

THE PLAYBOOK

Build your second brain for Claude

Stop re-explaining yourself every chat. Put who you are, how you work and what you're working on into a folder of plain notes that Claude reads first, then skip straight to the task. This is how I set mine up in Obsidian, plus the copy-paste files to start yours today.



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OBSIDIAN · CLAUDE

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WHAT YOU'RE BUILDING

A "second brain" sounds fancy. It isn't. It's a **folder of short notes**: who you are, how you write, your projects, your rules, what's decided and what's still open. Claude reads the right notes **before** it starts, so you stop typing the same setup into every chat. No magic and no special AI database. It's just **context Claude reads first**.

What it saves: the long setup prompt at the start of every chat (where your files live, the full backstory on a project, how you like things written), the room that setup eats in Claude's context window, and most of all **your time**.

RULE ZERO

If you've explained it to AI twice, it belongs in the vault.

Every time you catch yourself re-typing context, that's a note you haven't written yet.

01

ONE FOLDER • PLAIN TEXT

Make one folder that holds everything

I use **Obsidian**: a free note app that stores everything as plain Markdown files in a folder on your computer (it calls the folder a “vault”). You get links between notes and a graph view, and the files stay yours. Claude can read them directly because they’re just text.

Obsidian is optional. Any folder of **.md** files works the same way. Start simple and get fancy later.

Brand new to AI? Start with a Claude Project instead (Step 2 shows how), and move to a folder once your notes outgrow it.

02

THE ONE FILE CLAUDE READS FIRST

A short CLAUDE.md at the top of the folder

This is the front door: who you are, the house rules, and where to find things. In **Claude Code** (and the Claude desktop app working in a folder), a file named **CLAUDE.md** in the folder you open is loaded automatically at the start of every session. You don’t have to point to it.

On **Claude.ai**, paste the same text into a Project’s **instructions** and upload your notes as **project knowledge**. Projects are on every plan, including free.

Keep it short. Anthropic’s docs suggest under about 200 lines per CLAUDE.md, because everything in it loads every time and longer files are followed less consistently.

03

FIVE NOTES COVER MOST OF IT

About me · how I write · projects · decisions · open items

about-me: your role, your business, who you serve. **how-i-write:** your voice, the words you never use, a good example. **projects/:** one short note per project (goal, status, where the files live, who's involved). **decisions:** what's been decided and why, so Claude stops re-asking. **open-items:** what's still in flight.

Steal from your own chats. The messages where you corrected Claude are your best notes, already written.

STEP 4 · ROUTE IT

04

READ WHAT THE TASK NEEDS, NOTHING MORE

A “for this, read that” map in the front door

Don't make Claude read everything every time. Add a short **routing table** to CLAUDE.md: “writing a post → read how-i-write”, “working on Project X → read projects/project-x”. Claude opens only the notes the task needs, and that keeps your context window free for the actual work.

This routing is what lets me skip prompt and context engineering and go straight to the task.

STEP 5 · WRITE BACK BEFORE YOU STOP

05

SO TOMORROW STARTS WHERE TODAY ENDED

End each session by updating the notes

Before you close a chat, have Claude add what changed: new decisions, things finished, things still open. That's what makes it a **brain** and not a filing cabinet. The next session picks up today instead of starting from a blank slate.

Read what it wrote before you keep it. You approve what goes into your brain.

06

SHORT, CURRENT, NO CONTRADICTIONS

Prune once a month

Delete what's stale, merge what overlaps, and fix anything that contradicts something else. If two notes disagree, Claude may follow either one. A small, current brain beats a big, messy one.

THE STARTER FOLDER • COPY THIS

```
my-brain/
├─ CLAUDE.md           ← the front door (Step 2)
├─ about-me.md         ← who you are, who you serve
├─ how-i-write.md      ← voice, nevers, one good example
├─ decisions.md        ← what's decided + why
├─ open-items.md       ← what's still in flight
└─ projects/
    ├─ project-a.md     ← goal · status · where files live
    └─ project-b.md
```

THE PROMPTS · COPY THESE

A · YOUR CLAUDE.MD (FILL IN THE BLANKS)

```
# CLAUDE.md: read this first

## Who I am
<one or two lines: role, business, who you serve>

## House rules
- <how you want answers: short, plain English, bullets...>
- never <invent a number / send anything without my OK>
- ask before <anything you want approval on>

## Where things live (read only what the task needs)
| If the task is...          | Read first          |
|-----|
| writing anything           | how-i-write.md      |
| <project A>               | projects/project-a.md |
| planning / priorities     | open-items.md, decisions.md |

## Before you stop
Update decisions.md and open-items.md with what changed. Show me first.
```

B · HAVE CLAUDE SET IT UP FOR YOU (PASTE THIS)

Help me build a second brain you can read before every task.

Interview me one question at a time about: my work, who I serve, how I like to write, my current projects, decisions already made, and what's still open. Then write these as short Markdown files: CLAUDE.md (with a "for this task, read this file" routing table), about-me.md, how-i-write.md, decisions.md, open-items.md, and one file per project in projects/. Keep each file short and specific. Don't invent anything I didn't tell you.

C · THE WRITE-BACK (PASTE AT THE END OF A SESSION)

Before we stop: list what we decided, what got done, and what's still open in this session. Then show me the exact edits you'd make to decisions.md and open-items.md. Wait for my OK.

WHERE IT WORKS

WHERE YOU USE CLAUDE

HOW IT READS YOUR BRAIN

✱ Claude Code

Open the folder. CLAUDE.md loads automatically at launch, and Claude opens the other notes when the task calls for them.

✱ Claude desktop app

Give Claude access to the folder, and it reads the notes from there.

✱ Claude.ai Projects

CLAUDE.md text goes in the project instructions, and the notes go in as project knowledge. Re-upload a note when it changes.

Features change. Check code.claude.com/docs (memory) and support.claude.com (Projects) for the current details.

KEEP IT HONEST & SAFE

No passwords, keys or account numbers in any note

Client details **anonymized**

You **approve** every write-back

Short notes beat long ones

Claude **proposes**, you decide

THE STARTER CHECKLIST

☐ **One folder** (or one Claude Project) picked

☐ A short **CLAUDE.md** front door

☐ The **five core notes** started

☐ A **routing table**: for this task, read that

☐ The **write-back** at the end of each session

☐ A monthly **prune** on the calendar

Want your second brain set up for you?

I build the front door, the routing and the core notes around how you actually work, so Claude starts every task already knowing your business. That's the CV Method.

hello.thecvmethod.com/start