

Personal Knowledge Systems

Design a sustainable folder structure, audit your existing notes, identify dead notes, and build a declutter habit — tailored to your specific tools.

Difficulty: Intermediate

Model: GPT-4 / Claude / Gemini

Use Case: System Design, Note Organization, Digital Decluttering

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Why This Prompt Exists

Most knowledge systems fail because they're designed for acquisition, not retrieval.

You get:

- folders named "Misc" and "Archive" (graveyards)
- notes you can never find when you need them
- duplicate notes on the same topic
- no habit for removing what's no longer useful
- a system that feels like clutter, not leverage

But information architecture is not about where to put things.

It is about where to find them when you need them.

- PARA (Projects, Areas, Resources, Archives) is a proven framework
- Dead notes are notes you never revisit — they're noise
- Decluttering is a habit, not an event
- Tool-specific advice works; generic advice doesn't

Without architecture, your notes are a hoard, not a system.

This framework forces AI to be an information architect who builds for retrieval.

The Prompt

Assume the role of an information architect specializing in personal knowledge system design.

Your task is to help the user declutter and design a sustainable folder structure.

Generate:

1. FOLDER OR TAG HIERARCHY (max 7 top-level categories)
Based on PARA (Projects, Areas, Resources, Archives) or similar
2. PARA AUDIT
Where do your current notes belong?
3. DEAD NOTE IDENTIFICATION METHOD
How to find notes you never use (specific to your tool)
4. 30-MINUTE DECLUTTER CHECKLIST
Step-by-step, specific to your tool
5. ONE NEW HABIT TO PREVENT FUTURE CLUTTER
E.g., "weekly review of 5 oldest notes" or "one in, one out"

INPUTS:

Your Note-Taking Tool:

[NOTION / OBSIDIAN / EVERNOTE / ROAM / LOGSEQ / APPLE NOTES / OTHER]

Number of Notes (estimate):

[INSERT NUMBER]

Current Pain Points:

[E.G., "I can never find my project notes" / "I have 50 folders" / "I'm not sure what to delete"]

What You Want to Be Able to Do:

[E.G., "Find any note within 10 seconds" / "Connect ideas across domains"]

RULES:

- Top-level categories must be 7 or fewer
- The PARA audit must be specific, not general advice
- The dead note method must be actionable (e.g., "search for notes modified more than 6 months ago")
- The declutter checklist must fit in 30 minutes
- The new habit must be sustainable (daily or weekly, not "when I have time")

How To Use It

- Schedule 2 hours for your first declutter — 30 minutes is for maintenance.
- The PARA audit will hurt (seeing how many notes are misfiled). That's the point.
- Dead notes aren't failures — they're signals about what you don't actually care about.
- The new habit is more important than the initial cleanup.
- Re-run this audit every 6 months; systems drift.

Example Input

Your Note-Taking Tool: Notion

Number of Notes: About 800 (mostly meeting notes, book highlights, and project plans)

Current Pain Points: “I have folders for each client, but I can never find the decision from last month’s meeting. Also I have 40 ‘Misc’ notes.”

What You Want to Be Able to Do: “Find any decision from a client meeting within 30 seconds.”

Why It Works

Most knowledge systems fail because they’re built for accumulation, not retrieval.

This framework improves outcomes by forcing:

- PARA-based architecture (Projects, Areas, Resources, Archives)
- tool-specific declutter checklists
- dead note identification (what to delete)
- sustainable maintenance habits
- retrieval-focused design

Great knowledge systems don’t store everything — they make what matters findable.

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