Behind the Curtain: The AI future is here

Illustration: Sarah Grillo/Axios

OpenAI's ChatGPT previewed the future with its chatbot release in late 2022. Anthropic's latest Claude AI takes you there.

Why it matters: Claude Opus 4.5 — which powers Anthropic's agent tools, Claude Code for developers and the newly released Cowork — lets anyone quickly turn an idea into a functioning program or app, using plain English.

In eight hours, Jim built four apps on his phone — all fully functioning, all beautifully designed and intuitive. "My mind

is officially blown in a way it never has been before," he texted Mike on Thursday.

- We've been building products and companies [for 20 years](). Any of those apps would have taken multiple people and many weeks to hit this level of design and usability.
- Jim wanted to create a test to screen for people who'll excel at using AI. He built a 30-question quiz on his phone in two hours, then easily added five-minute training courses for each skill set.

Claude shows in vivid and unforgettable ways how easily AI will perform complex human tasks instantly — and forever change work, jobs and chores. Google, OpenAI, xAI and other competitors are racing to match and exceed Claude.

- You can assume there'll be leapfrogging advancements in this hyper-competitive race.
- Yes, these AI tools remain imperfect. But when you experiment with them, you'll see they're advancing lightning-fast.

The big picture: 2026 seems increasingly likely to be the year AI will go from fascinating aspiration to actual widespread application.

- Chris Lehane, OpenAI's chief global affairs officer, tells

us: "The whole waterline in capabilities has risen — everyone who has a boat, whether a big boat or a smaller boat, is rising on this rising tide. The capabilities are moving faster, and we as a society need to move faster if we want as many people as possible to have a fair chance of getting their fair piece of the [intelligence age](#)."

Inside Jim's test run: I used Claude Opus 4.5, Anthropic's flagship AI, accessed through a $20/month Claude Pro subscription.

How it works: This version can actually build things — not just chat. It writes code, creates working apps, and delivers downloadable files, all from my phone. You talk to it conversationally, directing what you want and how it should work.

- And I'm a tech dope who knows nothing about coding. I thought [Ruby on Rails](#), a popular tool for developers, was some kind of LSD. And ColdFusion, a [web development platform](#), sounds like the science explaining why my beer freezes at [Lambeau Field](#).

What's crazier: I've hardly touched my souped-up, $100-per-month desktop version. [Claude's Cowork](#) is an agent that can take on complex, multistep tasks and execute them on your behalf. Point it at a folder, describe what you want,
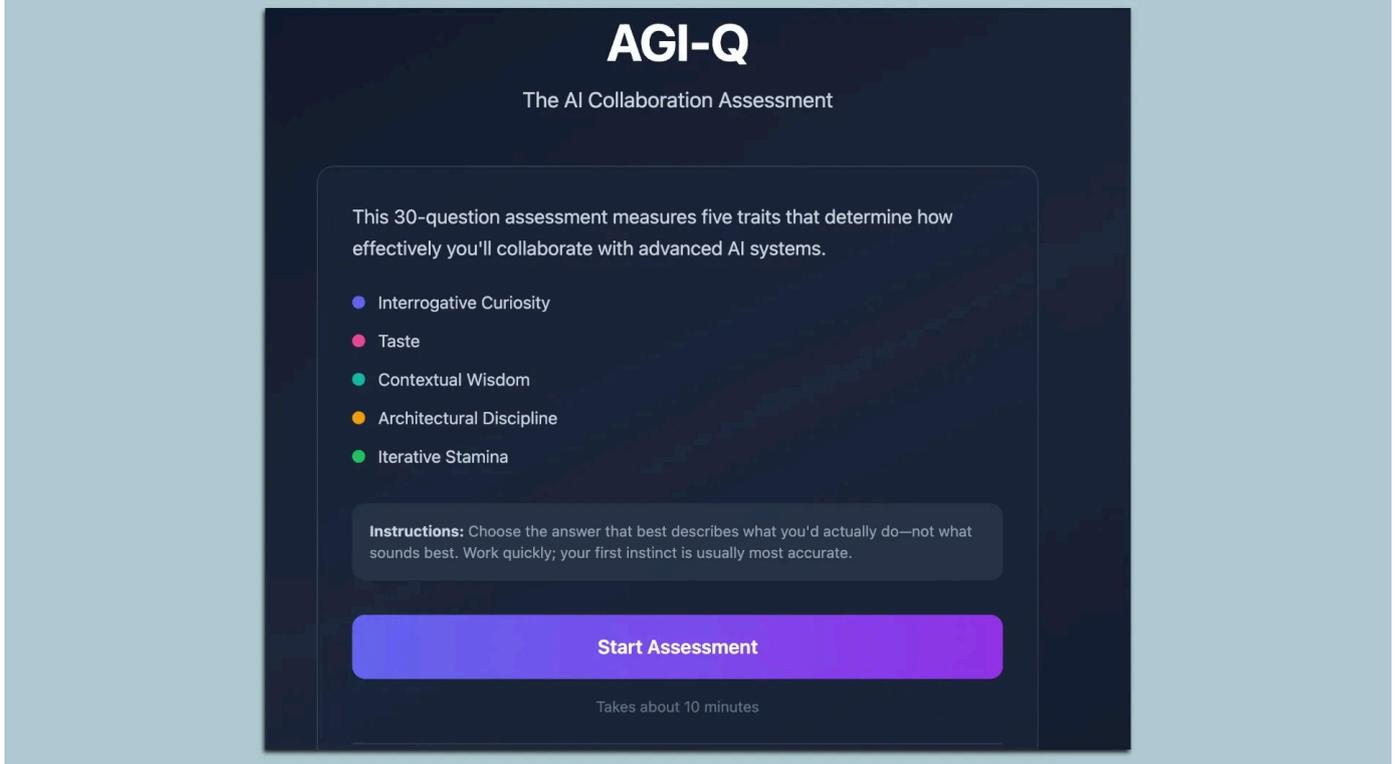
and walk away. It's macOS-only for now.

Case in point: To create my quiz to gauge someone's AI agility, I started with a thesis about who's likely to excel in our new world — then fed it into ChatGPT, Gemini and Claude to stress-test and perfect.

- All three LLMs offered different but related feedback, and helped me distill AI adeptness into five traits, in this order: Interrogative Curiosity, Taste, Contextual Wisdom, Architectural Discipline and Iterative Stamina.

Next, I used all three to help create a 30-question survey modeled after Gallup's StrengthsFinder and other personality tests for professional success.

- Then I used Claude's Opus 4.5 to build an interactive test, scoring system, and results page. The design and user experience are astonishingly good.
- Finally, I had Claude build five-minute training sessions to help users improve in their areas of weakness.

I shared the final program, AGI-Q *(above),* with a dozen friends, who all marveled at its ease. I'll make the app public once I get more comfortable with the test itself and the results' validity. (If you're super-eager to see it, shoot your text number to jim@axios.com and I'll send a private version.)

The bottom line: Plenty of these tools are free — use them voraciously, and get comfortable and adept. Your career likely depends on it.

- *Go deeper: "The job replacement AI machine."*