

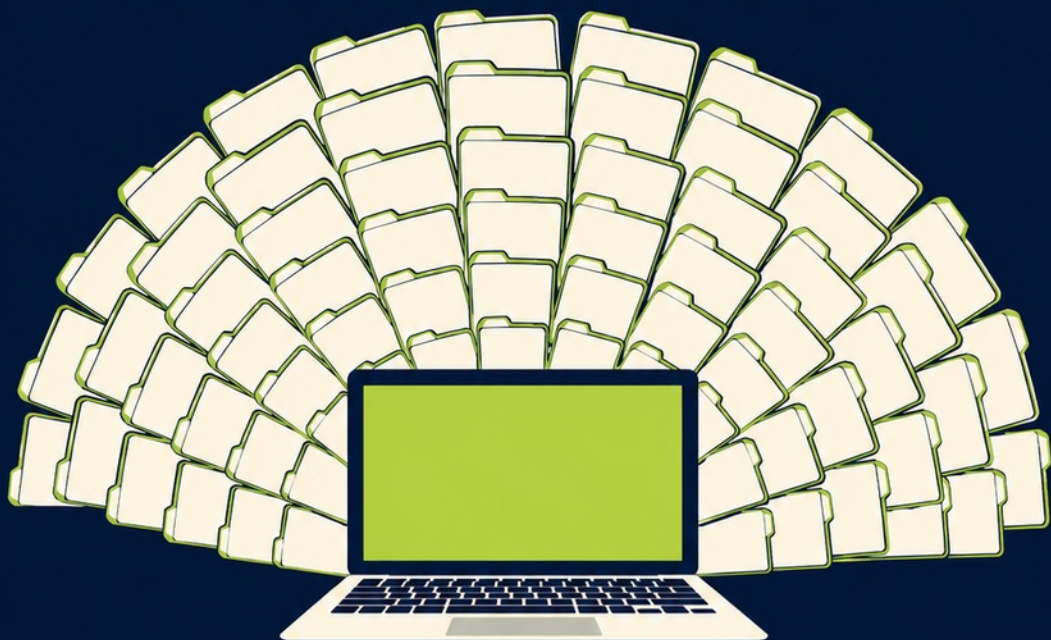
MAX PARADOX

PROBLEM? RELAX. YOU'VE GOT THIS!

Self-Help with a Sense of Humor ;)

I Have 73 Tabs Open and Can't Close Any of Them

How to Stop Collecting Information You'll Never Read



We have a problem. Relax. We can solve it—and have a laugh along the way.

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INTRO

You open your laptop to do one simple thing. Maybe you need to check the price of a hotel, compare two insurance plans, find a recipe for dinner, or finally read that article someone sent you three Tuesdays ago. The browser opens, and there they are: seventy-three tabs staring back at you like tiny unfinished obligations.

Some have been open for hours.

Some for weeks.

One may legally qualify as a tenant.

You recognize almost none of them by title because the tabs have become so narrow that each one displays approximately four pixels and a vague emotional threat. Somewhere in there is an article about sleep, a YouTube video called something like "7 Things Successful People Never Do Before 9 A.M.," three products you were comparing, a Reddit thread you absolutely intended to finish, a restaurant menu from a city you are no longer visiting, and a PDF you opened because the title contained the word "essential."

You cannot close any of them.

Not because you are using them.

That would make sense.

You cannot close them because you might need them later.

This is how a browser slowly stops being software and becomes an archaeological site.

You start with one question: "What's the best carry-on suitcase?"

Twenty minutes later you have twelve tabs comparing wheels, zipper materials, airline dimensions, polycarbonate thickness, warranty policies, and the fascinating geopolitical history of luggage manufacturing. You have learned that some suitcase wheels are manufactured by companies that apparently approach rolling through airports with the seriousness normally reserved for aerospace engineering.

Have you bought a suitcase?

Of course not.

You are still researching.

There is always another review. Another comparison. Another person on Reddit who has owned both models and has opinions. Strong opinions. Possibly stronger opinions about suitcase handles than you have about certain members of your family.

And that is the strange part of information overload: collecting information feels suspiciously like making progress.

You are doing something. You are searching, comparing, saving, opening, bookmarking, sending links to yourself, creating reading lists, taking screenshots, and occasionally opening a new tab so you can research a better system for organizing all the tabs you already have.

This is productivity wearing a fake mustache.

The problem is not simply that the internet contains too much information. That would be inconvenient, but manageable. The deeper problem is that modern information has almost no natural stopping point. Every article leads to another article. Every video recommends five more videos. Every product page contains alternatives. Every discussion has replies, counter-replies, updates, edits, and one person

named Kevin explaining why everyone else has misunderstood the entire issue.

There is no sign saying:

Congratulations. You now know enough. Please make a decision and go outside.

So your brain keeps collecting.

One more tab.

One more source.

One more review.

One more piece of evidence before you commit to something as dangerous as choosing a toaster.

The browser becomes a storage unit for future intentions. You are not just saving information. You are saving imagined versions of yourself.

Future You will read the twelve long-form articles.

Future You will watch the ninety-minute interview.

Future You will compare those investment options carefully.

Future You will finally learn why everyone keeps talking about gut health, zone two cardio, artificial intelligence, sourdough starters, Japanese walking methods, and whether standing desks are secretly trying to destroy civilization.

Future You is extremely busy.

Current You keeps assigning them homework.

This book is about ending that arrangement.

Not by making you ignorant. Not by telling you to stop being curious. Curiosity is useful. Research is useful. Learning

is useful. The ability to access more information than any previous generation could imagine is extraordinary.

The problem begins when collecting information replaces using it.

You read about exercising instead of exercising.

You compare productivity systems instead of doing the task.

You research which book to read instead of reading one.

You spend an hour comparing note-taking apps because your current note-taking app contains seventeen unfinished notes about choosing a better note-taking app.

At some point, the preparation becomes the activity.

And because preparation feels responsible, it is very difficult to notice that you are stuck.

This happens for several reasons. Sometimes you are afraid of missing something important. Sometimes you do not trust yourself to make a decision without having every available fact. Sometimes saving information gives you a small sense of relief: you do not need to deal with this now because you have preserved it for later. Sometimes you are simply tired, and opening another tab requires less mental energy than deciding what to do with the previous twelve.

And sometimes the information itself is enjoyable.

Research gives you possibility without commitment. Before you choose a camera, every camera is still an option. Before you book the hotel, every hotel might be perfect. Before you pick a course, you can imagine yourself becoming fluent in Spanish, learning Python, mastering photography, understanding economics, and perhaps making your own mozzarella by Thursday.

Choosing one option means closing doors.

Opening tabs means opening more doors.

Eventually you are standing in a hallway with seventy-three doors and no idea why you entered the building.

The solution is not going to be "just close your tabs."

You have probably tried that.

Maybe you even had a dramatic cleanup. You selected everything, closed the browser, and felt the emotional purity of a person who has recently thrown out six bags of clutter.

Then you immediately reopened five tabs.

By lunch, twelve.

By Friday, the ecosystem had recovered.

That happens because the tabs are not the real problem. They are the visible result of several habits: postponing decisions, confusing information with action, fearing loss, overestimating what you will consume later, and continuing research long after additional information has stopped improving the decision.

If we only attack the tabs, the tabs return.

Browsers are excellent at reproduction.

So this book will deal with the machinery underneath them.

You will learn how to decide when you have enough information, how to research without falling into an endless comparison tunnel, how to close things without feeling that you have permanently destroyed your intellectual future, and how to create a simple system for information that you genuinely intend to use.

You will also learn something less glamorous but far more useful: how to admit that some things you saved will never be read.

That article from four months ago?

Probably not.

The twenty-seven-minute video you saved because someone described it as “life-changing”?

Your life appears to have continued without it.

The fifteen-book reading list you created after watching one video about philosophy?

Socrates will cope.

The goal is not to become a minimalist monk who maintains one browser tab containing a blank document and considers bookmarks a moral weakness. You can keep useful information. You can research deeply when the decision deserves it. You can have open tabs while working.

You just need the tabs to represent what you are actually doing, not every possible thing your brain might theoretically care about before retirement.

By the end of this book, you should be able to look at information and make one of a few simple decisions: use it, save it deliberately, schedule it, act on it, or let it go.

No digital purgatory.

No “I’ll definitely read this later” graveyard containing 418 articles.

No twenty-tab research expedition to decide whether a \$24 purchase is worth making.

You are allowed to know enough.

You are allowed to choose.

You are allowed to close the tab.

And if something truly important disappears forever because you closed a browser window, there is excellent news.

The internet is remarkably talented at containing it again.

Chapter 1 - Your Tabs Are Unmade Decisions

You sit down to order a new pair of headphones. This should be easy. You know roughly what you want, you know your budget, and you are not attempting to purchase a small aircraft.

Twenty-five minutes later, the situation has changed.

You now have eleven headphone reviews open, two Reddit threads, four store pages, one video comparing frequency response graphs, and an article explaining the difference between codecs you had never heard of forty minutes ago. Somewhere along the way, you learned that a small but highly committed group of people considers Bluetooth latency a matter of personal honor.

You still do not own headphones.

But you now have research.

A lot of tab clutter begins exactly like this. The obvious explanation is that you are saving information. The more useful explanation is that many tabs are decisions you have not finished making.

A tab can mean:

"I need to decide whether to buy this."

"I should answer this later."

"I might want to read this."

"I need to compare this with something."

"I should remember this idea."

"This looks important."

"I do not know what to do with this, so I will leave it open and pretend visibility is a system."

That last one deserves more respect than it gets.

The browser is often not storing information. It is storing unresolved mental commitments.

This matters because unresolved commitments create a strange kind of pressure. You can close a tab containing the weather forecast without emotion. You used it. Finished. Goodbye.

But closing a tab for a course you might take feels different.

What if you forget it?

What if it was the right one?

What if six weeks from now you suddenly decide to learn data analysis and realize you have destroyed the only course on Earth capable of teaching it?

You have not. There are approximately nine billion courses.

Still, your brain dislikes unfinished decisions. It prefers keeping the evidence visible.

So you leave the tab open.

The tab now becomes a tiny visual reminder that something remains unresolved. Multiply that by seventy-three and your browser becomes a dashboard of vague obligations. Not urgent enough to handle, not irrelevant enough to delete.

A museum of maybe.

The Tab Is Not the Task

One of the easiest mistakes is treating the open tab as if it were somehow helping you remember what you need to do.

Sometimes it does.