

Off Your Plate

A practical field guide for turning loose thoughts, hard decisions, unfinished words, and half-built plans into something you can move.

Some things are hard because they are large. Most things are hard because they arrive in pieces.

A note here. A number you need to check. A decision with one missing fact. A message you know you need to send but have not found the words for.

None of it looks like much by itself. Together, it fills the room.

01	02	03	04
Clear	Decide	Say	Hand off
the picture	what matters	what needs saying	the next moves

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

This guide gives your AI four jobs: CLEAR the picture. DECIDE what matters. SAY what needs saying. HAND OFF the next moves.

You do not need a new app. Use whatever AI you already have. Start with the job in front of you, paste the prompt, replace the brackets, and keep what helps.

ONE RULE

Do not ask AI to take over your judgment. Ask it to hold the pieces still long enough for you to use yours.

1 Clear the picture

WHEN THE WHOLE THING IS LIVING IN YOUR HEAD

You do not need a prettier list. You need to see what kind of problem you actually have.

STARTER MOVE Choose one situation. Spend three minutes writing everything you know about it: facts, loose ends, dates, people, questions, half-thoughts. Do not organize it first. That is the AI's job.

PROMPT

Here is everything I know about [situation]:
[paste the messy version]

Turn this into a clear working picture. Separate:

- what is true
- decisions I need to make
- actions I can take
- things I am waiting on or still need to learn
- things that can wait

Then name the single first move that would make the rest easier. Do not invent missing details. Keep it short.

WHY IT WORKS A messy situation is usually several different jobs wearing one coat. This separates what is yours to do from what is waiting, unknown, or simply making noise.

PASS IT FORWARD [Take the decision line into Job 2.](#) [Take the action line into Job 4.](#)

2 Find the decision

WHEN THE OPTIONS KEEP MULTIPLYING OR THE DOCUMENT KEEPS HIDING THE POINT

AI is useful here because it can hold several variables at once. But it needs to know what you are protecting. Otherwise every detail gets an equal vote.

STARTER MOVE Finish this sentence before you paste anything: A good answer has to protect my _____. Time. Money. Quality. Energy. A commitment you already made. Name the thing.

PROMPT

I need to decide [decision].

A good answer must protect [priority or constraint].

Here are the facts, options, or document:
[paste]

Tell me:

1. the three factors that actually matter
2. the tradeoff each option makes
3. what information is still missing
4. your recommendation based on my priority
5. what new fact would change that recommendation

Do not fill gaps with guesses.

WHY IT WORKS Once you name what must be protected, the shiny details stop getting equal voting rights. You are still making the decision. The AI is clearing the table so you can see it.

PASS IT FORWARD [If someone needs your answer, take the recommendation and tradeoff into Job 3.](#) [If the decision creates work, take it into Job 4.](#)

3 Shape the words

WHEN YOU KNOW WHAT YOU MEAN BUT THE WORDS WILL NOT SETTLE

Do not start by asking AI to "write something." Start with your rough version. Fragments are fine. The point is to give it your meaning before it gives you its language.

STARTER MOVE Write the ugly version first. What happened. What you need to say. What you want to happen next. No polishing.

PROMPT

Help me turn these rough thoughts into a message I can actually send.

My raw words: [paste]

The person reading it needs to understand: [main point]

I want the next step to be: [outcome]

Tone: [warm / direct / firm / brief]

Keep my meaning and my voice. Do not add facts, promises, or emotion that I did not give you. Write one version under [word count] words, then flag any line that could be misunderstood.

WHY IT WORKS Blank-page prompting hands your voice to the machine. A rough draft gives it something to protect. The AI carries the sentence. You keep the meaning.

PASS IT FORWARD If the message creates a follow-up, put that trigger into Job 4 so "sent" does not quietly become "forgotten."

4 Build the handoff

WHEN THE THING KEEPS COMING BACK BECAUSE "DONE" WAS NEVER CLEAR

A task is not off your plate because you wrote it down. It is off when the next move, the waiting point, and the done line are visible.

STARTER MOVE Finish this sentence: This is done when _____. If you cannot name the finish line, the plan will keep growing extra legs.

PROMPT

I need [outcome] fully handled.

Done means: [definition of done].

What I already have: [facts, materials, constraints, dates, people involved].

Build the shortest useful plan. Show:

- the first move
- what can happen at the same time
- what I need before the next step
- where this could stall
- the follow-up trigger
- the final proof that it is done

Do not add busywork. If something important is missing, ask no more than three questions.

WHY IT WORKS Most loose ends are not missing effort. They are missing architecture. A visible handoff keeps the work from climbing back into your head every few hours to ask whether you forgot it.

PASS IT FORWARD Job 1 gives this plan the facts. Job 2 gives it the decision. Job 3 gives it the words. Job 4 closes the loop.

Use the chain, not just the prompt.

One prompt can help. The four together make a small system.

Take a charge on a bill that does not look right.

01 · CLEAR

Gather the amount, date, receipt, expected price, and any contact you already made. Separate what is true from what still needs checking.

02 · DECIDE

Name the outcome you will accept: a correction, a refund, or an explanation. Identify the proof that is missing and the point where the charge is no longer worth more of your time.

03 · SAY

Turn the facts into a short message with the amount, the date, the problem, and the action you want. No ten-paragraph origin story. No heat where a receipt will do.

04 · HAND OFF

Send it. Save the confirmation. Set the follow-up trigger. Close it when the correction appears.

The AI did not take over the decision. It kept the pieces from falling back into your head. That is the pattern.

BUILD YOUR OWN

The piece underneath all four

Every useful prompt in this guide names five things:

The job	what you need the AI to do.
The context	the facts it needs to do the job well.
The boundary	what it must not invent, change, or decide for you.
The shape	how the answer should arrive so you can use it.
Done	what a finished result actually looks like.

That is the architecture. Once you see it, you can build your own version for almost anything that keeps taking up room.

READY FOR THE NEXT LAYER?

Stop starting from scratch.

These prompts start with what you remember to bring into the room. The next layer is a system that keeps your context in place, filters what earns your attention, and hands the result back in a shape you can use.

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Build all four layers in about forty minutes and stop starting from scratch.

Your brain was never meant to be the integration layer. That is the system's job.