



RELAY

SETUP & WORKFLOW GUIDE

The complete GTD® workflow, already built. This handbook teaches the method and the app in one sitting, no book required.

ABOUT THIS GUIDE

This guide was written by the team behind Relay. It does two jobs at once: it teaches the working method Relay is built around, so you can start without any prior reading, and it shows you, screen by screen, how that method is wired into the app. Read it once from the front. Keep it nearby for the checklists.

A NOTE ON GTD® AND TRADEMARKS

Relay is built for the workflow popularised as *Getting Things Done*: the practice of capturing every commitment into a trusted system, clarifying what each one means, and reviewing the whole picture on a rhythm you can rely on.

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If you want the methodology from its source, with the deeper thinking behind it, read David Allen's book *Getting Things Done: The Art of Stress-Free Productivity*. This guide will get you running. The book will make you fluent.

WHAT YOU MAY DO WITH THIS GUIDE

Share it. Send the PDF to a colleague, print it, or link to it from your own notes. We ask only that you share it whole and unmodified, with this page intact.

VERSIONS

Relay runs in the browser and as native apps across your devices, and the same account signs in everywhere. This guide uses screenshots from the web and Android apps. Where a platform differs in a way that matters, such as widgets on Android or the capture hotkey on Windows, the text says so. Relay changes quickly. If a screen has moved since printing, the concepts on these pages still hold.

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FOCUS OF THIS GUIDE

This guide does two jobs. If you have never read a productivity book and never intend to, Part One teaches you the complete working method that Relay is built around, in five moves, one diagram, and one checklist. If you already know your way around a task manager, the rest of the guide shows you how Relay is put together: what each list is for, why items move on their own, and where the habits live.

Most task apps hand you an empty shell. You invent your own lists, your own labels and your own rules, then you maintain all of it, forever, mostly at 11pm. Relay takes the opposite bet: the structure of a trusted system is a solved problem, so the app ships with it. The lists exist on day one. The processing questions are built into a wizard. The reviews run themselves as guided flows. Your only job is the part no app can do for you: putting things in, deciding what they mean, and showing up for the reviews.

Relay runs in your browser at **app.relaygtd.com** and as native apps for your devices, and one account signs in everywhere. Nothing in this guide is platform-specific unless it says so. Where Android or Windows has an extra trick, such as widgets or the capture hotkey, the text calls it out.

WHAT YOU CAN EXPECT

- A working understanding of the five moves (capture, clarify, organize, reflect, engage) without reading anything else first.
- A tour of every list in Relay's sidebar, and the reason each one exists.
- The complete capture toolkit: quick add, email-to-Inbox, share sheet, widgets, and the desktop hotkey.
- How to run the guided Daily and Weekly Reviews, and what each step is actually for.
- A sane way to handle email, your calendar, and reference material alongside Relay.

This is not a feature manual, and it doesn't try to document every switch. The app's own Settings screens do that. It documents the *workflow*: the smallest set of habits that makes the whole thing trustworthy. Where Relay offers three ways to do something, this guide tells you the one we'd start with.

THE ONE RULE

Keep it simple enough to run on your worst day. A system you can only maintain at full energy is a system you'll abandon in a bad week. Relay's structure doesn't need tending, so spend your effort on the habits instead.

PART ONE

THE METHOD

The thinking Relay is built on. Enough to start today, no book required.

WHY YOUR HEAD IS THE WRONG PLACE FOR THIS

Every commitment you're carrying behaves like an app left running in the background: the reply you owe, the gift you meant to order, the project you haven't started. It burns attention even when you're not looking at it, and it pings you at the worst possible moments, in the shower, in a meeting, at 3am. Your brain is superb at *having* ideas and genuinely bad at *holding* them.

The fix is older than any app: write everything down in a place you check on a reliable rhythm, and your mind stops re-raising it. But the fix only works if the place is **complete** (everything goes there, not only work things) and **current** (you actually review it). A half-trusted system is worse than none, because part of your brain keeps auditing it. Everything in this guide serves those two words.

WHERE THIS COMES FROM

The method Relay implements is the one popularised as *Getting Things Done*, or GTD®. It is David Allen's approach to work-life management, set out in his book of the same name.¹ Relay is an independent implementation of that way of working (see the note on page ii), and this chapter is our own plain-language summary of it. If it earns its keep for you, read the book. It is the source, and it goes far deeper than an app guide can.

THE FIVE MOVES

Everything the method asks of you is one of five moves. Relay dedicates part of the app to each, and the mapping is on the next page.

CAPTURE	Get every commitment, idea and loose end out of your head and into one collection point the moment it shows up. Don't sort it, don't judge it, don't polish the wording. Just get it in.
CLARIFY	Take each captured item, one at a time, and decide what it actually is: Does it need action? What's the very next physical step? Is that step yours, and does it have a date attached?
ORGANIZE	Park the clarified result where you'll meet it at the right moment, grouped by the tool, place or person the step needs, and surfaced on the day it becomes relevant.
REFLECT	Sweep the edges daily and walk the whole system weekly, so every list stays true. This is the move that makes the other four trustworthy, and the one most people skip.
ENGAGE	Choose your next piece of work from a short, honest menu, then do it with full attention, confident that nothing you're ignoring is secretly on fire.

¹ *Getting Things Done: The Art of Stress-Free Productivity*, David Allen (Penguin). GTD® and Getting Things Done® are registered trademarks of the David Allen Company; Relay is not affiliated with or endorsed by it.

THE FIVE MOVES, IN RELAY

In most tools you have to improvise each move out of generic features. In Relay each move has a home of its own:

Move → Where it lives	
Capture	The Inbox , fed from everywhere: the quick-add button, the n key, a private email address, your phone's share sheet, home-screen widgets, even a watched folder on Windows.
Clarify	The Process wizard. One item at a time, one question at a time, the same questions you'll find on the map on the next page.
Organize	Automatic. Your answers <i>are</i> the filing: name a context and the item joins Next Actions ; name a person and it lands in Waiting For or Agenda ; give it a date and it waits in Scheduled .
Reflect	The Reflect tab. A guided five-step Daily Review and a guided twelve-step Weekly Review, with your trigger lists for head-sweeps.
Engage	The Engage screen. Today's calendar, today's shortlist, and your next actions filtered to fit the time and energy you actually have.

THREE LAYERS, IN ORDER

People who make this stick tend to build it in the same order:

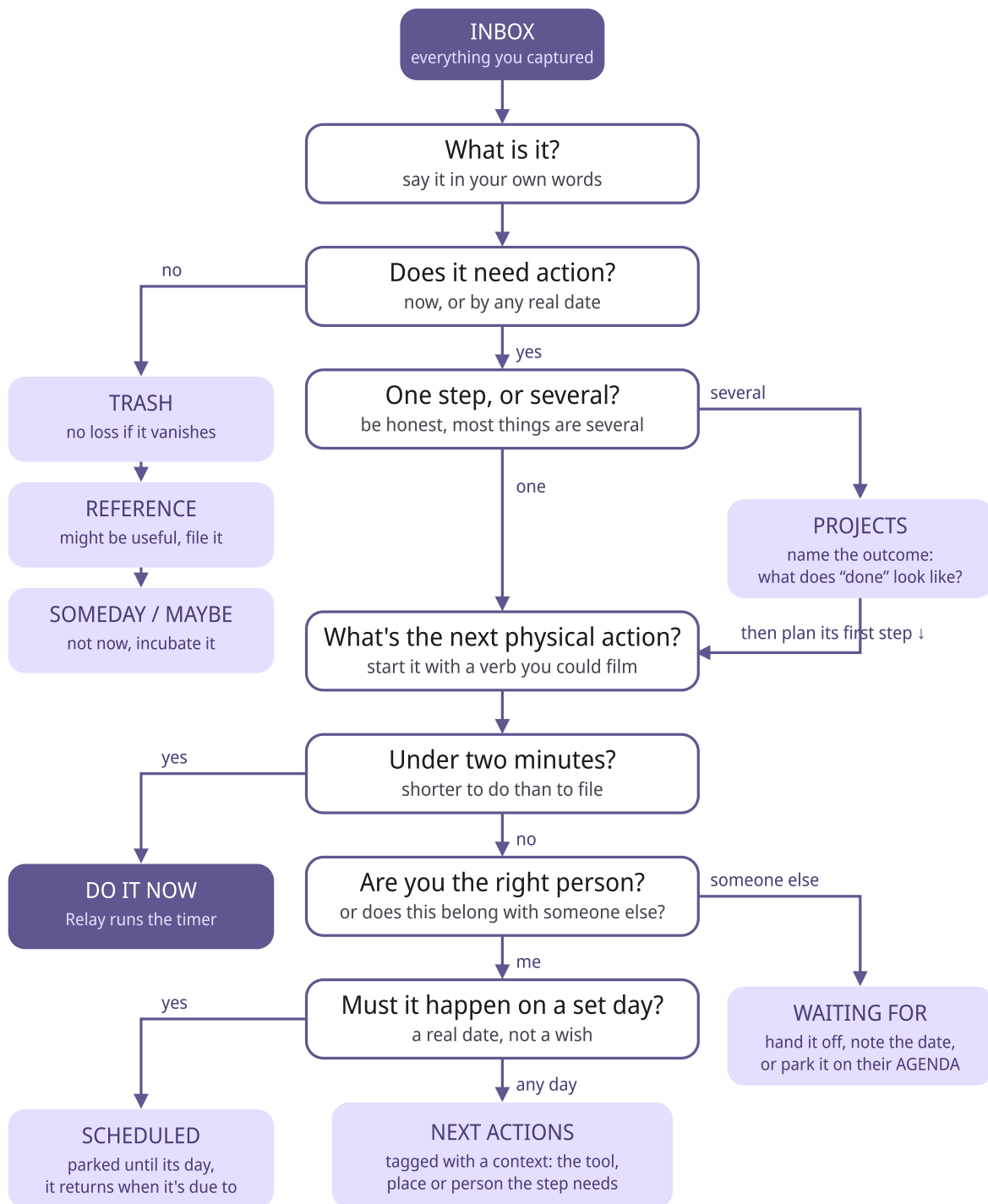
- 1 • Understand the moves.** Know a project from a next action, and know the clarifying questions well enough to hear them in your own voice. That's Part One of this guide, and you're nearly done with it.
- 2 • Stand the system up.** Get capture within arm's reach everywhere, empty your head into the Inbox once, and process it. In Relay this is an afternoon, not a weekend: Part Two walks the lists, Part Three walks the toolkit.
- 3 • Run the loops.** The daily and weekly rhythms that keep the system breathing. This layer is the one that changes how your weeks feel, and it's pure habit, so Relay reminds you, times you, and makes each pass as short as it can honestly be.

WORTH SAYING TWICE

Skipping layer one doesn't save time. If the moves aren't clear, the lists turn into drawers you're afraid to open. Twenty minutes with Part One is the cheapest productivity upgrade you will ever buy.

THE CLARIFY MAP

Every item that enters your Inbox leaves through this map. It looks like a lot of decisions; out loud it's about ten seconds per item. Relay's Process wizard asks you exactly these questions, in exactly this order, so you never have to remember the map, only answer it.



READ THE MAP OUT LOUD

"What is it? Does it need action? One step or several? What's the very next physical action? Under two minutes, do it now. Someone else's, hand it off and track it. A set day, schedule it. Otherwise, park it on Next Actions, tagged by context."

THE WEEKLY REVIEW

Any system drifts. Actions get done and never ticked, projects stall silently, and the moment you sense the drift you stop trusting the lists. Once you stop trusting them, you stop using them. The Weekly Review is the maintenance pass that resets everything to true, once a week, in under an hour. No other habit in this guide pays back as much.

Below is the full checklist in three passes. You don't need to memorise it: **Reflect** → **Weekly Review** walks you through every step in order, shows you only what each step needs, and times the whole thing (page 27).

PASS ONE · SWEEP IN

- ☐ **Gather the strays**
Loose notes, screenshots, open tabs, receipts, the sticky note on the monitor. Capture each one into the Inbox.
- ☐ **Run a head sweep**
Walk a trigger list and let it shake loose the commitments you're holding in your head. Capture everything it surfaces.
- ☐ **Process the Inbox to zero**
Every item through the clarify map. Zero means decided, not done.

PASS TWO · BRING IT CURRENT

- ☐ **Next Actions**
Tick off what actually got done. Delete what's dead. Reword anything that's gone vague.
- ☐ **Calendar, backward**
Scan last week: anything you promised, owe, or need to follow up from those meetings?
- ☐ **Calendar, forward**
Scan the coming weeks: what needs preparing before it arrives?

- ☐ **Waiting For**
Nudge, thank, or escalate. Tick off what arrived.
- ☐ **Projects, one by one**
The heart of the review. Does every active project have at least one concrete next action? If not, decide one now.
- ☐ **Reference**
File the week's accumulation so it stops posing as work.

PASS THREE · LOOK UP

- ☐ **Someday/Maybe**
Promote what's become real. Delete what no longer sparks anything.
- ☐ **Higher horizons**
Do this week's projects still serve your goals, and is anything big missing entirely?
- ☐ **Get creative**
Capture the ambitious, half-mad idea you've been sitting on. No commitment, because capture is free.
- ☐ **Final sweep**
Process whatever the review itself shook loose. Leave the Inbox at zero.

BOOK THE HOUR

Reviews that live only in good intentions don't happen. Relay will hold a recurring Weekly Review hour on your Google Calendar and remind you on the day. Turn both on in Settings and make the appointment with yourself.

PART TWO

RELAY, LIST BY LIST

Every list in the sidebar, what it's for, and why things move on their own.

A SYSTEM THAT'S ALREADY BUILT

Open Relay for the first time and the sidebar is already the whole method: **Inbox**, **Reflect** and **Engage** at the top for capture, review and doing. Then the working lists: **Next Actions**, **Scheduled**, **Waiting For**, **Agenda**, **Someday/Maybe**, then **Projects** and **Horizons**, then **Reference**. Housekeeping lives behind your avatar, out of the way: **Completed**, **Trash** and the Reference Archive. There is nothing to create and nothing to name.

YOUR ANSWERS ARE THE FILING

Here is the idea that makes Relay feel different from every empty-shell task app: **you never move an item into a list**. You answer questions about it, and the answers file it. The facts you record *are* the location:

If an item has...	...it lives in
nothing decided yet	Inbox
a context, and it's a single step	Next Actions
a date it should surface on	Scheduled
a person it's parked with	Waiting For or Agenda
a "not now" decision	Someday/Maybe
more than one step in it	Projects
no action in it at all, worth keeping	Reference

Change the facts and the item moves by itself. Delegate a task to Sam and it leaves Next Actions for Waiting For. Clear the someday flag on an idea whose time has come and it rejoins the working lists. You'll see this constantly in the Process wizard (page 21): the wizard never asks "which list?". It asks what's true, and the list follows.

WORKSPACES: ONE SYSTEM, FILTERED

A **Workspace** is a slice of your life, such as Work, Personal, Studies or a side business (up to five). Set one on each item, then filter the whole app to one workspace when you want work eyes only. Two things matter. Workspaces *filter*, they never *file*, and you should still run **one** system. Same Inbox, same reviews, same trust. Create yours in **Settings** → **Workspaces**.

TEN MINUTES OF SETUP: CONTEXTS, CONTACTS, ENERGY

Relay ships its lists ready-made, but three small vocabularies are yours to define, because they describe *your* life. All three live in **Settings** → **Workspaces** and **Settings** → **Contexts & contacts**.

CONTEXTS: WHERE A STEP CAN HAPPEN

A context names what a step needs before you can do it: a place, a tool, or a state. When you're choosing work, context is the first gate. A list of phone calls is useless on a train with no signal, and errands are invisible from your desk. Relay asks for a context whenever you file a next action, and the Engage screen can filter to only what's doable where you are.

Start small. You can add more the first time reality demands one:

A starter set of contexts	
@computer	Needs a keyboard and focus: writing, code, spreadsheets, admin.
@phone	Calls to make. Put the number in the title so nothing blocks dialling.
@home	Only possible at home: repairs, paperwork drawers, the loft.
@office	Needs the workplace: equipment, files, or the people there.
@errands	Out-and-about tasks. Batch them and clear three in one loop.
@anywhere	Thinking, reading, short writing. Doable in any seat in the world.

Old-school setups needed a dozen context lists because contexts were the *only* axis. Relay also records energy and duration, so keep contexts few and physical and let the filters do the rest.

CONTACTS: WHO THINGS ARE PARKED WITH

Contacts power the two people-lists: delegate a task to a contact and it tracks on **Waiting For**; park a topic for your next conversation with them and it waits on **Agenda**. Add the handful of people you delegate to and meet with, such as your manager, your reports and your partner. Not your address book.

ENERGY AND DURATION: HOW HEAVY, HOW LONG

Each action can carry an energy level (**High / Medium / Low**) and a duration estimate (five minutes to all day). They cost one tap at clarify time and pay out every time you have twenty flat minutes before a meeting and want something Low-energy that fits exactly (page 23).

INBOX

The Inbox is the one place everything lands before you've decided what it is. Its whole design goal is to make capture cost nothing, so your head learns it can let go.

Everything feeds it: the quick-add button and the **n** key, the private email address, your phone's share sheet, home-screen widgets, files dropped onto the window, imported tasks from connected tools. (The full toolkit is on pages 18–20.) Items sit here *unclarified*. The red badge on the Inbox is the only badge Relay shows everywhere, because it's the only number that should ever pressure you.

THE TWO RULES OF THE INBOX

Rule one: in, always. If it has any grip on your attention, capture it. Wording doesn't matter; “tyres??” is a fine capture. You are not committing to anything. Capture and commitment are different moves, which is exactly why capture can be reflexive.

Rule two: out, regularly. The Inbox is a lobby, not a lounge. Items leave through the Process wizard (page 21), one at a time, decided and filed. Empty means decided, not done. Most people process once or twice a day; Relay can remind you up to five times daily (and skip the reminder when the Inbox is already empty).

SNOOZE, FOR THINGS THAT CAN'T BE DECIDED YET

Sometimes an item genuinely can't be clarified today. The venue hasn't replied, the results aren't out. **Snooze** it (This afternoon · This evening · Tomorrow · This weekend · Next week · or pick a date) and it steps out of view, returning to the Inbox when the time comes. Snooze exists only in the Inbox, and that's deliberate: it postpones a *decision*. Once something is clarified, postponing is what Scheduled is for.

DO THIS NOW

Your first real session with Relay should be a full head-empty: thirty to sixty minutes capturing everything on your mind into the Inbox. Work, home, the car noise, the friend you owe a call. Aim past fifty items. Then process the lot. The quiet that follows is the product working.

NEXT ACTIONS

The working heart of the system: every single-step action you could take as soon as you're in the right place with the right tool. It is the honest menu of what's actually next, rather than today's plan or a wish list.

WRITE ACTIONS YOU COULD FILM

A next action is *physical and visible*, something a camera could record you doing. “Sort out insurance” isn't; “Call Aviva about the renewal quote” is. The moment of filing is when you do this thinking, once, so that the moment of doing needs none. Start with a verb. If you catch a vague item on this list during a review, reword it or send it back through the clarify map.

Next Actions	examples
☐ Email Priya the draft budget for comments @computer Medium · 15m	
☐ Buy a 13mm spanner @errands Low · 10m	
☐ Sketch the talk outline on paper @anywhere High · 45m · ↳ Conference talk	

FILED BY CONTEXT, FILTERED BY REALITY

Every next action carries its context, and most carry energy and a duration. The list can group by context, project, energy or workspace (List options → Group), and the same filters power the Engage screen's “what fits right now” view. This is why Relay doesn't need a dozen separate context lists: one list, many honest cuts.

THREE THINGS THIS LIST IS NOT

A daily plan lives elsewhere: pinning and the Daily Review build that (pages 24–25). “Eventually” belongs on Someday/Maybe. Multi-step outcomes belong in Projects, each feeding its *current* step back here. If this list stops feeling true, the Weekly Review resets it, and that's the deal that lets it stay short.

On size. A healthy Next Actions list for a busy life runs to dozens of items across all contexts. That's fine, because you'll only ever look at it through a filter. Long and true beats short and censored.

SCHEDULED

The tickler file: things you've decided about that shouldn't be visible until a particular day. Park them here and they come back to you exactly when they become relevant, and haunt you not one day sooner.

Renew the passport in March. Chase the invoice on Friday if it hasn't arrived. Start the holiday packing list on the 12th. None of these belong on Next Actions today. Seeing them every day just teaches you to skim past things, which is how trust dies. Give them a **scheduled date** and they wait here, out of sight, until their day, when they surface in that morning's Soft Landscape and Daily Review.

SCHEDULED IS NOT DUE: RELAY KEEPS TWO DATES

This distinction does more work than any other in the app:

SCHEDULED

A plan you made with yourself: "show me this on that day." Move it freely, because it's your plan. A scheduled date files the item into this list.

DUE

A promise with consequences in the outside world: the filing deadline, the contract date. Relay surfaces approaching deadlines in Engage and the Daily Review, but a due date never files anything. An item can be due Friday and still be doable today.

Keep due dates honest. The fastest way to wreck a system is decorating tasks with fake deadlines "for motivation". Within a fortnight you can't tell a real Friday from a nervous one, and you'll start ignoring both. If it merely *should* happen soon, that's what reviews and pins are for.

REPEATING ITEMS

Anything rhythmic takes a repeat rule: water the plants, run payroll, change the smoke-alarm battery ("every Tuesday", "first Monday of the month", "every 90 days after completion"). Completing one occurrence files the next automatically. If a monthly item lands on a weekend, Relay can slide it to the previous or next weekday, set per item.

LITMUS TEST

Before giving anything a date, ask: "what actually happens on this day?" If the answer is "it becomes relevant", schedule it. If the answer is "someone is let down", it's due. If the answer is "nothing, really", give it no date. The empty answer is the most common one.

WAITING FOR

Everything that's in motion but in someone else's hands: the quote you requested, the parcel in transit, the decision your boss owes you. It stays off your action lists, because it isn't your action, but never out of your sight.

Most people track other people's promises in the worst possible place: low-grade background anxiety. The Waiting For list replaces that with a ledger. When you delegate during processing, by answering “No, someone else” to “*Are you the right person?*”, Relay asks who, stamps the **delegated-on** date, and files the item here against that contact. The date does the real work: “waiting since the 14th” turns a vague itch into an obvious follow-up.

Waiting For	examples
☐ Landlord: boiler service booking Waiting on Dave delegated 28 Jul	
☐ Contract redlines back from legal Waiting on Priya delegated 1 Aug · due 8 Aug	
☐ Replacement card in the post Waiting on bank delegated 30 Jul	

WORKING THE LIST

Twice a week is plenty for most lives, and the Weekly Review walks it regardless. For each item: has it arrived? Tick it off (and thank someone). Gone quiet too long? The follow-up is a brand-new next action, “Chase Priya on the redlines, @phone”, which the clarify flow will create in seconds. Blocked forever? Escalate or let it go honestly.

DELEGATING WELL, IN ONE PARAGRAPH

A good handoff names the outcome, the deadline if one truly exists, and where to shout when it's done. Do that in the conversation or the email, then capture the tracking entry. The entry isn't the delegation; it's your memory of it. That's why Waiting For items keep their link to the project they serve, so a stalled handoff shows up the moment you review the project.

Contact view: group the list by contact (List options → Group → Contact) before a 1:1 and you have an instant “what am I waiting on from you” brief. It is the polite way to apply pressure.

AGENDA

Topics saved for the next time you're with a particular person: things to raise in Monday's 1:1, to ask your accountant, to remember for dinner with your dad. Captured the moment you think of them; spent the moment you're together.

The trigger “I must mention this to Sam” fires at the least useful times, never in the meeting itself. So park it: capture the thought, and in processing choose *Add to agenda* when the wizard asks who it belongs with. It files here under Sam. Walking into your next conversation, open Agenda, and there's your list, with no “there was something else...” trailing off into silence.

AGENDA VS WAITING FOR: THE DIRECTION OF THE ARROW

Both lists attach items to people, so keep the compass simple: **Waiting For** tracks what's already handed off, moving from them to you. **Agenda** holds what hasn't been said yet, moving from you to them. “Priya owes me the redlines” waits; “ask Priya about the offsite budget” is agenda. During processing, the same fork asks whether you're delegating it or raising it, one tap either way.

USING IT WELL

- **Keep entries one line each.** An agenda item is a conversation cue, not a briefing document. If it needs background, attach the link or file to the item.
- **Group by contact.** The Agenda screen's natural cut, turning each person into a ready-made meeting sheet. Scan it before the meeting starts.
- **Clear as you go.** Raised it? Tick it. Whatever the conversation produces, whether actions, handoffs or dates, goes straight into the Inbox for processing rather than into your memory.
- **Standing meetings count as people.** A team stand-up or a monthly board meeting can be a contact in its own right. Anything you'd raise there files against it.

If you don't run meetings all day: Agenda is still quietly excellent for the personal ones, such as the partner, the flatmate, or the friend you see monthly. It's also the politest list in the app, because the people you're with get your prepared best rather than your “hang on, what was it...”. If you truly never use it, hide it in **Settings** → **Reviews & prompts**.

SOMEDAY/MAYBE

Everything you might want, minus the guilt: the language you'd like to learn, the workshop you'd love to build, the trip, the book, the business. Real enough to keep; not committed enough to clutter your working lists.

This list solves a problem most systems die of: ideas you can't act on yet either get deleted (and lost) or sit on your action lists (and rot, teaching you to ignore the list). Someday/Maybe is the third way, a parking orbit. One commitment only: you'll glance at it in the Weekly Review and re-decide. That tiny promise is what makes capturing wild ideas free.

IN RELAY

Mark anything as someday, whether a task or a whole project, and that single fact files it here. Clear it and the item rejoins the working lists with everything intact. During processing, *Incubate* is the someday door; *Incubate until...* adds a date so the idea resurfaces on its own (ski season, next budget round) instead of relying on your review to catch it.

SECTIONS: THE ONE LIST YOU CAN SHAPE

Someday/Maybe is the only list with user-defined **sections**. A few broad bins beat a filing system: *Trips* · *Projects-in-waiting* · *To learn* · *To read & watch* · *Big swings*. Add sections as the list grows, not before. This is a treasure chest, and a little disorder is part of its charm.

THE WEEKLY TRIAGE

- **Promote** what's become real: clear the someday flag, name the outcome, and give it a next action before you leave the review.
- **Demote** without shame: an active project that's lost its moment moves here whole, plans and all, and stops draining your attention. This direction is a feature, not a failure.
- **Delete** freely: if an idea has read as "no" three reviews running, let it go. A shorter list makes the yeses louder.

CAPTURE THE AMBITIOUS ONES

Put at least one thing on this list that slightly scares you. Someday/Maybe is where the next season of your life auditions, so treat it as a greenhouse rather than a graveyard.

PROJECTS

A project is any outcome that takes more than one step: hire the designer, move house, ship the release, plan the wedding. The Projects list is your inventory of open commitments, and most people are carrying far more of them than they think.

The word matters because unnamed projects masquerade as tasks and jam the system. “Fix the garden fence” sits on a to-do list for a month, untouchable, because it's secretly five steps with a trip to the timber yard in the middle. The moment you call it a project, the paralysis dissolves into a first action. In Relay's Process wizard, answering “*It needs more than one action*” makes this conversion one tap.

NAME THE OUTCOME

Every Relay project has a **success outcome** field: one sentence describing what will be observably true when this is done. “Fence repaired and painted, tools back in the shed.” Writing it does two things. It defines *done*, so the project can actually end, and it drags the vague hope into a decidable shape. When a project stalls, re-reading its outcome is usually the restart button.

THE SCRATCHPAD: THINKING SPACE, NOT COMMITMENTS

Each project carries a **scratchpad**: free space for plans, notes, brainstorm, half-ideas, links to the real documents. Nothing in it is tracked, counted, or nagged about. It's the drawer where the thinking lives. Keep future maybe-steps here too; they only become real actions when you promote them during a review. Current commitments live as the project's child actions, never as prose.

CHILDREN: THE PROJECT'S MOVING PARTS

Open a project and its child items sit right inside it: next actions, waiting-fors, scheduled steps, reference material. The children file themselves into the global lists like everything else, so the same item is “under the project” and “on Next Actions at @computer” simultaneously. That's the trick that makes both views true at once: plan inside the project, work from the lists.

Checklists are for steps too small to file. Every item can carry a lightweight checklist (“pack: passport · chargers · gum shield”). If a checklist line needs its own context, date or owner, it isn't a checklist line. It's a child action.

KEEPING MANY PROJECTS HONEST

The Projects screen sorts itself into four bands, and the sorting is done *for* you, derived from the facts:

Project bands		derived, never set by hand
Active	Has at least one live task somewhere in it. Healthy.	
Stalled	No live task anywhere in its tree. The commitment exists; the momentum doesn't. The Weekly Review's Projects step exists to empty this band.	
Paused	You pressed pause on purpose. Its actions are withheld from your working lists until you resume. Deliberate hibernation, no noise.	
Someday	Flagged someday. An ambition, not yet a commitment (page 13).	

Stalled is the band to fear. A stalled project is invisible in daily life, because nothing surfaces on any action list, and that is precisely why it corrodes trust. Relay makes the band impossible to miss, and the fix is always the same one question: *what's the very next physical action?*

SEQUENTIAL OR PARALLEL

Some projects are chains: book the venue, *then* send invitations. Mark a project **sequential** and only its first open step shows on your lists; complete it and the next steps forward automatically. Parallel projects (the default) surface every open step at once. Chains keep your Next Actions list truthful, because step three of a sequence isn't actually *next*, so it shouldn't be on the menu yet.

SUB-PROJECTS, GENTLY

A project can hold sub-projects one level deep, such as "Move house" holding "Sell the flat" and "Find schools". Use it when a chunk has its own outcome and its own momentum. If you're nesting deeper than that, you're building an org chart, not a plan; flatten it and let Horizons (next page) carry the bigger picture.

THE AUDIT

When a project won't move and you can't see why, **Audit project** asks Relay's AI to look at the whole thing, outcome and children and scratchpad, then point at what's missing or muddled. Like every AI touch in Relay it's pull-only: nothing is read or sent until you press the button, and its suggestions stay suggestions rather than edits.

HORIZONS

Lists answer “what should I do?”. Horizons answers “why am I doing any of this?”, with a ladder from today's actions up to the life you're actually trying to build.

The ladder has four rungs above your projects. **Areas of Focus** (H2) are the roles you maintain rather than finish: parent, engineer, health, money. Above them, **Goals & Objectives** (H3), the one-to-two-year outcomes. Then **Vision** (H4), the three-to-five-year picture, and **Purpose & Principles** (H5), the why behind all of it. Higher rungs deliberately have no done-state: you don't complete “health”.

Link projects upward and the ladder becomes load-bearing. Every project can point at the goal or area it serves; anything pointing nowhere is flagged **unaligned**. An unaligned project isn't wrong, but it should be able to explain itself. If it can't, it's a candidate for Someday/Maybe or an honest delete.

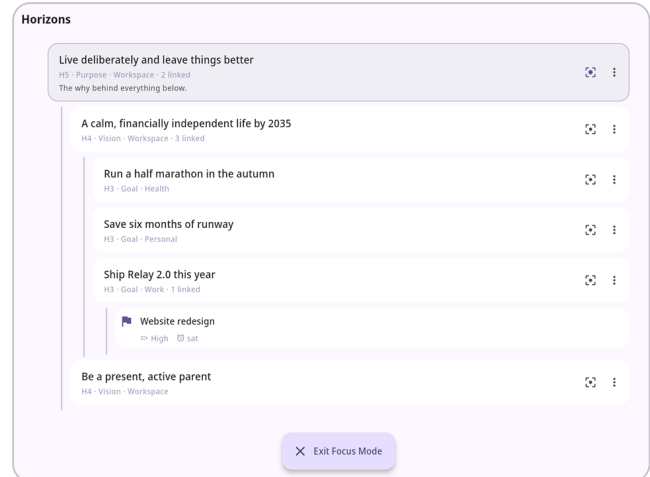
Focus Mode isolates one chain, being one purpose, the vision under it, its goals and their projects, and hides everything else. Use it when the whole pyramid is too loud and you want to see a single thread of your life end to end.

HOW OFTEN TO LOOK UP

Projects and actions: weekly, in the review. The ladder itself: the Weekly Review's *Higher Horizons* step offers a glance, while a proper climb, asking whether these are still the right goals, earns an hour once a quarter. Altitude work is compound interest. It is rare, slow, and quietly the reason the daily system points somewhere.

START WITH TWO RUNGS

Don't write a life philosophy this week. List your six-or-so Areas of Focus, add the two or three Goals you already know are true, and link your active projects to them. The upper rungs can stay empty until they have something honest to say.



HORIZONS The ladder, top down: a purpose, the visions it implies, the goals underneath, and a real project linked where it belongs.

REFERENCE

Everything worth keeping that asks nothing of you: the warranty PDF, the wifi password, the article that changed your mind, the map of the campsite. There is no action in it, so it must never sit on an action list, pretending.

Half of what a head-empty produces is reference wearing a task costume. During processing, the answer *Reference* files it here, where it stops nagging and starts being findable. A reference item can be a note, an uploaded file (Relay stores it, up to 100 MB a file and 5 GB in all), or a link to where the real thing lives.

FILING THAT A TIRED BRAIN CAN RUN

Relay's reference filing is deliberately old-fashioned: **a letter of the alphabet**. File the boiler manual under B, or H for house, since yours is the only vote, and an A–Z rail jumps straight to it. No folder trees to design, no taxonomy to maintain, no “where does this *really* belong”. One letter, filed, done. Unlettered items sit in **General** until you care.

THREE SHELVES

GENERAL	Standalone keepers, A–Z. The manuals-and-passwords shelf.
PROJECT SUPPORT	Material attached to a project, such as the venue shortlist or the research doc. Lives with its project while the project runs, and survives it afterwards.
ACTION SUPPORT	Attached to a single action: the form to fill in, the address to visit. Travels with the step that needs it.

When a reference stops earning its shelf, **archive** it. The Reference Archive (behind your avatar) keeps it searchable without cluttering the working shelves. And search () covers titles and notes across everything, so even a lazily-filed reference is two keystrokes away.

Relay is a filing cabinet, not a wiki. If you write long interlinked notes daily, keep your dedicated notes app and store *links* to it in Relay. The rule that matters: actionable things live in Relay, and Relay knows where the rest lives.

PART THREE

WORKING THE SYSTEM

Capture from anywhere, process with the wizard, engage from what's in front of you, reflect on a rhythm.

CAPTURE: WITHIN ARM'S REACH, ALWAYS

Capture only works as a reflex, and reflexes die of friction. If saving a thought means finding the app, opening it, and waiting, your brain quietly goes back to holding things. So Relay puts a capture door on every surface you live on. The test is simple: *thought to captured in under five seconds, from wherever you are.*

IN THE APP: QUICK ADD

The + button floats on nearly every screen; on a keyboard, **n** opens it from anywhere. Type the thought, press Enter, and it's gone straight to the Inbox, ready for processing later. That's the whole move, and most captures should be exactly that thin.

When you already know more, quick add takes it in the same pass: a workspace, a context, a date, a duration, an energy level, a description. Filled-in facts do their usual filing work, so a task captured with a context skips the Inbox entirely and lands on Next Actions, already clarified. Quick add is also polite about place: open it on the Projects screen and it offers to create a project; on Reference, a reference.

FROM YOUR EMAIL: THE PRIVATE ADDRESS

Relay gives you a private capture address, **you@in.relaygtd.com** (Settings → Integrations). Forward anything to it and it appears in your Inbox, attachments included, usually within moments. This one habit turns the email chapter of this guide (page 30) from theory into a two-key reflex: actionable mail gets forwarded, then archived.

Keep the address private. Anyone who has it can feed your Inbox. If it ever leaks, or you just get a bad feeling, press **Rotate** and the old address dies instantly. Update the forwarding rule you'll inevitably have created.

FROM ANYTHING ON YOUR PHONE: SHARE TO RELAY

Take the webpage that triggered an idea, the photo of the poster, the PDF someone messaged you, and share it to Relay as you'd share it to a person. Links keep their page title; files upload to your Relay storage. A quiet "Captured to Inbox" confirms it, with an Undo if your thumb slipped. The thought is saved and your phone never left the app you were in.

CAPTURE ON THE DESKTOP

THE GLOBAL HOTKEY (WINDOWS APP)

Ctrl + **Alt** + **N**, from any application, mid-anything: a small capture window appears over whatever you're doing, takes the sentence, and vanishes. The email you were writing is still focused. This is capture at the speed of intrusive thought, and the single best reason to run the desktop app. If you use Relay in a browser on Windows, the app will show you a one-time tip that sets up a system shortcut doing much the same.

DROP A FILE ON THE WINDOW

Drag any file onto Relay, in the browser or the desktop app, on any screen, and it captures to the Inbox with the file attached. The screenshot of the error, the menu PDF, the scan of the letter: drop, done, decide later.

THE WATCH FOLDER (WINDOWS APP)

Pick a folder in **Settings** → **Desktop** and anything saved into it lands in your Inbox within seconds. Point your scanner at it, or make it the “Relay” folder on your desktop that other apps export into. It's capture for software that has never heard of Relay.

CAPTURE WITHOUT OPENING ANYTHING (ANDROID)

Three home-screen widgets keep the doors open (see them on the next page):

- **New task**, a single + button. Tap it and a capture sheet floats over your home screen with the keyboard already up; type, enter, done. The app never visibly opens.
- **Relay list**, any list you choose, live on the home screen, with one-tap complete. Most people put Next Actions or the day's shortlist there; the header switches lists on the spot.
- **Process inbox**, one button, straight into the processing wizard. A queue-buster for the bus stop: two captures processed while the kettle boils.

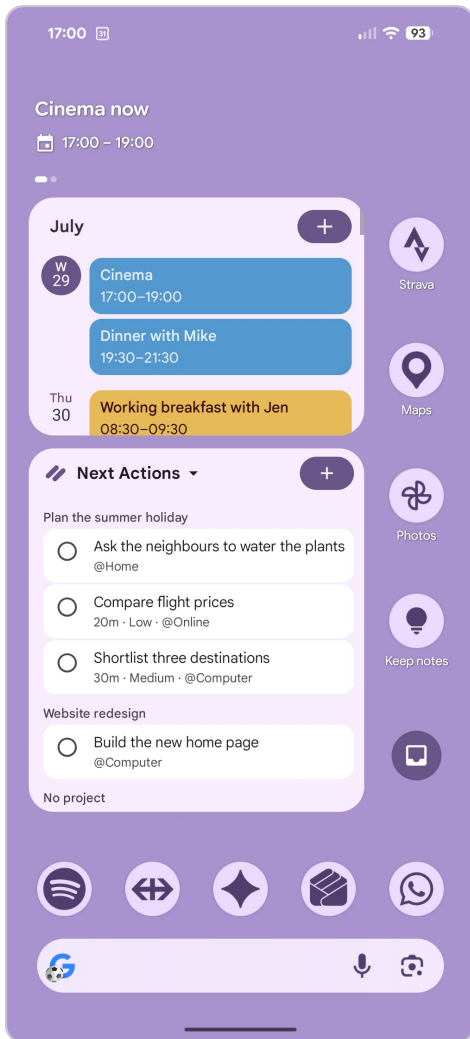
ROADS THAT LEAD IN ANYWAY

Some capture happens without you. Connected tools (Google Tasks, Todoist, Notion and Linear, page 29) deliver their new items into your Inbox; every review step has a capture bar so mid-review thoughts don't derail the pass; and the PWA's app-icon shortcut jumps straight to a new task. However a thing arrives, it arrives in the same place. One Inbox, one habit, one processing pass.

THE FIVE-SECOND AUDIT

Tonight, time yourself: thought → captured, from your sofa, from your desk, from another app. Anywhere it takes longer than five seconds, install the door for that surface, whether a widget, a hotkey or a forwarding rule. Friction you remove once pays out hourly, forever.

THE SYSTEM ON YOUR HOME SCREEN



RELAY LIST WIDGET Next actions grouped by project, one-tap complete, quick-add in the corner, beside your calendar, which keeps the day's hard edges in view.

The home screen is where intention meets muscle memory, and the **Relay list** widget earns its space. Point it at the list you actually work from, whether Next Actions, the day's shortlist, or the Inbox if you're taming a backlog. Ticking the circle completes for real; the caret in the header swaps lists without opening the app; the + captures.

Every widget instance has its own settings for list, sort, grouping, text size and how much metadata to show, so a second copy of the widget can be a different tool entirely: one panel of @errands beside Maps, one Inbox panel on the last page as a nagging conscience.

On Android 12 and later the widgets take their colours from your wallpaper, like the rest of your home screen. They're patient, glanceable, and slightly smug. Your system stays visible *between* sessions, which is where most systems are quietly abandoned.

The two one-tap buttons, **New task** and **Process inbox**, are described on page 19. Together the three widgets close the loop: capture without opening the app, see the work without opening the app, and clear the Inbox in stolen moments.

Placement advice: put *New task* where your thumb already lives (dock row, if it fits). Put the list widget on the first page. Put *Process inbox* wherever you stare when bored, since its whole job is converting idle seconds into an empty Inbox.

PROCESS

Processing is where captured chaos becomes a trusted system, and it's the move most apps leave you to improvise. Relay builds it in: a full-screen wizard that takes the top item of your Inbox and asks you the clarify map, one question at a time.

Start it from the **Process** button on any Inbox row (that one item), from **Process inbox** in the list menu (the whole stack, oldest first), from the Android widget, or by letting the processing reminder walk you in. The wizard shows one item, one question, a handful of large answers. Decisions you've made burn down into a history line above the card, so a misclick is undone by clicking the history to rewind.

THE QUESTIONS, IN THE WIZARD'S OWN ORDER

WHAT IS IT?	A next action, a project, or reference. This first fork does the sorting that matters most. Reference asks only for a filing letter, or offers the bin.
IS IT ACTIONABLE?	If not: <i>Trash</i> it, or <i>Incubate</i> it to Someday/Maybe, with or without a date to resurface on.
UNDER TWO MINUTES?	Then filing it costs more than doing it. Choose <i>Less than 2 mins</i> and Relay starts a countdown. Do it right now, tick, next item. This little timer quietly clears a third of most inboxes.
WHAT'S THE VERY NEXT PHYSICAL ACTION?	Write the filmable step. If you catch yourself listing steps, take the escape hatch, " <i>More than one action? It's a project</i> ", and the wizard pivots to naming the project and its outcome instead.

Two more questions, who does it and when, are on the next page, along with what happens after the wizard files things.

TOP TO BOTTOM, NO SKIPPING

Process in order, one decision per item, no putting things back. The moment you start cherry-picking easy items, the hard ones fossilise at the bottom and the Inbox becomes a guilt pile with a scroll bar. The wizard's whole design, one item filling the screen, exists to make skipping impossible.

WHO, THEN WHEN, THEN HOW

ARE YOU THE RIGHT PERSON?

If someone else is, type their name, then choose *Delegate it* (tracks on Waiting For, stamped with today as the delegated-on date) or *Add to agenda* (waits for your next conversation). New names become contacts on the spot.

A SPECIFIC DAY?

Yes, schedule it parks it in the tickler for that date. *Any day works* sends it onward as a true next action.

HOW WILL YOU TACKLE IT?

Pick the context; add energy and a duration while your hand is there. Ten extra seconds now, and the item is fully filterable forever.

And that's a processed item. The history line reads something like *Next Actions: @home* or *Waiting For: Sam, delegated 3 Aug*, the item is filed where those facts say it lives, and the next Inbox item slides in. Rhythm, not paperwork. A practised pass runs well under a minute per item.

CHANGING YOUR MIND IS ONE EDIT

Nothing filed is final, because filing is just facts. If the call you parked at @phone turns out to need a decision from Dana first, delegate it to Dana and it becomes a Waiting For. If the errand grew teeth, convert it to a project. If the someday idea woke up, clear the flag. Open any item and change what's true; the lists rearrange themselves. There is no "move to list..." command in Relay, and by now you know why.

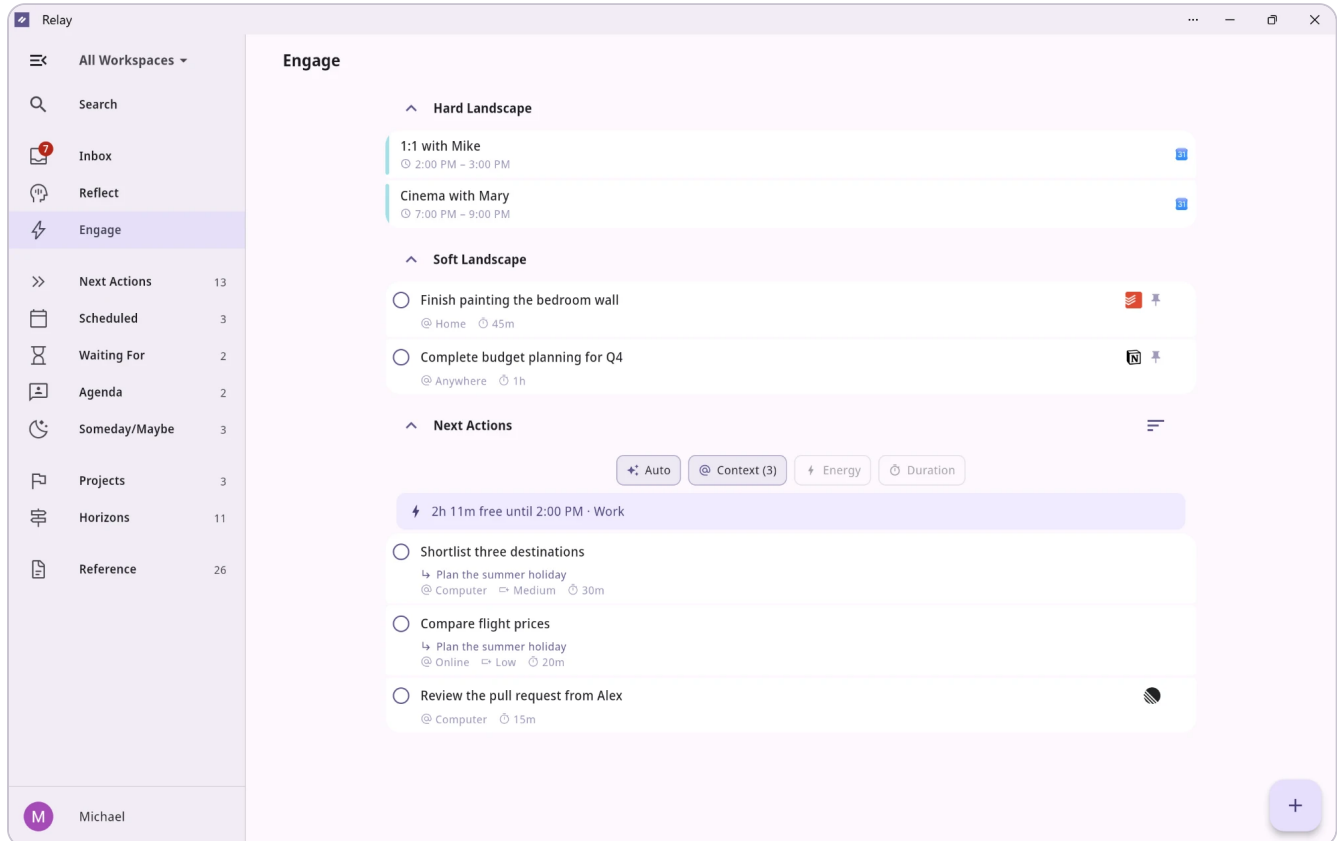
HOUSEKEEPING IN BULK

Long-press (or swipe) starts multi-select: complete, pin, snooze, mark someday, duplicate, or delete a whole sweep of items at once. Every list also has **List options** for sort, group, and what each row shows (descriptions, parents, metadata, source icons). Two sleepers worth knowing: **Print list...** gives any list a clean paper copy, and **Copy link to list** puts a deep link on your clipboard, so you can paste it in notes, docs, or a browser bookmark and land straight there.

When a wizard step stalls you, the free-text steps have an AI nudge (the bulb). Press it and Relay suggests a sharper next action or outcome from what it can see. Pull-only, as always, silent until asked, and it never edits for you. If the wording it offers isn't yours, ignore it; the system runs on your words.

ENGAGE

The doing screen. One glance answers the only question that matters at 2:47pm on a Tuesday: *given where I am, what I've promised, and what I've got left in the tank, what now?*



ENGAGE Top to bottom: the day's fixed points, the day's shortlist, then the filtered menu, with the free-time banner doing the arithmetic.

Three stacked sections, in priority order. The **Hard Landscape** is today's calendar, the appointments that aren't negotiable, pulled live from Google Calendar. The **Soft Landscape** is today's shortlist: what you pinned, plus anything scheduled for or due today. And **Next Actions** is the full menu, filtered to fit the moment.

FILTERS THAT TELL THE TRUTH

Chips across the top cut the list by **Context** (where you are), **Energy** (what you've got), and **Duration** (what fits). Or tap **Auto** and Relay reads the room. It sees the free gap before your next event and your working hours, the banner does the arithmetic ("2h 11m free until 2:00 PM"), and it shows only what genuinely fits the slot. The twenty-minute gap stops being scroll time and becomes the two twenty-minute actions it always contained.

WORKING THE SCREEN

Work the three sections top-down: be where the Hard Landscape says, clear the Soft Landscape next, and spend whatever's left from the filtered menu. Tick things off where they lie. If the shortlist is done by three o'clock, that isn't an error. It's the system handing you back a decision: pull something forward, or bank the win.

TRUST THE FILTER

When the filtered list shows four items, resist the urge to peek at everything. Four honest options beat forty theoretical ones. You already did the thinking at clarify time; engage is for spending it.

PINS: CHOOSING THE DAY'S FEW

A **pin** is you earmarking an item: *this one, today* (or tomorrow, or this week). Pinned items form the backbone of the Soft Landscape, and pins expire on their own. A today-pin doesn't follow you into Thursday as a reproach; the item just returns to its list, intact, for tomorrow's choosing.

Pins are a daily *choice*, not a status. Three to six pins is a strong day. If you pin twelve things, you haven't planned. You've written a wish list with extra steps, and the Soft Landscape stops meaning anything. The Daily Review (next page) is where pinning becomes deliberate: it shows you the day's real capacity while you choose.

THE REMINDER ARCHITECTURE

Relay's notifications are rhythm-keepers for the system, not per-task alarm clocks (your calendar already owns time-of-day alarms). Three, all in **Settings** → **Notifications**:

Reminders		all optional, all yours to time
Daily Review	Once a day, at your hour. Opens the five-step morning pass.	
Inbox processing	Up to five nudges a day, and it can stay silent when the Inbox is already empty, so when it does speak, it's telling the truth.	
Weekly Review	On your chosen end-of-week day, plus, if you let it, a standing one-hour block written into your Google Calendar.	

On the web, reminders appear as banners inside the app; on Android and Windows they're real system notifications. Tapping the processing nudge drops you straight into the wizard, which is the shortest distance between guilt and an empty Inbox yet devised.

ALARM HYGIENE

Every reminder you ignore trains you to ignore the next one. Set the processing nudge to the number you'll actually honour, because one honest nudge beats five background hums. You can always raise the dose during a chaotic season and lower it after.

THE DAILY REVIEW

Five steps, five-ish minutes, and the day stops being something that happens to you. Find it under **Reflect**, labelled “Prepare the decks for the day”, and let the reminder make it a fixture, morning or the evening before (it plans tomorrow just as happily).

1 • Inbox. A scan for anything urgent hiding in this morning's arrivals, and a commitment to when today's real processing pass happens.

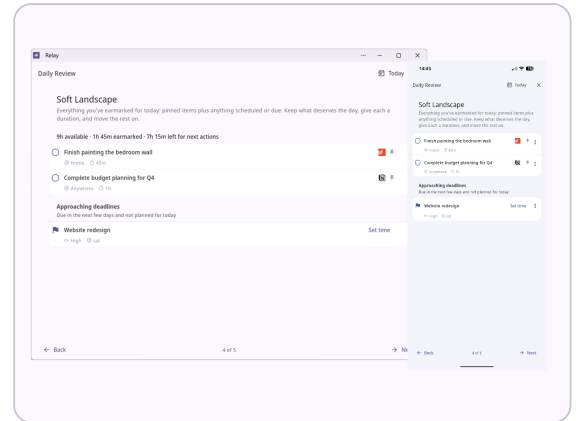
2 • Hard Landscape. Today's calendar, eyes-on. Meetings you'd forgotten spark captures now, not at 4:55pm.

3 • Working Time. Set the hours you'll actually work today, and which workspace owns each block. One tap for the usual day; adjust when today isn't usual. This is what makes the arithmetic honest.

4 • Soft Landscape. The day's candidates: everything pinned, scheduled, or due, with approaching deadlines shown before they're emergencies. Keep what deserves the day, give each survivor a duration, and push the rest onward with *Reschedule*, *Pin for tomorrow* or *Unpin*.

5 • Your Day. The ledger: hours available, hours in meetings, what's earmarked, and what's honestly left for next actions, with a shortlist that fits it. End with *Start your day*, which lands on Engage.

The output isn't a document. It's a day with a shape: fixed points known, a shortlist that fits the real hours, and a truthful answer to “what's left over”. People who run this pass stop discovering at noon that the day was already spoken for at nine.



DAILY REVIEW • SOFT LANDSCAPE The day's earmarked items, their durations, and the deadline radar, the same step on desktop and phone.

THE WEEKLY REVIEW, GUIDED

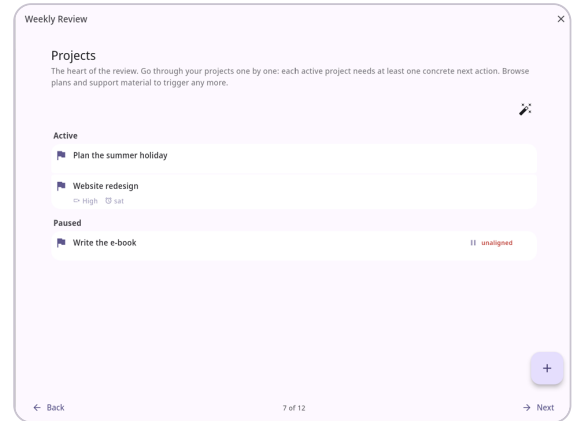
Page 5 gave you the checklist; Relay gives you the checklist as a machine. **Reflect** → **Weekly Review** runs twelve steps, each showing exactly the list that step needs. Nothing to remember, nowhere to wander off to.

The twelve, in order: **Clear Your Head** (a mind sweep against your trigger lists, optional, never skip it twice) · **Inbox** to zero · **Next Actions** pruned · **Last Week's** calendar, mined for loose ends · **Upcoming**, mined for prep · **Waiting For** chased · **Projects**, one by one · **Higher Horizons**, a glance up (optional) · **Reference** filed · **Someday/Maybe** triaged · **Get Creative**, one ambitious capture · **Final Sweep**, processing whatever the review itself stirred up.

The calendar steps show your real Google Calendar weeks inline, last week and next, because the calendar is where commitments hide from list-keepers.

Projects is the heart (right): every active project leaves the step with at least one concrete next action, which is the precise mechanism by which nothing falls through cracks. Stalled projects surface here with nowhere to hide.

Life interrupts reviews, so Relay expects it: **Pause** keeps your place, your snapshot, and your elapsed time for later; **End** abandons honestly. Finish properly and the completion page logs your time against your average and median. Most people land near the half-hour once the rhythm sets in, and watching the number fall is its own small reward.



WEEKLY REVIEW · PROJECTS Step seven of twelve. Each active project answers the same question: what's its next concrete action?

SAME CHAIR, SAME HOUR

Reviews survive on ritual, not enthusiasm. Friday closing the work week, or Sunday opening the new one, are the classic slots. Pick one, let Relay hold the calendar block, and defend it like a meeting with someone important. It is one.

THE MIND SWEEP

Your head releases what it holds only when prompted, because nobody remembers all their commitments by trying harder. A trigger list is the prompt: a scroll of cue words that walks your whole life past your attention and shakes the strays loose.

In Relay the sweep is the **Focal Roll**: one unbroken scroll of prompts with a capture bar underneath. A cue floats past (*car · warranty · in-laws · conference · dentist*), something twinges, you type it, and keep rolling. No judging, no sorting; that's processing's job, later. A first full sweep with a good list reliably produces dozens of captures, many of which have been renting space in your head for months.

THE LISTS YOU SWEEP AGAINST

Relay ships two starter trigger lists, one for your personal orbit (house, money, health, people, fun) and one for the professional one (projects, promises, communications, admin, events). Both are fully editable: reword the prompts into your own vocabulary, and *Reset to Default* undoes any regret. Better still, build your own with the prompts that actually catch *your* strays ("the allotment", "Mum's birthday", "the vending-machine guy"). Starting a new list from nothing, the AI drafter can lay down a first draft for the life you describe; keep the prompts that ring true, delete the rest.

WHEN TO SWEEP

- **Weekly, briefly.** It's step one of the Weekly Review, and five minutes is plenty once the backlog's gone.
- **Once, thoroughly.** Your first week with Relay deserves the full half-hour version against both lists (page 8's "Do this now").
- **Whenever the fog rolls in.** That scattered, everything's-slipping feeling is usually just uncaptured commitments. A ten-minute sweep from **Reflect** → **Trigger lists** is the fastest known cure.

Write prompts, not tasks. A good trigger is a noun with gravity, such as "passport", "the loft" or "Q4", rather than an instruction. The prompt's job is to make your brain do the remembering; the capture bar catches what falls out.

COMPLETING, AND WHAT STAYS BEHIND

Tick the circle and an item moves to **Completed**, leaving your attention but not your history. Completed items stay searchable forever, which pays off twice: instant answers to “did we already handle this?”, and a surprisingly good mood on the day you scroll a year of finished projects. Recurring items are the one exception to “done is done”, because completing one occurrence simply files the next.

Trash is for the never-minds. Anything deleted waits there thirty days, restorable in one tap, then purges itself. Empty it early if clutter offends you; ignore it forever if not. Either way, deletion in Relay is calm: nothing vanishes by accident, and nothing lingers by default.

SEARCH: TWO KEYSTROKES TO ANYTHING

Press  (or the rail's Search) and type. Search runs across every item, covering titles and notes, active and done, tasks and projects and references alike, with chips to narrow by type. It's the guide's answer to “where did I file that?”, because retrieval doesn't depend on remembering the filing.

THE KEYBOARD, FOR PEOPLE WHO LIVE THERE

Anywhere in the app	Jump to a list
 New task, capturing without touching the mouse	 Inbox · Engage
 Search	 Next Actions · Scheduled
 Show this list: every shortcut, in-app	 Waiting For · Projects
	 Reference · Horizons

Plus  +  +  system-wide on the Windows app (page 19). Shortcuts pause automatically while you're typing in a field.

YOUR DATA, PORTABLE

Under **Account**, export everything as JSON whenever you like: items, structure, and links to your stored files. It's your system; Relay just runs it.

CONNECTED TOOLS

Work arrives in other people's systems: the ticket in Linear, the row in Notion, the task someone assigned in Todoist. Relay's integrations exist for one reason: so those commitments enter *your* one system instead of forming satellite to-do lists you have to remember to check.

Everything connects in **Settings** → **Integrations**, and every import obeys the house rule: new items land in the **Inbox**, unclarified, exactly like a thought you captured yourself. An imported ticket still gets the same questions. Is it actionable, what's the next physical step, when? A row badge shows where an item came from, and completion flows back:

What connects, and how it behaves	
Google Calendar	Read, not written: powers the Hard Landscape, the free-time arithmetic, and the review's week views. The one exception: Relay can write your standing Weekly Review block. You choose which calendars feed in.
Google Tasks	A chosen list imports to the Inbox; completing in Relay completes at the source. Relay never creates tasks over there, so traffic flows toward your system.
Todoist	Two-way on the items it brings across: titles, notes, dates, completion. Handy as a bridge while you migrate, or a permanent feed from shared family lists.
Notion	Point it at a database and map the columns once, saying which property is the date, which is status, which is the deadline. Rows flow in; state flows back.
Linear	Your assigned issues arrive as they're assigned; completing the work in either place settles it in both.

The quiet payoff is psychological: once every channel drains into one Inbox, "I should check X in case something's waiting there" stops being a background thread. Checking Relay *is* checking everywhere.

Two-way, with a seatbelt: sync writes back state (done, renamed, re-dated) on items that came *from* a connected tool. Relay doesn't spray your private system into other software, and a deletion over there never deletes here beyond the Trash. Your system stays yours.

PART FOUR

EMAIL

The other inbox, and how to stop living in it.

Email is where other people's priorities arrive dressed as yours. The failure mode is familiar: the inbox becomes a to-do list, so nothing can be archived, so it grows, so every glance means re-reading forty decisions you've already half-made. The cure isn't answering faster. It's separating the *mail* from the *commitment*, because the message is only packaging.

EMPTY REGULARLY, WHERE "EMPTY" MEANS DECIDED

Getting the mail inbox to zero doesn't mean replied-to-everything; it means every message has been through the same questions as any capture. Newsletter? Bin or read-later. Purely informational? File it. Two-minute reply? Send it now. A real commitment? **Forward it to your Relay address, then archive it.** The commitment now lives in the system that gets reviewed; the message rests in the archive, findable by search whenever the action needs it.

The email pass, message by message	
Nothing in it	Archive or delete. Unsubscribe while you're there; future you says thanks.
Worth keeping	Reference. Your mail archive is a fine filing cabinet, or forward the keeper to Relay and file it under its letter.
Two minutes	Reply now. Handled in less time than filing would take.
A real action	Forward to you@in.relaygtd.com → archive the mail → clarify in Relay at the next processing pass.
Someone else's action	Send the handoff email, then forward yourself the tracking stub. It clarifies into Waiting For, stamped with today.

PRACTICAL TRIMMINGS

- **Retitle as you forward.** The subject becomes the item's title, so change "RE: RE: FW: Q3 numbers" into "Send Marta the corrected Q3 figures" while it's in front of you. That's the clarify step, half done.
- **Make a forwarding shortcut.** Add your Relay address to your mail contacts as "Relay". Two keystrokes and the commitment has left the building.
- **Batch, don't graze.** Two or three email passes a day beat forty glances. Between passes, the mail app can be closed, because Relay is holding everything that matters.

ONE SYSTEM, NOT TWO

The moment actions live in both your mail inbox and Relay, you're back to auditing two lists with one brain. Be strict: mail is where messages live; Relay is where commitments live. The forward button is the border crossing.

PART FIVE

CALENDAR

Sacred ground: only the things that are truly nailed to time.

Relay doesn't replace your calendar. It partners with it and respects the border. The calendar holds the **Hard Landscape**: commitments physically attached to a date or an hour. Everything movable stays on your lists, where it can flow around the fixed points. Guard that border, because a calendar padded with wishes goes the way of all padded lists. It gets ignored.

ONLY THREE THINGS BELONG ON A CALENDAR

FIXED-TIME COMMITMENTS	Meetings, appointments, the train, focus blocks you've genuinely promised yourself. Things with a start time someone is counting on, even if that someone is future-you.
FIXED-DAY COMMITMENTS	Must happen <i>on</i> that day, any hour: submit the return, collect the keys, call before the office closes.
DAY-ANCHORED INFORMATION	Things to know that day, not do: school closed, Priya travelling, the road outside being resurfaced at 7am.

Everything else belongs in Relay as a scheduled item, a pin, or a plain next action: "gym?", "start the deck", "sometime this week". If a calendar block would be harmless to drag to Thursday, it wasn't a calendar item.

HOW RELAY LEANS ON IT

Connect Google Calendar and the fixed points flow into everything: the Hard Landscape tops the Engage screen, the free-gap arithmetic knows when your next meeting is, the Daily Review shows the day's shape before you choose its shortlist, and the Weekly Review pages through last week and next inline, the two most under-mined seams of loose ends. Relay reads; the one thing it ever writes, with permission, is your standing Weekly Review block.

THE DAILY GLANCE, THE WEEKLY MINE

Daily: see the fixed points before choosing the day's work, which the Daily Review builds in. Weekly: mine the calendar in both directions. Looking backward, for each meeting attended, was any promise made or any follow-up owed? Looking forward, does each upcoming event silently assume some prep? Those two questions catch the commitments that never announce themselves as tasks.

PART SIX

REFERENCE, IN PRACTICE

The keep-pile that makes the do-pile lighter.

Page 17 covered the mechanics of letters, shelves, files and links. This page is about appetite: what's worth keeping at all, and the small habits that keep the cabinet a pleasure instead of a landfill.

KEEP IT IF IT ANSWERS A FUTURE QUESTION

Good reference has a retrieval scenario: *when X happens, I'll want this*. The boiler's error-code page (when it blinks again), the insurance policy number (when you're on hold), the colleague's onboarding doc (when the next hire starts), the packing checklist (every single trip). No imaginable question means no shelf space. The bin is also a filing decision, and usually the right one.

REFERENCE LISTS: ONE ITEM, MANY LINES

Some of the best reference isn't a document but a running list, kept as a single reference item whose checklist or notes grow for years:

- **Packing list**, refined after every trip until forgetting becomes structurally impossible.
- **Restaurants to try**, fed by every recommendation, drained by every anniversary.
- **Gift ideas**, captured in July when they're mentioned, retrieved in December when they're needed.
- **Books & films**, so the answer to "nothing to watch" is a list you made yourself.
- **Home inventory**: paint codes, filter sizes, the name of the good electrician.
- **Wins**, kind words and shipped things, for the days that need evidence.

HABITS THAT KEEP IT CLEAN

- **File at processing speed**. One letter, one tap, move on. A rough shelf beats a perfect pile, and search covers the rough edges.
- **Weekly, sweep the strays**. The review's Reference step exists because keepers accumulate in the Inbox's corners all week.
- **Archive on doubt**. The Reference Archive keeps retired material searchable without haunting the shelves. Archiving is free; hoarding costs attention.
- **Let big libraries live elsewhere**. Link to deep note systems, team wikis and photo archives from Relay rather than moving in. The cabinet's job is knowing where things are, not owning them.

YOUR FIRST WEEK

Trust isn't installed; it's earned in about seven days of light, honest use. Here's the on-ramp we'd run:

DAY ONE · ABOUT AN HOUR

- ☐ **Set up the doors**
Sign in, add the widgets (or the desktop app and its hotkey), save your Relay email address as a contact called "Relay".
- ☐ **Name your vocabularies**
Workspaces (two or three), the starter contexts from page 7, and the few people you delegate to or meet.
- ☐ **Empty your head**
The full mind sweep against both trigger lists. Aim past fifty captures, the point where it starts feeling lighter instead of longer.
- ☐ **Process the lot**
The wizard, top to bottom, two-minute rule enforced. Watch the lists build themselves from your answers.

DAYS TWO TO SIX · MINUTES A DAY

- ☐ **Capture on reflex**
Every stray thought, into the nearest door, no exceptions in week one. You're teaching your head that the net is real.
- ☐ **Run the Daily Review each morning**
Five minutes: shape the day, pin the few, start from Engage.
- ☐ **Process to zero once a day**
Let the reminder call it. Inbox zero, decided-not-done, daily.

DAY SEVEN · THE KEYSTONE

- ☐ **Your first full Weekly Review**
All twelve steps, unhurried. This is the session where the system starts trusting you back.

WHEN YOU FALL OFF, AND YOU WILL

A conference week, a sick child, and suddenly the Inbox is deep and the lists feel stale. This is normal and the repair is always the same: one honest sweep, one processing session, one Weekly Review. An hour, maybe two, and the system is truer than it was before the wobble. Falling off isn't failure; staying off is just a decision you haven't reversed yet.

WHERE TO GO FROM HERE

The app's Settings screens hold the switches this guide skipped. For questions, bugs and ideas, support@relaygtd.com reaches humans who use the system themselves. And when you're curious about the deeper method, the thinking this guide compressed, David Allen's *Getting Things Done* is the book, and it rewards the read.

Your head is for deciding, not for storing. That is the whole of it.



STOP MAINTAINING A SYSTEM. START USING ONE.

Relay: a modern, trusted GTD® system that's already built.

relaygtd.com · support@relaygtd.com

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