

# API Getting Started Guide

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## Introduction

A getting started guide is a document that walks the user through how to create a minimum working example with your API. You can also think of a getting started guide as a “Hello World” tutorial that includes a complete series of steps or actions that show the user how to use your API.

	Getting started guide	Tutorial guide
Target audience	Domain experts who know the problem space and want a quick setup or overview of your product	Beginners who are new to the problem space and require in-depth and comprehensive guidance
Content	Basic steps and essential information	In-depth analysis and broader explanation of concepts
Purpose	Help users get started quickly	Provide a comprehensive understanding of the problem space or product
Scope	Immediate actions	Immediate actions and comprehensive explanations

## Why do I need an API getting started guide?

API getting started guides are helpful for the following reasons:

- **Faster integration:** Getting started guides provide the user with a streamlined path to get started with an API without having to read through lengthy documentation to understand key steps to interact with your API, such as setting up an account, getting API keys and

authenticating requests for specific endpoints, etc. They typically offer step-by-step instructions, code samples, and ready-to-use templates that help users quickly understand the API's core concepts and functionalities. By following the guide, users can accelerate the integration process and start using the API in their applications faster.

- Reduced learning curve: APIs can have complex documentation with various endpoints, parameters, authentication methods, and data formats. Getting started guides distill this information into a concise and simplified format, focusing on the most common and essential use cases.
- Practical examples: Getting started guides often include code snippets or sample projects that demonstrate how to interact with the API in real-world scenarios. These examples help users understand the API's capabilities and see how it can be integrated into their own applications. By showcasing practical use cases, the guides provide inspiration and guidance for users to start building with the API quickly.
- Intended use: API getting started guides allow for the correct and intended use of the API. Getting started guides also help prevent errors, increase efficiency, and streamline performance.

## Best practices

The key goal of a getting started guide is to achieve a basic core working function of the product or feature. Use the following practices when writing the getting started guide:

- Keep it short and to the point. It should focus on the most important aspects of the API and provide only the essential information needed to get started.
- Provide a common use case with sample code.
- Number the steps and use headings for different procedures.
- Start the headings with a verb for example, "Make your first request", "Choose an endpoint for your request."
- Provide examples of sample return data, so the user can verify that they successfully completed the task.
- Include only one action in a step.
- Include guidance on how to handle errors and provide examples of common error messages.
- Include links to additional resources, so the user can learn more about the API.

## Content of the API getting started template

### About the "Introduction" section

In this section, give a brief introduction or explanation of the API and define the intended audience the guide is created for. You should also describe what the user will accomplish or learn by using the getting started guide. For example, to integrate the API into their own app, to build an app with the API or to test the API.

## About the “Prerequisites” section

In this section, include all the necessary tools or information the user will need to accomplish the objectives of the getting started guide. Examples include:

- List of hardware requirements.
- List of any software dependencies.
- How to download (provide the web address), install, and configure the API.
- If detailed software setup instructions are required for dependencies, refer the user to the Getting Started Guide or Setup Guide for the API.
- How to get the required access keys or authentication credentials, if required.
- If detailed authentication information is required, refer the user to that document.

## About the “Authentication” section

This section is optional since not all APIs require authentication to use. Use this section to explain the requirement to get access to the API, which may include signing up for the API, setting up authentication, following the steps to get API keys or access tokens.

## About the “Base URL” section

The base URL is the root address of the API, which all API endpoints will be appended to. Provide a base URL at the top of the document to ensure all relative links are consistently referenced, and to simplify the process of updating URLs if the domain or root address changes.

## About the “Make your first API request” section

In this section, guide users through making their first CRUD request to the API. Provide clear, step-by-step instructions along with example API responses to help them understand the process.

To improve usability, consider the following:

- Code samples: Provide code snippets in relevant programming languages the user can run. The template contains placeholders for your code snippets.
- Comments and explanations: Include in-line comments within the code or provide supporting explanations after each snippet.
- "Hello, World" example: Create a “Hello, World” example that shows how to use at least one of the API endpoints.
- Common error messages: Highlight potential errors users might encounter, along with troubleshooting tips.
- Provide annotated screenshots with arrows, boxes, etc. Bear in mind that screenshots may be difficult to translate so ensure you use them only when relevant.

## About the “Next steps” section

In this section, refer the user to other documentation and features available in the API that can help improve the user’s understanding and usage of your product. Provide links to:

- Additional tutorials or articles about the API.
- The API glossary or any additional core concepts.
- Relevant resources, like blogs, troubleshooting guides, reference documents, videos, and how-tos.

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