

Chat or Cowork?

Chat answers. Cowork delivers. Chat gives you a response you work with. Cowork takes an assignment and comes back with a finished result. Knowing which one to open is the difference between using capacity and burning it.

As of: 11 August 2026

 OPEN CHAT WHEN ...

Question, not assignment

You have a question, not an assignment. If you can't describe the end result in one sentence, you're not ready for Cowork. Think in Chat first.

Draft, not deliverable

You want a draft, not a deliverable. Chat is where you iterate: shorten, sharpen, change direction mid-flight. That back-and-forth is the point.

One source is enough

A document, a mail thread, a meeting recap: single-source work is Chat work.

You're exploring

Brainstorming, comparing options, testing an idea. Exploration has no defined end result — so it has no assignment.

 OPEN COWORK WHEN ...

The end result is defined

You can write down the deliverable in one sentence: format, content, done-criteria.

The work has stages

Gather, compare, draft, format: multi-step work across files, mail and meetings is what Cowork is built for.



Several sources, one result

Several sources feed one deliverable. Three documents, a mailbox and last week's meetings into one briefing? That's an assignment, not a question.

Hand off, don't rework

You'll hand off the result, not rework it. Cowork delivers finished work. Chat delivers raw material. Pick by what happens after.

THE THREE-QUESTION TEST



Before you brief Cowork

Run this before every assignment. It takes ten seconds and saves the rework.

RULES

- „1. Can I describe the finished result in one sentence?
 2. Does it take more than one step and more than one source?
 3. Is this worth a real assignment — or is it a question in disguise?
- Three times yes: Cowork. One no: Chat."

PRO MOVES



The Cowork brief

„Deliverable: [what, format, length]
Sources: [files, mailbox, meetings]
Steps: [gather what, compare what, produce what]
Done means: [acceptance criteria]
Ask me before: [decisions you want to keep]"



Chat sharpens, Cowork runs

Use Chat to think the brief through. Then hand the sharpened brief to Cowork as a fresh assignment. A vague assignment is the expensive mistake: Cowork will diligently build the wrong thing.



No Cowork? Ask IT first

Cowork needs two things from your admin: it has to be enabled, and usage-based billing has to be set up. No Cowork in your Copilot? That's a governance decision, not a bug.

The mode is the first decision of every task

Make it deliberately — access isn't fitness.