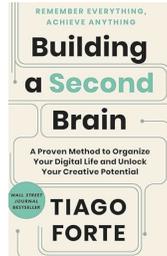


Your Kindle Notes For:



Building a Second Brain: A Proven Method to Organize Your Digital Life and Unlock Your Creative Potential

Tiago Forte

119 Highlight(s) | 0 Note(s)

Location: 56

whether changing jobs, giving a big presentation, launching a new product, or starting a business or a family—we will have access to the wisdom we need to make good decisions and take the most effective action. It all begins with the simple act of writing things down.

Location: 60

our relationship with technology, personal finance changed how we manage our money, and personal productivity reshaped how we work, personal knowledge management helps us harness the full potential of what we know.

Location: 70

When you transform your relationship to information, you will begin to see the technology in your life not just as a storage medium but as a tool for thinking. Like a bicycle for the mind, it

Location: 78

personal knowledge management

Location: 82

Those who learn how to leverage technology and master the flow of information through their lives will be empowered to accomplish anything they set their minds to.

Location: 223

Anything you might want to accomplish—executing a project at work, getting a new job, learning a new skill, starting a business—requires finding and putting to use the right information. Your professional success and quality of life depend directly on your ability to manage information effectively.

Location: 278

This digital commonplace book is what I call a Second Brain. Think of it as the combination of a study notebook, a personal journal, and a sketchbook for new ideas. It is a multipurpose tool that can adapt to your changing needs over time. In school or courses you take, it can be used to take notes for studying. At work, it can help you organize your projects. At home, it can help you manage your household.

Location: 307

It's time to elevate the status of notes from test prep and humble scribbles into something far more interesting and dynamic. For modern, professional notetaking, a note is a "knowledge building block"—a discrete unit of information interpreted through your unique perspective and stored outside your head.

Location: 431

Think of your Second Brain as the world's best personal assistant.

Location: 478

This tendency is known as recency bias.⁴ We tend to favor the ideas, solutions, and influences that occurred to us most recently, regardless of whether they are the best ones.

Location: 526

your notes app is uniquely designed to facilitate personal knowledge management.

Location: 583

The solution is to keep only what resonates in a trusted place that you control, and to leave the rest aside.

Location: 588

By training ourselves to notice when something resonates with us, we can improve not only our ability to take better notes, but also our understanding of ourselves and what makes us tick. It is a way of turning up the volume on our intuition so we can hear the wisdom it offers us.

Location: 590

Adopting the habit of knowledge capture has immediate benefits for our mental health and peace of mind. We can let go of the fear that our memory will fail us at a crucial moment.

Location: 600

The best way to organize your notes is to organize for action, according to the active projects you are working on right now. Consider new information in terms of its utility, asking, “How is this going to help me move forward one of my current projects?”

Location: 604

Organizing for action gives you a sense of tremendous clarity, because you know that everything you’re keeping actually has a purpose.

Blue highlight | Location: 621

Every time you take a note, ask yourself, “How can I make this as useful as possible for my future self?” That question will lead you to annotate the words and phrases that explain why you saved a note, what you were thinking, and what exactly caught your attention.

Location: 635

I’m here to tell you that that is no way to live your life. Information becomes knowledge—personal, embodied, verified—only when we put it to use. You gain confidence in what you know only when you know that it works. Until you do, it’s just a theory.

Blue highlight | Location: 637

This is why I recommend you shift as much of your time and effort as possible from consuming to creating.

Blue highlight | Location: 648

Information is always in flux, and it is always a work in progress. Since nothing is ever truly final, there is no need to wait to get started. You can publish a simple website now, and slowly add additional pages over time. You can send out a draft of a piece of writing now and make revisions later when you have more time. The sooner you begin, the sooner you start on the path of improvement.

Blue highlight | Location: 669

IV. The word “productivity” has the same origin as the Latin verb *producere*, which means “to produce.” Which means that at the end of the day, if you can’t point to some kind of output or result you’ve produced, it’s questionable whether you’ve been productive at all.

Location: 723

It's not a matter of having enough raw talent. Talent needs to be channeled and developed in order to become something more than a momentary spark.

Location: 743

In the digital world we live in, knowledge most often shows up as “content”—snippets of text, screenshots, bookmarked articles, podcasts, or other kinds of media. This includes the content you gather from outside sources but also the content you create as you compose emails, draw up project plans, brainstorm ideas, and journal your own thoughts. These aren't just random artifacts with no value—they are “knowledge assets” that crystallize what you know in concrete form.

Location: 771

We need an external medium in which to see our ideas from another vantage point, and writing things down is the most effective and convenient one ever invented.

Location: 845

That very same question—How can creativity emerge out of chaos?—still drives me to this day. Only now, it's in the form of organizing digital information instead of LEGOs.

Location: 866

There is a way out of this situation. It starts with realizing that in any piece of content, the value is not evenly distributed. There are always certain parts that are especially interesting, helpful, or valuable to you. When you realize this, the answer is obvious. You can extract only the most salient, relevant, rich material and save it as a succinct note.

Location: 875

This is why it's so important to take on a Curator's Perspective—that we are the judges, editors, and interpreters of the information we choose to let into our lives. Thinking like a curator means taking charge of your own information stream, instead of just letting it wash over you.

Location: 917

but if you take away one thing from this chapter, it should be to keep what resonates.

Location: 923

As you consume a piece of content, listen for an internal feeling of being moved or surprised by the idea you're taking in.

Location: 936

The authors' conclusion: "Our intuitive mind learns, and responds, even without our conscious awareness."

Location: 995

First, you are much more likely to remember information you've written down in your own words. Known as the "Generation Effect,"¹⁰ researchers have found that when people actively generate a series of words, such as by speaking or writing, more parts of their brain are activated when compared to simply reading the same words.

Location: 1,002

Thinking doesn't just produce writing; writing also enriches thinking.

Location: 1,012

The moment you first encounter an idea is the worst time to decide what it means. You need to set it aside and gain some objectivity.

Location: 1,016

Notetaking is the easiest and simplest way of externalizing our thinking.

Blue highlight | Location: 1,019

Your Turn: What Would This Look Like If It Was Easy?

Location: 1,024

On average I capture just two notes per day—what are two ideas, insights, observations, perspectives, or lessons you've encountered today that you could write down right now?

Location: 1,117

Your Second Brain isn't just a tool—it's an environment. It is a garden of knowledge full of familiar, winding pathways, but also secret and secluded corners.

Blue highlight | Location: 1,141

I eventually named this organizing system PARA,^I which stands for the four main categories of information in our lives: Projects, Areas, Resources, and Archives. These four categories are universal, encompassing any kind of information, from any source, in any format, for any purpose.^{II}

Blue highlight | Location: 1,147

you have to answer only one simple question: “In which project will this be most useful?” It assumes only that you are currently working on a certain set of projects, and that your information should be organized to support them.

Location: 1,168

We need to always be wary of accumulating so much information that we spend all our time managing it, instead of putting it to use in the outside world.

Location: 1,173

The intention here is not to use a single software program, but to use a single organizing system, one that provides consistency even as you switch between apps many times per day.

Location: 1,201

Whether you’re self-employed, at a large corporation, or somewhere in between, we are all moving toward a world of project-based work.

Location: 1,202

Knowing which projects you’re currently committed to is crucial to being able to prioritize your week, plan your progress, and say no to things that aren’t important.

Location: 1,261

The number of active projects usually ranges from five to fifteen for the average person.

Location: 1,293

Most notes apps have an “inbox” or “daily notes” section where new notes you’ve captured are saved until you can revisit them and decide where they belong. Think of it as a waiting area where new ideas live until you are ready to digest them into your Second Brain.

Location: 1,302

This order gives us a convenient checklist for deciding where to put a note, starting at the top of the list and moving down: In which project will this be most useful? If none: In which area will this be most useful? If none: Which resource does this belong to? If none: Place in archives.

Blue highlight | Location: 1,312

Organizing by actionability counteracts our tendency to constantly procrastinate and postpone our aspirations to some far-off future. PARA pulls these distant dreams into the here and now, by helping us see that we already have a lot of the information we need to get started. The goal of organizing our knowledge is to move our goals forward, not get a PhD in notetaking.

Location: 1,315

Knowledge is best applied through execution, which means whatever doesn't help you make progress on your projects is probably detracting from them.

Location: 1,326

Instead of organizing ideas according to where they come from, I recommend organizing them according to where they are going—specifically, the outcomes that they can help you realize.

Location: 1,329

PARA isn't a filing system; it's a production system.

Location: 1,342

Every life moves through seasons, and your digital notes should move along with them, churning and surfacing new tidbits of insight from the deep waters of your experience.

Location: 1,382

I've learned that completed creative projects are the blood flow of your Second Brain.

Location: 1,384

It is only the steady completion of tangible wins that can infuse you with a sense of determination, momentum, and accomplishment.

Location: 1,398

What's worrying you that you haven't taken the time to identify as a project? What needs to happen that you're not making consistent progress on? Look at your calendar: What do you need to follow up on from the past? What needs planning and preparation for the future? Look at your to-do list: What actions are you already taking that are actually part of a bigger project you've not yet identified? What communication or follow-up actions you've scheduled with people are actually part of a bigger project? Look at your computer desktop, downloads folder, documents folder, bookmarks, emails, or open browser tabs: What are you keeping around because it is part of a larger project?

Location: 1,458

He started with an initial read of the entire novel, noting down anything that stuck out to him: "I think it's important to put your impressions down on the first reading because those are the initial instincts about what you thought was good or what you didn't understand or what you thought was bad."

Location: 1,462

In his own words, “I endeavored to distill the essence of each scene into a sentence, expressing in a few words what the point of the scene was.”

Location: 1,500

Your job as a notetaker is to preserve the notes you’re taking on the things you discover in such a way that they can survive the journey into the future.

Location: 1,504

Discoverability is an idea from information science that refers to “the degree to which a piece of content or information can be found in a search of a file, database, or other information system.” Librarians think about discoverability when deciding how to lay out books on the shelves. Web designers think about it when they create menus for the websites you visit every day. Social media platforms work hard to make the best content on their platforms as discoverable as possible.

Location: 1,525

Distillation is at the very heart of all effective communication.

Location: 1,527

What if your future self was just as important as these VIPs? How could you communicate with them through time in the most efficient, concise way?

Blue highlight | Location: 1,541

I have my read later app synced to my digital notes app, so any passage I highlight there automatically gets saved in my notes, including a link to the source.

Location: 1,636

I was driving and unable to write anything down, but as soon as we arrived I sat in the car for a few minutes and captured the ideas I remembered. This is actually a great way to filter down the volume of notes you’re taking—the best stuff always sticks in your mind for an hour or two.

Location: 1,680

The result points to a mysterious aspect of the creative process: it can end up with a result that looks so simple, it seems like anyone could have made it. That simplicity masks the effort that was needed to get there.

Location: 1,688

As you distill your ideas, they naturally improve, because when you drop the merely good parts, the great parts can shine more brightly. To be clear, it takes skill and courage to let the details

fall away. As Picasso's bull and Burns's documentaries illustrate, in making decisions about what to keep, we inevitably have to make decisions about what to throw away.

Location: 1,719

The rule of thumb to follow is that every time you "touch" a note, you should make it a little more discoverable for your future self^{VII}—by adding a highlight, a heading, some bullets, or commentary. This is the "campsite rule" applied to information—leave it better than you found it. This ensures that the notes you interact with most often will naturally become the most discoverable in a virtuous cycle.

Location: 1,734

Distillation is at the heart of the communication that is so central to our friendships, our working relationships, and our leadership abilities. Notetaking gives you a way to deliberately practice the skill of distilling every day.

Location: 1,764

II. I like to think of layer one as the "soil"—an excerpt from a source or my own thinking (whether as words, drawings, images, or audio) I initially capture into my notes. They are like the ground on which my understanding will be built. Layer two is "oil," as in "I've struck oil!," conveniently represented by black, bolded text. Layer three is "gold," which is even more valuable, and shines in highlighter yellow in many apps. Layer four is the "gems," the most rare and illuminating finds that I've distilled in my own words as an executive summary.

Location: 1,862

The challenge we face in building a Second Brain is how to establish a system for personal knowledge that frees up attention, instead of taking more of it.

Location: 1,869

If we consider the focused application of our attention to be our greatest asset as knowledge workers, we can no longer afford to let that intermediate work disappear. If we consider how precious little time we have to produce something extraordinary in our careers, it becomes imperative that we recycle that knowledge back into a system where it can become useful again.

Location: 1,916

A scientist doesn't obscure her sources—she points to them so others can retrace her footsteps. We all stand on the shoulders of giants, and it's smart to build on the thinking they've done rather than try to reinvent the wheel.

Location: 1,935

This lens reframes creativity as an ongoing, continual cycle of delivering value in small bits, rather than a massive all-consuming endeavor that weighs on you for months.

Location: 1,960

Our creativity thrives on examples. When we have a template to fill in, our ideas are channeled into useful forms instead of splattered around haphazardly. There are best practices and plentiful models for almost anything you might want to make.

Blue highlight | Location: 1,963

Your Second Brain is the repository of things you are already creating and using anyway. All we are doing is adding a little bit of structure and intentionality to how we use them: capturing them in one place, such as a digital notes app, so we can find them with a search; organizing them according to our projects, areas, and resources, so we have a dedicated place for each important aspect of our lives; and distilling them down to their most essential points, so they can be quickly accessed and retrieved.

Location: 2,079

In Patrick's words: "Using my first brain only for what it is best at is freedom. Freedom to be present and not multitasking as I sit with grieving people hearing stories of their loved ones. Freedom to know I have everything recorded. Freedom to know that when I go to pull the memorial together, 80 percent of the work is already done."IV

Location: 2,101

Reframing your work in terms of Intermediate Packets isn't just about doing the same old stuff in smaller chunks. That doesn't unlock your true potential. The transformation comes from the fact that smaller chunks are inherently more shareable and collaborative.

Location: 2,107

Getting feedback is really about borrowing someone else's eyes to see what only a novice can see.

Location: 2,112

You will begin to see yourself as the curator of the collective thinking of your network, rather than the sole originator of ideas.

Location: 2,118

The CODE Method is based on an important aspect of creativity: that it is always a remix of existing parts. We all stand on the shoulders of our predecessors. No one creates anything out of a pure void.

Location: 2,129

Giving credit where credit is due doesn't lessen the value of your contribution—it increases it. Having a Second Brain where all your sources are clearly documented will make it much easier to track them down and include those citations in the finished version.

Location: 2,146

Ideas are merely thoughts until you put them into action.

Location: 2,148

We learn by making concrete things—before we feel ready, before we have it completely figured out, and before we know where it's going.

Location: 2,153

It's not necessarily about becoming a professional artist, online influencer, or business mogul: it's about taking ownership of your work, your ideas, and your potential to contribute in whatever arena you find yourself in.

Location: 2,201

What I learned from my father is that by the time you sit down to make progress on something, all the work to gather and organize the source material needs to already be done. We can't expect ourselves to instantly come up with brilliant ideas on demand. I learned that innovation and problem-solving depend on a routine that systematically brings interesting ideas to the surface of our awareness.

Location: 2,219

One of the most important patterns that underlies the creative process is called “divergence and convergence.”¹¹

Location: 2,227

The activity of divergence is familiar to all of us: it is the classic whiteboard covered in sketches, the writer's wastepaper basket filled with crumpled-up drafts, and the photographer with hundreds of photos laid out across the floor.

Location: 2,229

You can't fully plan or organize what you're doing in divergence mode, and you shouldn't try. This is the time to wander.

Blue highlight | Location: 2,247

The first two steps of CODE, Capture and Organize, make up divergence. They are about gathering seeds of imagination carried on the wind and storing them in a secure place. This is where you research, explore, and add ideas. The final two steps, Distill and Express, are about convergence. They help us shut the door to new ideas and begin constructing something new out of the knowledge building blocks we've assembled.

Location: 2,278

Now each chapter starts life as a kind of archipelago of inspiring quotes, which makes it seem far less daunting. All I have to do is build bridges between the islands. An archipelago is a chain of islands in the ocean, usually formed by volcanic activity over long spans of time. The Hawaiian Islands, for example, are an archipelago of eight major islands extending over about 1,500 miles of the Pacific Ocean.

Location: 2,305

An Archipelago of Ideas separates the two activities your brain has the most difficulty performing at the same time: choosing ideas (known as selection) and arranging them into a logical flow (known as sequencing).

Location: 2,357

When the full complexity of a project starts to reveal itself, most people choose to delay it.

Location: 2,363

Waiting until you have everything ready before getting started is like sitting in your car and waiting to leave your driveway until all the traffic lights across town are green at the same time.

Location: 2,367

Your Second Brain is a crucial part of this strategy, because you need a place to save the parts that get postponed or removed.

Location: 2,374

endless. Knowing that nothing I write or create truly gets lost—only saved for later use—gives me the confidence to aggressively cut my creative works down to size without fearing that I've wasted effort or that I'll lose the results of my thinking forever. Knowing that I can always release a fix, update, or follow up on anything I've made in the past gives me the courage to share my ideas before they're perfectly ready and before I have them all figured out.

Location: 2,388

This is the chicken-and-egg problem of creativity: you don't know what you should create, but you can't discover what people want until you create something. Dialing Down the Scope is a

way of short-circuiting that paradox and testing the waters with something small and concrete, while still protecting the fragile and tentative edges of your work.

Location: 2,412

I used a series of Hemingway Bridges to string together many such windows of time that otherwise wouldn't have been of much productive use.

Location: 2,434

Set a timer for a fixed period of time, such as fifteen or twenty minutes, and in one sitting see if you can complete a first pass on your project using only the notes you've gathered in front of you. No searching online, no browsing social media, and no opening multiple browser tabs that you swear you're going to get to eventually. Only work with what you already have. This first pass could be a plan, an agenda, a proposal, a diagram, or some other format

Location: 2,439

You are only creating the first iteration—a draft of your essay, a sketch of your app, a plan for your campaign. Ask yourself, "What is the smallest version of this I can produce to get useful feedback from others?"

Location: 2,470

There is a certain level of organization that you want to maintain in your digital world, so that when you go there to get things done, your virtual workspaces support your productivity instead of interfering with it.

Location: 2,497

Building a Second Brain is not just about downloading a new piece of software to get organized at one point in time; it is about adopting a dynamic, flexible system and set of habits to continually access what we need without throwing our environment (and mind) into chaos.

Location: 2,591

We want to learn from the experience and document any thinking that could add value in the future. This is where the Project Completion Checklist is essential. It's a series of steps you can take to decide if there are any reusable knowledge assets worth keeping, before archiving the rest. The only way that the Kickoff Checklist we just looked at will be feasible is if you've previously taken the time to save and preserve material from past projects.

Location: 2,632

It's very empowering to realize you can put a project in "cold storage" and let go of the mental toll of having to keep it in mind. It's tremendously comforting to know that I don't need to make constant progress on everything all the time.

Location: 2,646

The purpose of using project checklists isn't to make the way you work rigid and formulaic. It is to help you start and finish projects cleanly and decisively, so you don't have "orphaned" commitments that linger on with no end in sight.

Location: 2,655

Allen recommends using a Weekly Review to write down any new to-dos, review your active projects, and decide on priorities for the upcoming week. I suggest adding one more step: review the notes you've created over the past week, give them succinct titles that tell you what's inside, and sort them into the appropriate PARA folders.

Location: 2,705

It's important that the project list remains a current, timely, and accurate reflection of your real-life goals and priorities. Especially since projects are the central organizing principle of your Second Brain.

Location: 2,765

The checklists I've provided are a starting point to help you add some predictability in an environment that is often chaotic and unpredictable.

Location: 2,776

The truth is, any system that must be perfect to be reliable is deeply flawed. A perfect system you don't use because it's too complicated and error prone isn't a perfect system—it's a fragile system that will fall apart as soon as you turn your attention elsewhere.

Location: 2,799

Value has shifted from the output of our muscles to the output of our brains.

Blue highlight | Location: 2,799

Our knowledge is now our most important asset and the ability to deploy our attention our most valuable skill.

Location: 2,807

You might have arrived at this book because you heard about this new field called personal knowledge management,

Location: 2,809

Whatever you are looking for, all these paths eventually lead to the same place, if you are willing to follow: a journey of personal growth.

Location: 2,845

We can't always control what happens to us, but we can choose the lens we look through. This is the basic choice we have in creating our own experience—which aspects to nourish or starve, using only the magnifying power of our attention.

Location: 2,853

it's time to fire your biological brain from that job and give it a new one: as the CEO of your life, orchestrating and managing the process of turning information into results. We're asking your biological brain to hand over the job of remembering to an external system, and by doing so, freeing it to absorb and integrate new knowledge in more creative ways.

Location: 2,858

Once your biology is no longer the bottleneck on your potential, you'll be free to expand the flow of information as much as you want without drowning in it.

Location: 2,885

The paradox of hoarding is that no matter how much we collect and accumulate, it's never enough. The lens of scarcity also tells us that the information we already have must not be very valuable, compelling us to keep searching externally for what's missing inside.

Location: 2,901

I believe most people have a natural desire within them to serve others. They want to teach, to mentor, to help, to contribute. The desire to give back is a fundamental part of what makes us human.

Location: 2,908

Learning shouldn't be about hoarding stockpiles of knowledge like gold coins. Knowledge is the only resource that gets better and more valuable the more it multiplies. If I share a new way of thinking about your health, or finances, or business, or spirituality, that knowledge isn't less valuable to me. It's more valuable! Now we can speak the same language, coordinate our efforts, and share our progress in applying it. Knowledge becomes more powerful as it spreads.

Location: 2,932

Because we cannot describe how we know what we know, it can't be programmed into software. The curse of computer scientists is our blessing, because this tacit knowledge represents the final frontier on which humans outperform machines. The jobs and endeavors that rely on tacit knowledge will be the last ones to be automated.

Location: 2,942

Self-direction is impossible without self-knowledge. How can you know what you want if you don't know who you are?

Location: 2,975

The only way to discover the answer to these questions is by speaking and seeing what comes out. Some of what you say might not resonate with others or provide value to them, but occasionally, you will strike on something—a way of seeing, a perspective, a story—that blows people's minds and visibly transforms how they see the world.