# PARA cheat sheet

Imagine if you could **organize your entire digital life**, including the dozens of different platforms and apps that you use, within a simple system.

Imagine if that system supported and enabled you to reach your most important goals, **without requiring tedious filing or time-consuming maintenance.**

And finally, imagine if you could implement this system in just **15 minutes, with minimal effort.**

Welcome to PARA, a universal system for digital organizing I've developed over the past 10 years. It is part of my course and methodology **Building a Second Brain**, in which I've taught thousands of high performers how to **leverage the full power of their ideas to amplify their creative output.**

Click here for a free introduction to the system, including instructions for coming up with the right folders, guidelines for deciding what goes where, and common pitfalls I've observed from helping thousands of people implement it.
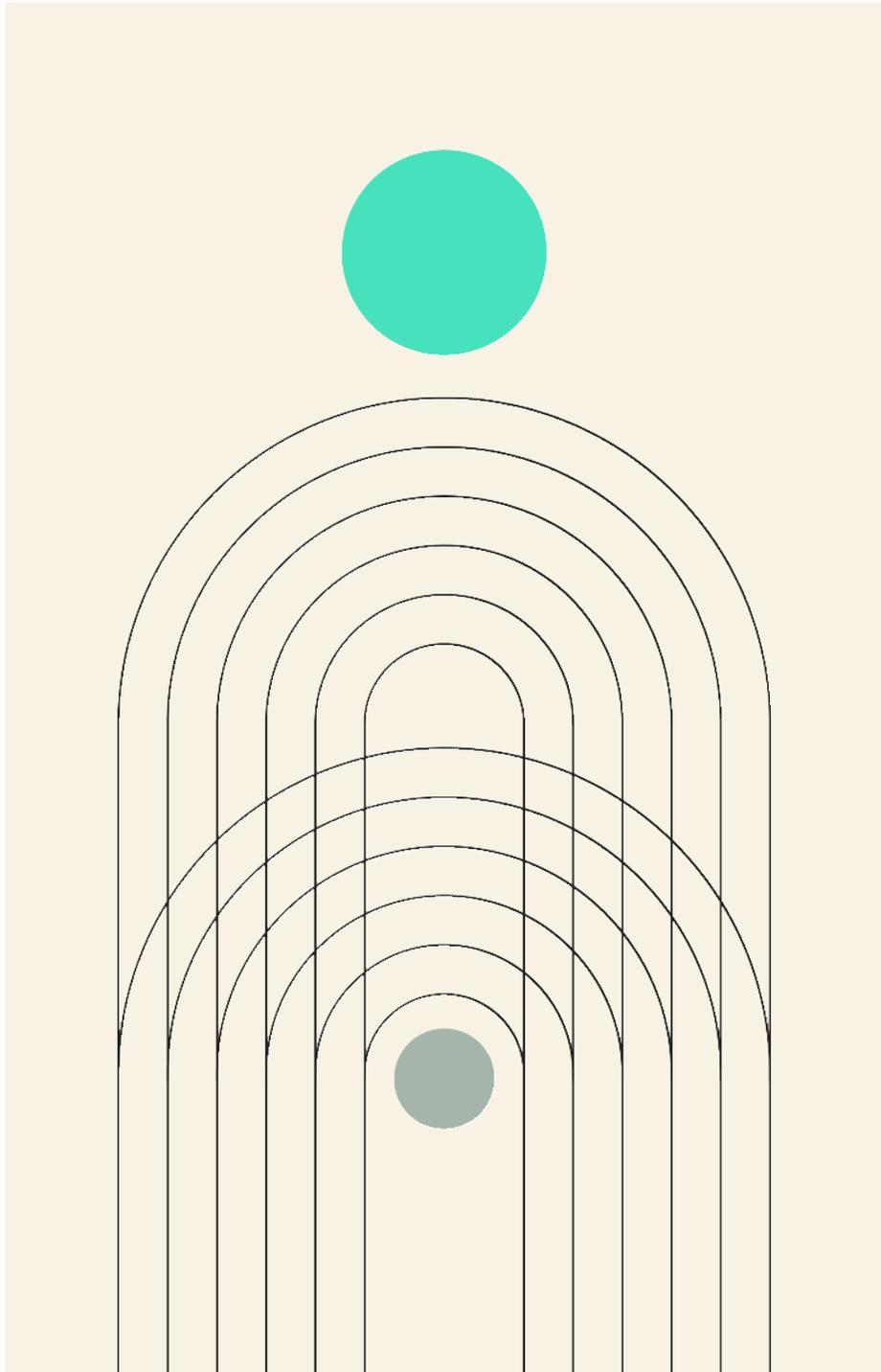
On the next page is a summary of the four buckets that encompass every file, note, or document in your digital life. A few **tips to keep in mind**:

- **Organize by project**, not by topic (such as psychology or marketing) or kind of information (quotes, book notes, insights)

- **Projects** have a goal and a completion date; **Areas** have a standard to maintain indefinitely

- **Areas are ongoing responsibilities** (for personally relevant info); **Resources are interests or research** (for generally useful info)

- A Project without a Goal is a **hobby**, and a Goal without a Project is a **dream**

- Move notes (or even entire notebooks) **when you notice they fit better elsewhere**, rather than on a schedule

- **Move quickly, touch lightly.** Use your intuition when organizing, rather than trying to categorize everything perfectly

PARA summary

More actionable ⟵——————⟶ Less actionable

P A R A

Projects
Things I'm actively working on with a goal and deadline

EXAMPLES:
Product launch
Birthday party
Sales presentation
Marathon training

Areas
My roles & responsibilities with a standard to be maintained and no end date

EXAMPLES:
Productivity
Health
Travel
Finances

Resources
Things I'm interested in and curious about

EXAMPLES:
Science fiction
Recipes
Gardening
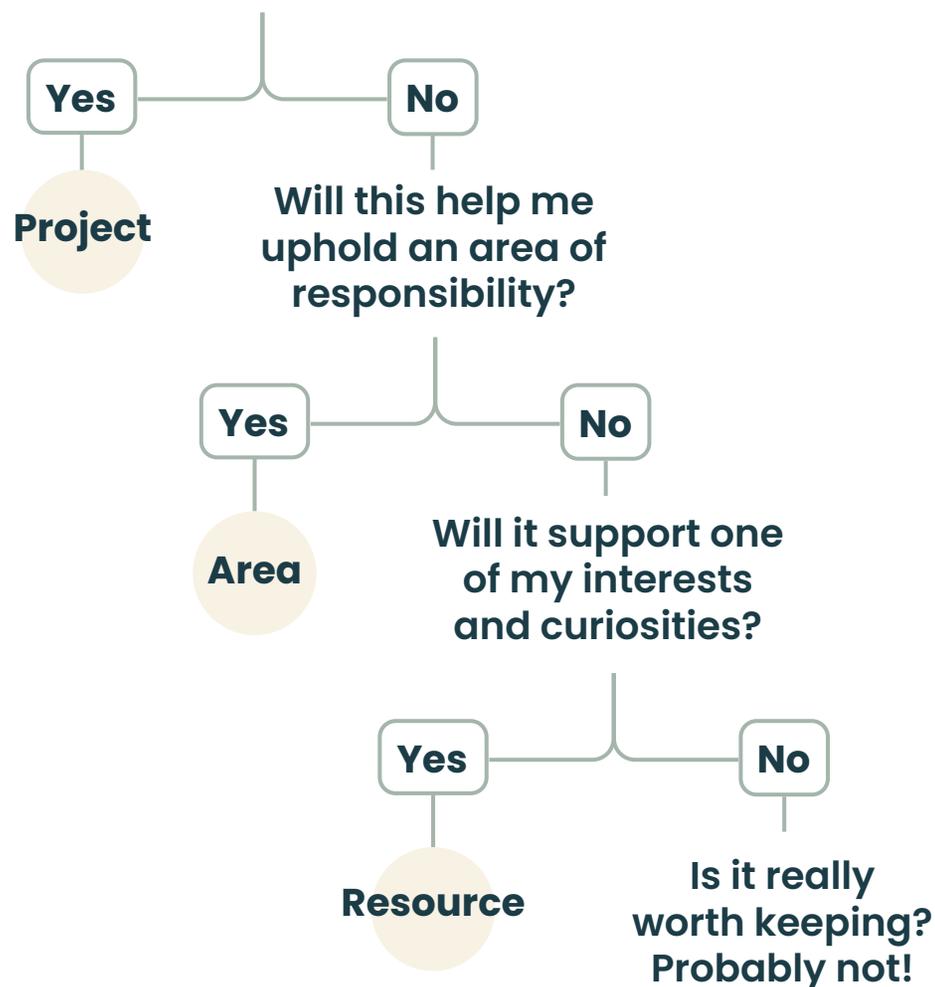Slide templates

Archives
Completed or inactive things

EXAMPLES:
Completed event
Inactive side project
Last year's marathon
Past client project

Where to Put a Piece of Information?

When's the next time you'll need that piece of information? Follow this flowchart to find where best to store it.

Will this help me move a current project or goal forward?

Yes → **Project**

No → **Will this help me uphold an area of responsibility?**

Yes → **Area**

No → **Will it support one of my interests and curiosities?**

Yes → **Resource**

No → **Is it really worth keeping? Probably not!**

5 Simple Rules for PARA Success

1. **Never create an empty folder before you have something to put in it.** Create a new folder, tag, directory, or container only if and when you truly need it.

2. **There's no ONE correct place for any piece of information.** Any given file or document can go any number of places. Don't overthink this decision. Use your intuition, rather than trying to categorize everything perfectly.

3. **Move quickly, touch lightly.** PARA is a dynamic system. Once you've added a note or document, it doesn't have to stay in that location forever. Move it to where you need it most.

4. **Search is your friend.** When you're looking for a piece of information within PARA, use the search function first. You'll often find it much quicker than going into individual folders.

5. **When in doubt, start over.** If at any time you start to feel overwhelmed by the information swirling around you, move everything into an archive with today's date, and start fresh.