Public

Mechanisms that improve the likelihood of acceptable outputs from non-deterministic models

Mechanism	Guidance	Reference
Instructions	▪ Loaded at start of conversation (or path-specific when LLM tries to read files) ▪ Use as navigation aid and for a few rules that address repeated observed failures	▪ GitHub Copilot: Custom Instructions or AGENTS.md ▪ Claude Code: CLAUDE.md and Rules
Skills	▪ Usually loaded by LLM on-demand, but also supports explicit invocation ▪ Minimal a SKILL.md file, often also bundled with references and scripts ▪ Can be used for pure knowledge, for procedural workflows, or for both	▪ Standard: SKILLS.md ▪ GitHub Copilot: Agent Skills ▪ Claude Code: Skills
Prompts	▪ Loaded when explicitly invoked by user through /my-prompt ▪ Use for repeated workflows ▪ A harness-agnostic alternative is to use explicit invokable skills	▪ Standard: SKILLS.md with disable-model-invocation: true ▪ GitHub Copilot: Prompt Files ▪ Claude Code: CLAUDE.md and Rules
Tools	▪ Invoked by the model or user to access external capabilities ▪ Perform actions such as API calls, code execution, or web search ▪ Return structured results for the model to use	▪ Standard: MCP, SKILLS.md ▪ GitHub Copilot: Tools ▪ Claude Code: Tools
Custom Agents	▪ Selected by the user at the start of a conversation ▪ Can also be used as instructions for sub-agents ▪ Frequently used for "personas", but can contain any kind of context	▪ GitHub Copilot: Custom Agents ▪ Claude Code: Subagents
Subagents	▪ Used by model to offload certain work (either decided autonomously or prompted) Runs with a separate context window, and optionally with a different model ▪ Used to reduce the noise in the main conversation's context window	▪ GitHub Copilot: Subagents ▪ Claude Code: Subagents

Public

Ensuring quality of LLM output using deterministic tools

Mechanism	Guidance	Reference
Hooks	▪ Run code at key lifecycle events Automate workflows, enforce policies or validate actions ▪ Deterministic, unlike instructions or prompts	▪ GitHub Copilot: Hooks ▪ Claude Code: Hooks


zühlke
empowering ideas