

Building a Second Brain

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Summary

The book describes the "Second Brain" method as a way to build a personal note-taking system. The key ideas I took from it are to separate the processes of collecting information, organizing it, and refining it into distinct time phases (see the "CODE" method). In addition, information is refined so that when it's time to apply it, everything is ready to spark a creative process (see the "PARA" method).

General Ideas

- Let old notes rest accessible
- Make progress in short steps and divide your work in small packages
- Don't spend too much time summarising
 - Think of "How can I acquire or assemble my project, without doing everything myself?"
- Try to create an environment for ideas to happen. Think of laying everything out so that the conditions become ideal for it to happen.
- **Standardize the way you work**, because it is the only way to improve the way to do something
- Use the Creative Process: capturing ideas, organizing them into groups, distilling the best parts, and assembling them together.
- **Achappellago of Ideas:**
 - Method for working on projects
 - Gathering past ideas/notes when starting a project so you just have to connect them later on.
 - Keep a habit of collecting ideas. When you have a project to start, you can go through the ideas and collect them. Then you only need to connect the ideas and fill some gaps.
- **Hemmingway Bridge:**
 - Always end a working session with writing down, what the next step for next time is.
- Avoid doing "heavy lifting". Split the task into smaller ones so that they become more actionable and don't require you to feel like putting a lot of effort into something

C.O.D.E Method

Remember more, connect ideas, increase your output and it's quality, have less frustration and stress

Capture	Organize	Distill	Express								
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Capture only truly noteworthy ideas• Keep only what resonates (unusual, counterintuitive, interesting, potentially useful)• Capture criteria: Feeling pleasure, curiosity, wonder, excitement• What to capture: passage, image, quote, fact <p>Capture Chapter:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Integrate notetaking into your life/habits• Always be ready to capture a thought• Turn the consuming of information into knowledge assets by saving parts of it <ul style="list-style-type: none">• What to capture:<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Passages from books/podcasts, links to content, voice memos, images, lessons from courses, random "shower ideas"• Don't save sensitive information• Save the source link/address to find later.• Capture Criteria:<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Keep only the valuable parts (value is not evenly distributed)• Not more than 10% of the original source (Link the source for revisiting)• Limit yourself to an average of 1-2 notes per day• Is it inspiring and sparks imagination?• Is it useful for a problem/project?• Is it personal like thoughts or memories?• Is it surprising and changes your mind/gives a new perspective (has to change your mind)• Capturing tools:<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Notetaking app, read later apps, web clippers, transcription tools• 12 Favourite problems:<p>How to:</p><ul style="list-style-type: none">• Keep a list of up to 12 Problems you are trying to solve.• Every time you get new information check against the problem, if anything fits.• Save for the actionability of the problem• State some open and some concrete questions (No Yes or NO questions)• Make them spark curiosity• Find them by looking at what you were obsessed with as a kid<p>Why?:</p><ul style="list-style-type: none">• Keeping the problems in your mind. Viewing information through the lense of a problem• Helps to see correlations between seemingly unrelated ideas	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Organising is a separate step for notetaking<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Organise for action, to active projects you work on <p>Organise Chapter:</p> <p>Goals:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Project based organisation helps with reviewing project <p>How to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Organise for projects and actionability• Design a space specific to your needs, to feel comfortable in• See it as an environment or place for you to work• Use PARA organisation technique <h3>P.A.R.A. Method</h3> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• It can and should be used everywhere, such as the documents folder on your computer, your cloud storage drives, and of course , your digital notes app. <table><tr><th>Projects</th><th>Areas</th><th>Resources</th><th>Archive</th></tr><tr><td>= short-term efforts and goals with completion E.g. writing an essay, vacation in Japan, Have max. 5-15 active projects.</td><td>= long-term responsibilities and fields of interest with open ended Things to keep an eye on and a set standard for E.g. Finances, writing • Set a standard for open ended tasks to keep yourself oriented (Finances = feed my family and cover their basic needs)</td><td>= Topics of interest to be useful sometime Things you want to keep information for, but don't have a goal, deadline or standard set E.g. Fishing</td><td>= Inactive Information to keep (just in case) Everything completed or on hold to keep from your work environment Saved but out of sight</td></tr></table> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Separate the time when capturing a note and when deciding where to put it• Put everything in an "notes inbox" and organise in a weekly review• Where to put a note<ul style="list-style-type: none">• put the note in one of there categories. If it does not fit, move to the next category<ul style="list-style-type: none">a. Most useful Projectb. Most useful Areac. The Resource it belongs tod. Archives• Organise to where the note will be useful the soonest• Minimise the time spend filing, labeling and tagging <h3>Habits for Digital Organization</h3> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Create the habit of capturing information to your notes system• Weekly review:<ul style="list-style-type: none">◦ Clear the email inbox◦ Check your calendar◦ Clear your notes inbox◦ Set the tasks for the week• Monthly review:<ul style="list-style-type: none">◦ Review your PARA-organisation◦ Review your life and reprioritise, when something changed◦ Review the goals/tasks you set to do "someday or maybe", to see if something has become actionable	Projects	Areas	Resources	Archive	= short-term efforts and goals with completion E.g. writing an essay, vacation in Japan, Have max. 5-15 active projects.	= long-term responsibilities and fields of interest with open ended Things to keep an eye on and a set standard for E.g. Finances, writing • Set a standard for open ended tasks to keep yourself oriented (Finances = feed my family and cover their basic needs)	= Topics of interest to be useful sometime Things you want to keep information for, but don't have a goal, deadline or standard set E.g. Fishing	= Inactive Information to keep (just in case) Everything completed or on hold to keep from your work environment Saved but out of sight	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Find the essence and make it more useful• Summarise in a few words, what is most important• Reduce the notes to the "essence" of what is most useful• Summarise the core message• How can you make this most useful for your future self? <p>Progressive Summarization</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Have multiple Layers of summarisation2. Bold the most important passages3. Highlight the key points of the bolded passages4. Write a short Summary <p>Why:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• It reduces the time to revisit the notes.• You can dynamically decide how much time to spend reviewing the notes.• The original is always preserved. <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Tips:<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Highlight no more than 10-20% of the source• Have a purpose in mind• Use your intuition• Distill, so that a note can be reviewed in under 30sec.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Show your work and share ideas• Create "Intermediate Packets" of work<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Divide the work to small Building blocks which connect to a completed project• Prepare the blocks in advance and just connect in the end• Transfer information to knowledge by using it• Switch from consuming to creating• Let old notes stay accessible without organising them too much• Use the notes to tell a bigger story• Collect Feedback from others earlier and more frequent by showing the intermediate packets <p>Goals:</p> <p>Remember everything exactly when needed. Complete Projects stress free.</p>
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Divergence and Convergence

- Two types of modes when working
- Separate them from another
- Begin with Divergence

Divergence:	Convergence:
<p>Divergence = Collecting and generating new Ideas (Brainstorming)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">◦ Open your mind for possibilities◦ Consider as many options as possible◦ Gather different kinds of outside inspiration◦ Expose yourself to new influences◦ Explore new paths◦ Talk to others <p>Tips:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">◦ Open windows◦ Jump between different sources◦ Follow your curiosity	<p>Convergence = Sorting and Reducing Ideas</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">◦ Eliminate options◦ make trade-offs◦ decide what is truly essential <p>Tips:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">◦ Close the doors◦ Use noise cancelling headphones◦ Ignore new input

Project Checklist

- Recycle Information from old projects to use in future ones
- Each time you finish a project, move its folder wholesale to the archives, and each time you start a new project, look through your archives to see if any past project might have assets you can reuse.

- **Project Kickoff** (at the start of a new project):
 - a. Make an overview of the project (scope, information needed, people who can help)
 - b. Review folders (or tags) that might contain relevant notes.
 - c. Search for related terms across all folders. Look for peripheral information
 - d. Move (or tag) relevant notes to the project folder.
 - e. Create an outline of collected notes and plan the project.Should not take longer than 20-30min
- **Project Completion:**
 - a. Mark the project as completed
 - b. Review the packets and organise them for reuse
 - c. Reflect on what you would do better next time and note thatFor bigger projects, take a few hours to review. For small ones a few minutes.

Application Steps

1. Set your goals on what you want to do
2. Set up a notes app to capture
3. Set up a PARA System
4. Make a habit of capturing
5. Practice Progressive Summarisation
6. Schedule a weekly and monthly review