PRACTICE GUIDE / 01

GitHub Skills Starter Guide

A hands-on path for safer agent collaboration

Practice the repository habits that make AI-assisted changes easier to inspect, test, and review.

IN THIS GUIDE

Four practical modules, a printable review card, and links to the official sources.

THIRD DESIRE / PRACTICAL AI WORKFLOWS

Research checked 5 November 2026. Re-check linked documentation before applying fast-changing product instructions.

Start in a safe sandbox

Give yourself a small, disposable place to learn before an agent touches a shared repository.

1. Pick a practice repository

Use a personal or team-approved repository with no customer data, production secrets, or protected branches. Make a small README change first. Record the repository and branch you will use.

2. Set the boundary

Write down what the exercise must not change: deployment settings, credentials, billing, release tags, or unrelated files. Keep the task to one reviewable outcome.

3. Make one branch for one change

Create a short-lived branch for the exercise. Ask the agent for a focused change on that branch, and ask it to explain which files it touched. The branch is a workspace boundary, not a safety guarantee.

4. Review before merge

Read the complete diff yourself. Check the purpose of every changed line, run the repository's documented checks, and decide whether the change belongs. A green check does not replace review.

> **Learning objective: finish with a small change you can explain, test, and safely discard.**

A five-part learning route

These are workflow topics, not a claim that each is a current GitHub Skills course. The Skills address redirects to GitHub Learn, so check the live course list before choosing an interactive lesson.

Orientation - Repository basics

Learn the basic repository, issue, commit, and pull request flow. Practice by making and describing one small change.

Review - Pull request review

Read a change as a reviewer. Practice leaving one specific question or suggestion, then verify the author response against the diff.

Recovery - Merge conflict practice

Create a harmless conflict in a disposable file. Identify both edits, choose the intended result, and inspect the final file before committing.

Automation - Test with Actions

Study how a repository workflow can run checks on changes. Read the workflow file and understand its triggers and permissions before enabling one.

Security - Dependency and supply-chain checks

Explore dependency and supply-chain practices. Check which security features are available for the repository and what they actually scan.

> **Courses teach GitHub workflows. They do not grant an AI agent access, certify agent output, or make a change safe automatically.**

Run a 20-minute practice lab

Use one intentionally small README task to practice the full collaboration loop.

Plan - 3 minutes

Write a one-sentence task and name the allowed file. Define a visible success condition, such as adding a short section with a correct heading.

Delegate - 5 minutes

Ask the agent to work on a branch, change only the allowed file, and report the diff and checks it ran. Do not provide credentials or real customer information.

Inspect - 5 minutes

Compare the diff with your task. Look for extra files, unexplained generated output, changed links, copied secrets, or edits outside the agreed scope.

Verify - 5 minutes

Run the repository's documented checks yourself when practical. If a check cannot run, record that limitation instead of assuming it passed.

Close - 2 minutes

Keep or discard the branch. Write down one thing the agent did well and one instruction that would make the next task safer.

> **If the agent needs broader access or the task reaches protected data, stop and ask the repository owner to define the allowed path.**

Review card and notes

Use this card before accepting an agent-assisted change.

[ ] The task is bounded, and the intended outcome is clear.

[ ] The work happened on the expected branch and files.

[ ] I understand every part of the diff, including generated files.

[ ] No secret, private record, or unrelated data entered the change.

[ ] The relevant checks ran, and their results match the claim.

[ ] Any failed or skipped check is recorded plainly.

[ ] A human with repository authority made the merge decision.

Practice repository _____

Task and success condition _____

Checks run and result _____

One lesson for next time _____

Pause if you cannot explain the change. Ask for a smaller diff or a clearer explanation before proceeding.

Sources and limits

The following official sources support product-specific guidance or show where to verify it. Pages were checked on 5 November 2026; live catalogs, commands, provider pricing, and service policies can change.

The official course catalog entry point redirects, so verify current interactive course availability directly. This guide is an independent practice aid, not a GitHub certification or a guarantee of safe agent behavior.

GitHub Skills - course catalog entry point (may redirect to GitHub Learn)
https://skills.github.com/

GitHub Docs - Review pull requests
https://docs.github.com/en/pull-requests/how-tos/review-pull-requests

GitHub Docs - Resolve merge conflicts
https://docs.github.com/en/pull-requests/how-tos/merge-and-close-pull-requests/resolving-a-merge-conflict-on-github

GitHub Docs - GitHub Actions
https://docs.github.com/en/actions

GitHub Docs - Dependency graph
https://docs.github.com/en/code-security/concepts/supply-chain-security/dependency-graph

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Use this guide as a working aid. Confirm the current official instructions, rights, account permissions, and human approvals that apply to your own project.