Ask it to draft a message but not send it.	It respects the unchanged send-approval rule.

Don't test with real consequences

Keep the test in the approved safe workspace. Use a draft, a preview, or a read-only task. Don't charge, publish, email a customer, or alter a live record.

A new test must not quietly gain more permission than your normal work.

If the check fails

Record the actual output. Restore only your changed words through the approved undo method. Reload the same way and repeat the same safe check.

If you can't safely undo it, stop and send the change card to ED.

CHECK / RESULT	EVIDENCE LOCATION	KEEP / UNDO / ASK
Normal case		
Exception case		
Boundary case		

Version kept after the check

Checked by / date

“It works” needs one visible example

Keep the prompt and the result together. Test After You Change has a reusable test record if you make these edits often.

Only the changed path needs your check.

ED handles technical repair or release checks when the change needs code or service work.

A change card the next person can use.

Fill this once. It works as an owner edit record or a request to ED. Keep it with the project’s handoff notes.

FIELD	YOUR CHANGE
Agent / app and project	
Exact approved file location	
Section and current wording	
New wording	
What should change in a normal task	
What must stay the same	
Owner approval, if authority changes	
Before copy / undo location	

Saved by / version / date

Test result and where to find it

SHORT REQUEST TO ED

“Please change [one behavior] for [agent / project]. The current rule is [short quote]. I want [new wording]. Keep [approval or privacy rule] unchanged. The file listed in our handoff is [location]. I haven't changed the live setup.”

If you applied it yourself

Replace the last sentence with what you actually saved, when, and how the safe test went. Don't claim it is live if the reload is unconfirmed.

Where to go next

How to Write a Rule helps with wording. Where a New Thing Goes helps with file choice. Test After You Change holds the test evidence.

Leave a trail small enough to read.

One change, one owner, one before copy, and the actual result. Keep secrets out of the card.