AI STACK SIGNAL

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PLAIN-ENGLISH GUIDE · SORT YOUR PHOTOS WITH CLAUDE

SORT A MESSY PHOTO FOLDER WITH CLAUDE

THE STEPS, THE PROMPT, THE CATCH

Your trip photos are all in one folder. Claude can look through them, make folders by what's in each photo, and set the duplicates aside while you do something else. This guide gives you the steps, the exact words to use, what happened when we tested it, and what to watch out for.

01

Make a copy

Work on a copy of the photos, so your originals stay safe.

02

Connect the folder

Use the Claude desktop app and connect only that folder.

03

Give it your rules

One short prompt: how to sort, where duplicates go, delete nothing.

143

We tested it

10 folders, all 26 duplicates caught, nothing lost.

SOURCES: ANTHROPIC PRODUCT PAGE + HELP CENTER, PLUS OUR OWN TEST

01 START HERE
FIVE STEPS, START TO FINISH

You need a **paid Claude plan** and the **Claude desktop app**, because Claude reaches folders on your computer through that app.

1 **Copy your photos into a new folder**
Make a new folder, for example on your Desktop, and copy the photos into it. Anthropic suggests a dedicated working folder and backups of important files. Leave out anything private.

2 **Use JPG or PNG files**
iPhone photos are often HEIC, and HEIC isn't on Anthropic's list of image types. Export them as JPEGs first. We didn't test HEIC, so this is the safe route, not a proven failure.

3 **Open the Claude desktop app and connect the folder**
Start a new chat and add the folder. The exact buttons depend on your account, so look for the + by the message box. Connect only the copy, not your whole computer.

4 **Send your rules**
Paste the prompt on the next page. Claude makes a plan, then moves the files. Keep the desktop app open while it works, because it needs the app to reach your folder.

5 **Check the result**
Read the summary, open a few folders, and compare the number of files before and after. Anthropic also suggests checking what was moved before you call the job done.

Still see a Cowork button? It's the same thing. Anthropic is folding Cowork into Claude, and the change is still rolling out. Until it reaches your account, you'll find Cowork next to Chat. If your message box shows no such options, just ask.

02 COPY AND PASTE
THE EXACT PROMPT WE USED

Three short rules do the work: **how to sort**, **where duplicates go**, and **what never to do**.

OUR PROMPT

```
Sort these photos into folders by what's in them, like food, nature and places. Put duplicate
s in a folder called Review. Don't delete anything.
```

WAYS TO CHANGE IT

OUR IDEAS, NOT TESTED

YOU WANT	CHANGE THE FIRST RULE TO
Your own folders	Sort these into three folders: Family trip, Food and Everything else.
Sort by date	Sort these into a folder for each month they were taken.
Better file names	Add: Rename each photo with what's in it and keep a list of the old names.
A check first	Add: Show me your plan before you move anything.

GOOD HABITS

- **Be specific.** Anthropic says the clearer your rules, the more Claude can do without checking in.
- **Say what's off limits.** Name any folder or file type Claude should leave alone.
- **Say no to deleting.** Claude asks before it permanently deletes a file, in any mode. On a job like this, there's no reason to allow it.
- **Group the work.** Multi-step jobs use more of your usage, so do it as one task, not lots of small ones.

03 WHAT REALLY HAPPENED
WE TESTED IT ON 143 PHOTOS

We used 143 stock travel, food, city and nature photos. We shuffled them and renamed them IMG_2001 to IMG_2143, so the file names gave no clues. **26 exact duplicates** were hidden in the set. Then we checked every file by its digital fingerprint.

143
Photos before, and 143 after

10
Folders Claude made on its own

26 of 26
Duplicates caught, none wrongly flagged

0
Photos lost or changed

THE FOLDERS IT MADE

FOLDER	PHOTOS	FOLDER	PHOTOS
Places	34	Amusement Parks	8
Review (duplicates)	26	Diving	7
Nature	23	Flights	5
Food	19	Hiking	5
Beach	11	Nightlife	5

WHAT WENT WELL

- ✓ It sorted by what's in the photos, not by file name.
- ✓ We looked through the sorted photos and they made sense.
- ✓ It made more detailed folders than we asked for.

WHAT TO KEEP IN MIND

- ✗ This was one test, not a guarantee.
- ✗ Duplicates were exact copies. Near-identical shots weren't tested.
- ✗ We didn't measure the time or usage it took.

! **Judgment calls happen.** Food also picked up restaurant interiors, and a few beach and nature shots could have gone either way. If you care about the line between two folders, say so in your rules.

04 READ THIS FIRST
THE CATCH, AND OUR SOURCES

- [ ] **It needs a paid plan**
  Cowork's abilities are on paid plans only. Anthropic says Cowork "consumes limits faster than Chat", so big jobs burn through your usage.

- [ ] **Your photos are processed on Anthropic's servers**
  Anthropic says local files Claude opens are "processed on Anthropic's servers rather than staying on your computer." Keep private photos out.

- [ ] **Keep the desktop app open**
  If the app is offline, the session can't reach your computer.

- [ ] **HEIC isn't on the list**
  Anthropic's product page lists .png, .jpg, .jpeg, .gif, .svg and .webp for images. Export HEIC as JPEG first. Photos in Apple Photos must be exported to a folder before Claude can see them.

- [ ] **You're still responsible**
  Anthropic says you remain responsible for what Claude does on your behalf. Check the result, especially for anything you can't replace.

SOURCES (CHECKED NOV 3, 2026)

- Claude Cowork: claude.com/product/cowork
- Get started with Claude Cowork: support.claude.com/en/articles/13345190-get-started-with-claude-cowork
- Use Claude Cowork safely: support.claude.com/en/articles/13364135-use-claude-cowork-safely
- Organize files use case: academy.claude.com/use-cases/organize-files-by-whats-in-them
- Claude Cowork and chat are one Claude: support.claude.com/en/articles/16761823-claude-cowork-and-chat-are-one-claude
- Test photos: stock images from Pexels. Test run by AI Stack Signal on Nov 3, 2026.

Features and plans can change. AI Stack Signal isn't affiliated with Anthropic.

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