

FREE GUIDE

# The bots draft, I decide

A non-techie's guide to Grok Bot: how I run my life with 12 bots

El Jefe

Basecamp

Ledger

Side Hustle Bot

Iron Giant

Bobbin

Vitals

Niche Sites Bot

Directory Bot

City Ordinance Bot

Medical Site Bot

Analog

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# Why a non-techie should bother

I'm a Gen-Xer, a husband and a dad, and I don't write code for a living. For most of my life my idea of automation was a sticky note on the fridge, so if I can get a bunch of AI bots doing useful work for me, there's a good chance you can too.

A lot of what I know about AI I picked up from the people who hate it, and to be fair, they have a point. AI sometimes makes things up, and if you leave it alone it writes like a brochure. So I set my bots up around those two problems: they hand me drafts to look over, and they ask me before they do anything I can't take back.

Grok Bot is a desktop and mobile app where you make several bots and give each one its own job. Every bot gets its own chat, which works a lot like texting a person, and its own memory, so it remembers what you told it last week. Each one can also run routines, which are tasks it does on a schedule without you asking, and it has its own computer with a web browser so it can look things up and work on websites. On top of that there are connectors, which hook a bot up to services you already use, like Gmail, Google Calendar and Notion (a note-taking app).

You don't need to understand any of that on day one, though. You really just need one bot with one job, and you can build from there. I'm up to 12 now, and in this guide I'll walk through what each one does, what went wrong along the way and what I'd do differently if I were starting over.

# The big idea: one boss bot

My first bot is called El Jefe, which is Spanish for "the boss," and it's the one I talk to most. When I ask it for something, it either does the job itself or hands it off to whichever bot the job belongs to, so I don't have to keep track of who does what. If I ask about a trip, that goes to Basecamp, my life admin bot, and money questions go to Ledger, but quick one-offs like adding a calendar event or flagging an email El Jefe just handles on its own.

The rest of the bots each stick to one area. That way each chat stays on one subject and each bot's memory fills up with the stuff it needs for its job, because honestly my money bot has no reason to know about my fitness videos.

A couple of habits made the whole setup work better over time. The first is a shared checklist: El Jefe took Wikipedia's "Signs of AI writing" page and turned it into a checklist that every bot runs before anything goes public, and it checks that page every Sunday in case it changes. This guide went through the same checklist. The second is that the bots now check with each other, because one of them almost started building a project another bot was already working on. These days a bot asks the others before it starts something new.

# Getting started: your first bot

Setting up your first bot is pretty simple, and this is roughly the order I'd go in.

1. Install Grok Bot on your computer or phone and sign in.
2. Make a bot, give it a name you'll remember and give it one job. Keep the job small, because something like "tell me about email that actually needs me" gives it something to work with and "run my life" doesn't.
3. In the bot's chat, describe the job in plain words. Tell it what it handles, what it should leave alone and what it has to ask you about first (there's more on that last part in the golden rule section).
4. Connect one service, like Gmail or Google Calendar. You can add more later, but starting with one keeps things simple.
5. Ask it something real, like "Does anything on my calendar this week clash?", and then actually read what it gives you and check it against what you know. If the format's wrong, tell it, and if you have an example you like, show it that.
6. Once it's handling a job well, think about whether that job should become a routine. It's fine if the answer is no.

One warning about logins. Some sign-ins don't work from the bot's own browser, and Google's sign-in blocked several of mine, so it helps to ask your bot to tell you early when a step needs a login it can't do. That way you can just do that part yourself.

# Meet my bots

These are all 12 of my bots. Each card has the bot's job, one real example of something it did, its routines and what it has to ask me before it acts.

## El Jefe

01

### JOB

It takes any request I throw at it and either handles it or routes it to the right bot. It also does quick one-offs like calendar entries, email heads-ups and my weekly church lesson pages in Notion.

### EXAMPLE

Every week it builds a church lesson page for me. The first version was pretty dry, so I told it that and it fixed it, and later when I said the lessons weren't deep enough, it rebuilt them in the format I liked and saved that as a skill, which is a set of instructions it can reuse every week.

### ROUTINES

Every Sunday it checks the "Signs of AI writing" page, and during the week it does email and calendar check-ins that only message me when something needs me.

### ASKS ME FIRST

Before it sends any email or message, deletes or buys anything, or contacts people.

## Basecamp

02

### JOB

Life admin, which for me means email that needs me, calendar clashes, trips and household to-dos.

### EXAMPLE

Before a family trip to Japan, it read through our bookings and my calendar and found a hotel payment that was never confirmed. It also noticed we didn't have travel insurance, and it pointed out that our overnight flight meant leaving for the airport the night before.

### ROUTINES

During the week before we left, it did a trip check-in at 7 PM every evening. It also offered me a daily morning brief, and when I said no, it let it go.

### ASKS ME FIRST

Before it sends anything, changes my calendar or Notion, books something or spends money.

## Ledger

03

### JOB

Money, so savings, debt, investments and how I'm doing on my retirement goals.

### EXAMPLE

It pulled my brokerage balances and noticed I was carrying a credit card balance. Since my savings were earning less than the card was charging me, it helped me put together a plan to pay off the card with savings.

### ROUTINES

It checks in on the 1st of every month, and every Monday it sends me a recap of a small-money trading account.

### ASKS ME FIRST

Before it moves money, pays bills, contacts anyone or makes any trade outside that account.

## Side Hustle Bot

04

### JOB

Side-hustle income ideas, mostly books for Amazon KDP (Kindle Direct Publishing, which is Amazon's self-publishing service).

### EXAMPLE

It ranked dozens of Kindle niches, meaning narrow book topics, by Amazon sales rank, which is Amazon's number for how a book is selling compared with other books. Then it picked the top niche and wrote a full writing prompt in my pen name's voice.

### ROUTINES

None. It works when I ask it to.

### ASKS ME FIRST

Before it buys, publishes, sends messages or creates accounts.

## Iron Giant

05

### JOB

It grows my fitness channels on TikTok and YouTube Shorts with analytics, video plans, hooks and captions. A hook is the opening line or moment that keeps someone from scrolling past.

### EXAMPLE

It went through my channel stats and found that short exercise clips did far better than my talking videos, and then it wrote a 30-day resistance band series plan.

### ROUTINES

None yet.

### ASKS ME FIRST

Before it posts, comments, changes settings or buys anything. When it needed to buy a domain (a website address), I approved the exact total before it went ahead.

## Bobbin

06

### JOB

It runs a local fabric store's Facebook Page and group, drafting friendly posts and comments.

### EXAMPLE

It finds free photos, shows me a few options, and once I pick one it posts the text I approved. One was a Halloween bag post with a photo of a ghost tote.

### ROUTINES

It checks engagement every morning and drafts a post every weekday morning.

### ASKS ME FIRST

Before every single comment, reply, post and deletion.

## Vitals

07

### JOB

A health coach for small daily habits around movement, sleep and food. It's not a doctor, and it sends me to one for anything serious.

### EXAMPLE

For a nagging issue, it wrote me a short bedtime floor routine of stretches and strength moves, plus a reminder so I'd actually do it.

### ROUTINES

A stretch reminder every night at 8 PM.

### ASKS ME FIRST

Before it contacts anyone, buys anything or shares my health info.

## Niche Sites Bot

08

### JOB

It runs a few small websites that send people to my iPhone apps and books.

### EXAMPLE

On the website for a kids' math app, it built a multiplication chart, a times table test and 15 free printable worksheet PDFs, and I approved each batch before it went up.

### ROUTINES

It drafts on a schedule, with diet articles twice a week, a song page, a language help page and worksheets twice a month, and every one of those stops at a draft and waits for me.

### ASKS ME FIRST

Before it buys domains, publishes, deletes pages or spends money. It also never makes up numbers.

## Directory Bot

09

### JOB

It builds a directory site.

### EXAMPLE

It collected the official state lists and map data for all the relevant states and published nearly 7,800 locations with maps.

### ROUTINES

Just one, a one-time reminder to check Google search results a week after launch.

### ASKS ME FIRST

Before any email or pitch, and before buying anything.

## City Ordinance Bot

10

### JOB

It runs a site about city ordinances, with city pages and how-to guides that point to my app.

### EXAMPLE

On day one it wrote 30 city pages based on each city's actual code, plus 3 guides, and it redesigned the site to match the app. I previewed each batch as it went.

### ROUTINES

Every Monday it drafts the next 10 cities for me to approve, and on the 1st of each month it checks for broken links and changes to city codes.

### ASKS ME FIRST

Before it publishes, creates or deletes accounts, buys anything or makes design changes.

## Medical Site Bot

11

### JOB

It grows a site about unusual medical conditions.

### EXAMPLE

It found 7 pages that weren't showing up on the site's category pages because their categories had never been set up. It fixed that, linked each condition page to 6 to 8 related conditions, added an A to Z list and wrote 10 new pages, and all of it came to me as one change that I reviewed and then added to the live site.

### ROUTINES

None.

### ASKS ME FIRST

Before it publishes, creates or deletes accounts, buys anything or makes design changes.

## Analog

12

### JOB

My X bot. It posts to my account, but only with the exact text I write and approve.

### EXAMPLE

When I ask, it scores my drafts against X's ranking weights, which are the factors X uses to decide which posts get shown to more people.

### ROUTINES

Twice a day it sends me a brief on posts about Grok Bot, ranked by bookmarks, and it filters out posts based on country. The briefs are read-only, meaning it reads and reports back and doesn't change anything.

### ASKS ME FIRST

It never posts, sends DMs (private messages) or writes tweets on its own, so anything that goes out is text I wrote or approved.

# Routines explained

A routine is a task a bot runs on a schedule. You set it up once, and after that the bot does it at that time without you having to ask.

Most of mine fall into two kinds. The first is the check-in, where the bot looks at something and only messages me if something needs me. El Jefe does this with my email and calendar, Ledger checks in on the 1st of each month, and Basecamp checked in at 7 PM every evening the week before our Japan trip.

The second kind is the draft routine, where the bot makes something and leaves it for me to approve. Bobbin drafts a Facebook post every weekday morning, Niche Sites Bot drafts articles and pages on a schedule and City Ordinance Bot drafts 10 new city pages every Monday, but none of them publish anything on their own. Then there are plain old reminders, like Vitals telling me to stretch at 8 PM.

If I've learned anything about routines, it's not to schedule everything. Basecamp offered me a daily morning brief and I turned it down, and it dropped the idea, which is what you want from a bot. In my experience a check-in that stays silent until something actually needs you is the easiest kind to live with. Some of my bots don't have any routines at all, and Side Hustle Bot and Iron Giant just work when I ask them to.

# The golden rule: bots draft, I decide

Every one of my bots has a list of things it has to ask me about first. The lists are a little different from bot to bot, but they all cover the same ground, so anything that sends, posts, spends, books, deletes or contacts another person waits until I say yes.

In practice that means Bobbin asks before every comment, reply, post and deletion on the Facebook Page, and Analog only posts text I wrote and approved, word for word. When Iron Giant wanted to buy a domain, it showed me the exact total first and I approved that number. Ledger can make trades in a small-money account, but anything outside that account waits for me, and Niche Sites Bot and City Ordinance Bot both stop at drafts so I can preview each batch before anything goes live.

My bots are fast and they're usually right, and usually right is fine for a draft, but it isn't good enough for an email with your name on it, a public post or a payment. So when you set up a bot, put its ask-first list in its very first chat. Mine all say some version of "ask me before you send, post, buy, delete, book or contact anyone."

# Mistakes and lessons

This is the part I'd want to read first if I were you, so I'm not going to dress it up.

## **Google doesn't like bot browsers.**

Google's sign-in blocked the browser on several of my bots, and each one ended up with a different workaround. For Directory Bot the fix was me, since I just do those steps myself. Side Hustle Bot kept landing in the wrong signed-in Google account until it signed into the right one in a private window, and Iron Giant couldn't get through Google's sign-in at all, but YouTube Studio still opened when it went straight to the channel's own address with the account already signed in. The lesson El Jefe took from all of this is to say early when a login won't work, before you've built a whole plan around it.

## **A calendar event landed a day early.**

El Jefe saved an all-day event and it showed up a day before it should have, so now it double-checks the date after it saves anything to my calendar.

## **A comment posted twice.**

Bobbin put the same comment up two times on a business page, which wasn't a great look, so now it checks before posting and only posts once.

## **The first small-money trade lost most of its value.**

This was Ledger's first options trade, and an option is basically a bet on where a stock's price will be by a certain date. Chip stocks dropped even though the companies had good earnings, and the option lost most of its value, so now cheap options get treated like lottery tickets and sized that way.

## **I was sore after night one.**

Vitals gave me a bedtime routine and I was hurting the next day, so it switched me to a lighter version for a few nights, because a plan has to bend to how you feel.

## **A good niche was already crowded.**

One of the niches Side Hustle Bot found turned out to be full of new AI-built sites, so now it checks live search results before it recommends anything.

## **A bot promised more than the data could deliver.**

Directory Bot overestimated how many listings one data source would fill, and now it checks before it promises any numbers.

**Two bots almost built the same thing.**

City Ordinance Bot nearly started on a project another bot was already building, which is why it now checks with the other bots first.

**Missing facts stay missing.**

When a city's code doesn't cover something, City Ordinance Bot's pages say "not specified" instead of guessing.

**There was no preview link.**

The website for the kids' math app only goes live from its main branch, which is the main copy of the site's files, so there's no preview link I can click on, and Niche Sites Bot sends me screenshots instead.

**The first format was boring.**

My church lessons came out dry at first, and then they weren't deep enough. What fixed it was showing El Jefe an older lesson I liked, and it rebuilt the lesson in that format and saved it as a skill. Showing a bot an example worked a lot better than me trying to describe what I wanted.

**My Notion was a mess.**

This one was my mistake more than a bot's, and Basecamp turned my cluttered Notion into one simple home page.

# Start here: your first 3 bots and your first month

If I were starting over, I'd make three bots and leave it there for a while. The first would be a boss bot, your own version of El Jefe, that takes quick one-offs and later hands work to the other bots once you have some. I'd connect my calendar and email to that one.

The second would be a life admin bot like Basecamp, covering email that needs you, calendar clashes, trips and household to-dos. A good first test for it is your next trip or big event, where you ask it to read your bookings and calendar and look for anything you missed. The third bot should handle one thing you care about. Mine include money, fitness, a local fabric store's Facebook Page and a handful of websites, but you only need to pick one and give it one job.

## Week one

In the first week, make the boss bot and let the other two wait until later in the week. Before you ask it to do anything, write its job description and its ask-first list. Then connect one service, and I'd start with your calendar, because you already know what's on it and can check the bot's answers against that. After that, ask it real questions about your real week, like whether anything clashes or which of your emails need you, and read every answer. When it's wrong, say so in the chat, and when the format is wrong, show it an example you like, since that's what fixed my church lessons. I'd hold off on routines that first week too and just get used to how the bot works when you ask it things.

## Month one

Over the rest of the month, add the life admin bot and then the third one, each with its own job and its own ask-first list, and keep connecting services one at a time. Add one routine at most, and make it a check-in that only messages you when something needs you. If a bot offers you a daily brief you don't want, say no, the way I did when Basecamp offered me one.

Try to keep each bot to its own job, and when something comes up that belongs to a different bot, ask the boss bot to send it over. When a bot makes a mistake, ask it what it'll do differently. My bots' fixes have been small and specific, like Bobbin checking before it posts a comment so it only posts once, or El Jefe double-checking calendar dates after it saves them. And have any new bot check with the others before it starts a project, because one of mine almost built something another bot was already building.

## How to write a good job description

A job description is just the plain-words explanation you give a bot in its first chat, and mine are pretty short. Basecamp's is basically life admin, meaning email that needs me, calendar clashes, trips and household to-dos.

A good one sticks to one area, whether that's money, trips or a website, because "run my life" gives a bot nothing to work with. It should also say what the bot needs to leave alone (my money bot doesn't touch my fitness videos) and how you want to hear from it, which for most of my check-ins is only when something needs me. After that comes the ask-first list, which I'll get to below, plus any house

rules you've learned the hard way. A few of mine are to never make up numbers, to check before promising numbers, and to write "not specified" instead of guessing when the source doesn't say.

## How to tell if a bot is worth keeping

Every so often I go through these questions for each bot:

1. Has it caught something I would have missed? Before our Japan trip, Basecamp found a hotel payment that was never confirmed and noticed we had no travel insurance.
2. Do I actually read what it sends me? If I wouldn't read a routine's messages, I don't want that routine, and I said no to a daily morning brief.
3. Does it stay in its lane, or does it overlap with another bot?
4. After a mistake, does it change how it works? After the double comment, Bobbin started checking before it posts.
5. Do its drafts need light edits from me, or a full rewrite?

## The three ask-first rules to set on day one

These are the three I'd put in every bot's first chat, before it does any work.

1. Ask before you send or post anything, whether that's an email, a message, a comment, a reply or a public post. Analog only posts the exact text I approved.
2. Ask before you spend money, which covers buying, booking, paying bills, moving money and trades. When Iron Giant needed a domain, it showed me the exact total and waited for my yes.
3. Ask before you delete anything, create accounts or contact anyone, since those are hard to take back.

## Sign-off

I'm still adding bots and they're still making mistakes, and pretty much every lesson in this guide came from something going wrong first.

If any of this was useful, come follow me on X at [@elguebardo](https://twitter.com/elguebardo). That's where I post tips on how I use Grok Bot as a non-techie, including the mistakes, since I'm still figuring a lot of it out as I go. I'd be glad to have you along.