THINK

The ultrathink cheat sheet

Free guide. No signup. 2 min read

Checked 2026-10-31 against code.claude.com/docs/en/changelog (2.1.311 and 2.1.316) and code.claude.com/docs/en/model-config.

From @learningwithcole

One word in your prompt tells Claude Code to think harder for one turn. Here is what it does, how to tell it worked, and when to leave it out.

What it does

Type `ultrathink` anywhere in your prompt in Claude Code.

- It asks for deeper reasoning on that turn.
- In the terminal prompt, that turn runs at `xhigh` effort on Opus 5.5, Sonnet 5.5, Haiku 5.5 and Fable 5.1 through Anthropic's API. You need Claude Code 2.1.311 or later.
- Type it while Claude is already working and it raises the rest of that turn.
- Your saved effort setting does not change. The next turn goes back to normal.

The rainbow rule

Watch the word itself.

- **Rainbow:** the word can raise the turn. The raise is live.
- **Plain:** it does not raise the turn. That includes the word in quotes or inside a file path.

What you typed	What you see	Raises the turn?
`ultrathink fix the flaky auth test`	rainbow	Yes
`what does "ultrathink" do?`	plain	No

What you typed	What you see	Raises the turn?
`read docs/ultrathink.md`	plain	No

Only `ultrathink` is a keyword. Claude Code treats "think", "think hard" and "think more" as ordinary prompt text.

When to use it

One hard problem, one turn:

- A bug you can't explain
- A design choice with real tradeoffs
- A refactor that touches many files

When to skip it

- Plain lookups
- Small edits
- Anything where you already know the answer and just want it typed

If you want every turn to run higher, set your effort level instead. Save `ultrathink` for the one-offs.

If the word stays plain on a fresh prompt

- Check your version. The raise needs 2.1.311 or later.
- Check your model. Run `/model` and pick Opus 5.5, Sonnet 5.5, Haiku 5.5 or Fable 5.1.
- Some setups can't raise a turn, such as Amazon Bedrock. Set the effort level instead.

VS Code

Since version 2.1.316 (October 31, 2026), the VS Code chat box does the same thing: the turn runs at `xhigh` and the word shows in a rainbow.

The off switch

If you type the word by habit, set `CLAUDE_CODE_DISABLE_ULTRATHINK` to turn the keyword off. It arrived in 2.1.316. It is in the changelog, and the environment variables docs page didn't list it yet when I checked on October 31.