

Memoir Builder

User Manual

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What Memoir Builder Does

Memoir Builder helps you turn your life story into a finished document. You lay your story out as cards on a board — organized into chapters, each with the writing, photos, and documents that belong to it — and when you're ready, export it all as a polished manuscript with a clickable table of contents.

You don't have to write in order. Capture a memory wherever it fits on the board, whenever it comes to you, and the book comes together around it.

Capture a memory without typing a single word. Tap the microphone icon in the top bar, next to "Memoir Builder," on any device you're logged into — your computer, tablet, or phone — and just start talking. Your words are transcribed automatically into a text attachment, no typing involved at any step, and land by default on the **Un-Assigned** card in the Stream of Consciousness column's Random Memories & Ideas chapter, ready for you to review and move into the right chapter whenever you get to it. It's the fastest way to get a passing thought down before it's gone — see Quick Capture under Writing Directly in the App below.

Writing inside a card works the same hands-free way: open any card's built-in editor and dictate the whole thing by voice, start to finish, without touching the keyboard.

Getting Started

You can start using Memoir Builder in one of two ways:

- **Create an account** — with your email and a password, your Google account, or your Apple account (Sign in with Apple). You'll be asked to accept the Terms of Service first; declining cancels the sign-up and nothing is created. An email sign-up is confirmed with a code we send you. If you leave before entering it and later try to sign up again with the same user name or email, the Terms window explains why in red and offers **Enter confirmation code instead**, which takes you straight to the code screen. A short welcome carousel introduces the app the first time you land on your board (you can replay it anytime from the **?** button in App Settings). If you sign in with Apple and choose to hide your email, you'll be asked to pick a **user name** first — see Account & Settings below.
- **Try it as a Guest** — no account needed, no sign-in screen in the way. Opening Memoir Builder for the first time drops you straight onto a working board. A Guest board is saved only in this browser on this device — it won't follow you anywhere else, and you can't attach files, write with the built-in editor, or export while using it. When you're ready, click "Sign Up to Save Your Work" — if you'd actually customized your Guest board by then, you'll be offered the chance to bring it into your new account (an untouched Guest board is skipped automatically, nothing to ask about).

Your Board: Chapters and Cards

Your story is organized on two levels:

- **Chapters** are the big picture — the major periods or turning points of your life, shown as cards across the columns of your main board (its title reads "*Your Board* - Chapters").
- **Cards** live inside a chapter. Click a chapter's **Details >** link to open its own board, where you break that one chapter down into the actual content, images, and other pieces that belong to it.

The bottom line of each tile has its controls: on a chapter, the trash can (left), **Export** (centre — exports just that chapter, see Exporting Your Memoir) and **Details >** (right); on a card, the trash can, the **Add Content** pencil, **Export** (just that card) and the paperclip, evenly spaced. Each card also shows **Attachments: N** — how many things are attached to it — next to its status.

Every chapter and card has a title, a description, and a status (Not Started, Started, Pending, or Done). Click a title, description, or the pencil/edit icon to make changes. Drag chapters between columns, or cards between spots on a chapter's own board, to reorganize at any time. On a phone or tablet, press and hold a tile for a moment until it lifts, then drag it — a quick swipe just scrolls the board. When you let go, the tile stays where you dropped it while the board dims briefly to save the move.

Cards look like Sticky Notes by default (a colored paper note), or you can switch to a plainer Formal style — see Settings below.

Adding a chapter: click "+ Add Chapter & More" at the bottom of any column. Alongside the title and description, pick what kind of chapter it is — a plain **Chapter**, a **Bio**, or a **Family Tree** — each rendered in its own color so these special chapters stand out at a glance among your regular ones. (A chapter's kind is set once, when you create it, and can't be changed afterward. A new chapter in the Secrets column is always a plain Chapter.)

Secrets: Private and Locked Chapters

Some things belong in your story's record but not in the book. The **Secrets** column, the last column on most templates, is for them. Chapters and cards in Secrets are **Private**:

- They're **never exported** — not in the Document, the lists, or a chapter or card export — and **never shown to Aion**.
- They're easy to spot: soft red tiles, with **Private** on the status line.
- Move a chapter into Secrets and it becomes private; move it out and it's a normal chapter again. The Secrets column can't be renamed.

Every new Secrets column starts with a **Not for Export** chapter holding a **Taken to the Grave** card.

Locking a chapter: each chapter in Secrets has a padlock in the middle of its bottom line:

- **Grey, open** — not locked. Click it to lock the chapter. The first time, you choose a **4-digit code**; it opens every chapter you lock on your account.
- **Red, closed** — locked. The description is hidden and **Details** is greyed out. Click the padlock and enter your code to open it on this device; it locks again after 15 minutes unused.
- **Purple, swung open** — open on this device. Click it and choose **Lock** to lock it again straight away.

A locked chapter stays locked — there's no way to take the lock off for good — and it can't be moved out of Secrets. After 3 wrong codes, the code box is switched off for 5 minutes, with a countdown. **Forgot code?** in the padlock window emails you a link to choose a new one (it works once, for 30 minutes).

The lock keeps other people who use your device out of the chapter. The lock itself isn't encryption (your files are encrypted on our server either way — see Your Privacy and Security).

The only way out — a Protected PDF: click the padlock — locking a chapter the first time, entering your code to open one, or locking one again — and **Download a Protected PDF...** is there too. It saves the chapter as a PDF that needs a password to open. Enter your code and choose a file password of at least 8 characters (not your code); an eye icon on the password field lets you check what you typed. Keep it safe: nobody can open the file without it, and Memoir Builder doesn't keep a copy.

Choosing a Starter Template

Every new board starts from a template — a ready-made set of columns and a first chapter in each, so you're never staring at a blank board. Pick from 11 templates covering different ways to tell your story (a simple timeline, coming-of-age, travel, a single theme, a confessional story, a scrapbook, journaling, and more), plus **CV / Resume** — a single-chapter template for a professional summary and work history rather than a life story, with its own Cover Letter / Content / References & More cards in place of the usual set.

Every template's first column is **Stream of Consciousness**, with a **Random Memories & Ideas** chapter holding two cards — **Un-Assigned** (where Quick Capture saves your dictated notes) and **Images** — a catch-all for anything you haven't found a chapter for yet. Most templates also end with a **Secrets** column for things you want to record but never export (see Secrets above) — all but **Create an Article** and **CV / Resume**.

Click **Templates** in the top bar to switch to a different one at any time — this adds the new template's columns and chapters to your board without deleting anything you've already built.

Family Tree

Pick **Family Tree** as a chapter's kind when you create it (see Your Board: Chapters and Cards above) and that chapter's board becomes an interactive family tree instead of the usual cards — one card per person.

Building your tree:

- Start from the empty chapter's **" + Add first person"** button, then grow the tree out from there: **" + Partner"** links a spouse or partner alongside a card; **" + Child"** adds a child beneath a person or a couple (a child doesn't need two listed parents — a single parent with no partner recorded works fine); **" + Parent"** grows the tree upward to record someone's ancestors. The tree spreads out left and right for couples and siblings, and up or down for ancestors and descendants, around wherever you started.
- Each person's card holds a photo, name, a short description, birth and death years, and whether they're male or female.
- A pairing can optionally be labelled **Spouse**, **Partner**, or **Other** — purely descriptive, shown as a small label on the connector line; it never changes how the tree is laid out.
- **Change parents**, on a card's edit form, moves a child to a different pairing later on — useful if you attached it to the wrong couple, or want to record an adoptive family. Pick any other pairing in the tree, or "None recorded."
- A tree holds up to 50 people.

Desktop and tablet only to build. Editing a Family Tree needs a bigger screen, so it's available on a computer or a tablet's browser (including an iPad), but not on a phone or inside the mobile app. On an iPad, make sure Safari isn't set to "Request Mobile Website" — that setting disables editing the same way a phone does.

View and export anywhere. A tree built on desktop or tablet can still be opened read-only, and exported, from a phone, a phone's browser, or the mobile app — it just can't be created or edited there.

Exporting your tree: a Family Tree chapter has its own export, separate from the Document/Simple List/Pending List/Graphic Tree exports described in Exporting Your Memoir below (those never include Family Tree content). Click **Export** on the chapter itself, or find every Family Tree chapter on your board gathered under its own entry in the top **Export** menu. Either way, you get one combined PDF per tree: a title page, a graphic page laid out just like the tree on your board (photos included), and a text outline listing everyone by generation. **This PDF export is a subscriber (Bronze) feature** — building and viewing the tree itself is free on every plan (see Paid Subscriber Benefits below).

Sharing a tree with family: your Family Tree chapter's toolbar has **"Export for Sharing (.json)"**, which downloads a file with everyone's details and photos built in — send it to a relative however you like (email, a cloud drive, a text). They create their own account, add their own Family Tree chapter, and pick **"or Import a Family Tree file (.json)"** on its empty board to bring your tree in as their own, independent copy to keep building on. This isn't live, side-by-side collaboration — sending the file back and forth hands off a full copy each time, not a shared live document: importing into a tree that already has people on it (your own chapter's **"Import (Replace Tree)"** button) downloads a backup of what's there first and asks you to confirm, since it fully replaces what's there rather than merging with it.

Attaching Things to a Card

Click the paperclip icon on any card to attach something to it. There are three ways:

- **Upload** — pick a file and it's copied into Memoir Builder. This is the default.
- **Add a Link** — paste a link to something you already have online (Google Drive, iCloud, etc.). Nothing is copied.
- **Remember a File on This Device** — points at a file already on your device without copying it (only works in Chrome or Edge, and only on the same device you added it from).

The first time you attach something, you'll be asked to pick a default method — change it anytime from the same window. Attaching your first item to a card automatically moves its status from Not Started to Started.

A note on storage: files you Upload count against your plan's storage allowance (on the free plan, 300MB and 150 files per account, up to 25MB per file — see Paid Subscriber Benefits for more). Links and remembered local files don't count against it at all. When you reach a limit, Memoir Builder tells you which one and what you can do — delete something to make room, or subscribe for more. Nothing is ever deleted for you.

Managing an attachment — the attachment menu: each attachment on a card has a  button at the end of its line. Click it (or right-click the attachment; on a phone or tablet, press and hold it) to open the attachment menu:

- **Rename** — change the name. The file type stays the same (a `.docx` stays a `.docx`); only the name you see, download and export changes.
- **Edit** (for a `.txt` or `.rtf` file you uploaded) — opens it in the Simple Editor. See Editing an Attached Text File below.
- **Move** — opens a small window with two ways to move it:
 - **On this card: Up, Down and To top** change its place in the card's list straight away, and the window stays open so you can keep nudging. The first picture on a card is the one shown on it, so moving a picture **To top** makes it the card's picture.
 - **To another card:** pick a chapter (the one you're in is chosen first), then a card, and click **Move**. It goes to the bottom of that card's attachments. Any card on the same board, in any chapter.
- **Download** (for a file you uploaded) or **Open link** (for a link).
- **Delete** — asks you to confirm first.

Re-adding a file with the same name: if you upload, link, remember, or save something whose name matches something already on that card (handy after you download a file, edit it, and add it back), Memoir Builder asks whether to overwrite the existing one or keep both.

Editing an attached text file: choose **Edit** in the attachment menu of a `.txt` or `.rtf` file you uploaded (Word `.docx` files can't be edited in the app — download, edit and re-add them).

- A document written in Memoir Builder, or a `.txt` file, is saved back in place — the editor reminds you "Saving replaces this file." A `.txt` file stays plain text, with no formatting.
- An RTF made in another program (Word, Pages...) may lose some formatting such as tables, pictures or fonts, so your edits are saved as a copy — "*name* (edited)" — and the original stays as it is. If you already have an edited copy, you're asked whether to **Open the Copy** or **Edit the Original** (which makes another copy, "*name* (edited 2)").

Audio Transcription: when you upload a recognized audio file (MP3, M4A, WAV, OGG), Memoir Builder offers to transcribe it to text using the built-in Simple Editor, so you can review and edit the result before saving it as a second attachment alongside your original recording — the audio file itself is always kept either way, transcribing it never replaces or changes it. The transcribed document is named after your original audio file by default (rename it anytime). Not every recording has speech to transcribe (music, ambient sound); if nothing usable comes back, you'll see a plain "No speech detected" message instead of an error, and can still write your own notes if you like.

Transcription has an allowance per account. On the **free plan** it's **5 transcriptions for the life of your account**, up to 5MB per audio file and 25MB in total. **Subscribers get a fresh allowance every month** (on the 1st) — Bronze: **5 transcriptions a month**, up to 10MB per file and 50MB a month (see Paid Subscriber Benefits). Only what you transcribe while subscribed counts toward the month, so subscribing after using the free 5 gives you the full monthly allowance straight away. A failed attempt still counts, since it's used up the moment you submit it, whether or not it succeeds.

Once you've reached your allowance, uploading audio no longer offers to transcribe it. You'll see a "Transcription limit reached" message instead, and your audio file is saved as-is. It gives you three choices:

- **Subscribe** — go to the subscription options (shown when a plan would give you more).
- **Free Web** — opens a free audio-to-text website in a new tab. Upload your recording there, then attach the text it gives you to your card.
- **Continue** — keep the audio file and carry on.

Writing Directly in the App

Don't have a file ready? Click a card's "Add Content" icon to open the built-in editor and write straight into Memoir Builder — entirely hands-free if you want.

- **Dictate** — click the microphone icon (bottom-left, next to Save) and just talk; your speech is converted to text as you go, so you can fill in an entire card without touching the keyboard. Say "new line," "carriage return," or "line break" to start a new line by voice too. Turning the mic off always leaves you on a fresh line, so turning it back on later never runs into where you last left off.
- **Or type** normally, if you'd rather.
- Click the pencil next to the document's title to rename it — a microphone at the right end of the title line lets you speak the name instead of typing it. Like the main microphone, it shows a red dot and a listening indicator while it's on, and tells you if it shuts itself off. In a browser without voice input (such as Firefox), both microphones stay visible but greyed out with a red slash.
- **Format** your text with the toolbar: bold, italic, underline, strikethrough, highlight color, text color, and font size.

What you write is saved as an RTF document attached to the card, the same as an uploaded file — it opens directly in Word, Pages, or LibreOffice. If the card already has a document with that name, you choose **Cancel** (back to the editor), **Save as New** (saved under the next free name, such as "Notes (2)"), or **Overwrite**.

Quick Capture: click the microphone icon in the top bar (next to "Memoir Builder") to open the same editor with dictation already listening — a fast way to jot a passing thought without navigating to a specific card first. It's saved to the **Un-Assigned** card in your Stream of Consciousness column (or, if you've moved or renamed that, the first card on your board), so you can find and reorganize it later. In a browser without voice input, the top-bar microphone is shown struck through with "Unsupported Browser" beside it.

Aion, Your AI Assistant

Aion is the Hellenistic and Greco-Roman deity who personifies unbounded, cyclical, and eternal time — a fitting companion for arranging a lifetime of memories.

Click **Assistant** (Aion's picture) in the top bar to open Aion in a side panel — full screen on a phone. Aion helps you plan the shape of your memoir, step by step:

- **Choosing a template** — on a new board, tell Aion what you'd like to record (your life story, a trip, growing up, a journal...) and it recommends the starting template that fits best. You confirm before anything changes, and your existing chapters are kept.
- **Planning chapters** — on your main board, Aion suggests chapters to add, rename, or move, and columns to add or rename.
- **Filling a chapter** — inside a chapter, it suggests cards: for example one for each person, event, or source you want to capture.

Not sure what to ask? The panel starts with a few example questions you can pick.

Suggestions only. Nothing on your board changes until you tick the suggestions you want and click **Apply selected** (or **Dismiss** them). Aion never deletes anything, and applied changes can't be undone automatically, so check before you apply.

What Aion can see: your board's titles, descriptions, statuses, and attachment file names — never the contents of your files, and nothing in your Secrets column. These are sent to an AI provider so it can make suggestions, as described in the Terms of Service and privacy policy (you'll be asked to accept them the first time you use Aion, if you haven't already).

Talk instead of typing: click the microphone in the panel's title bar to speak your message — a red dot shows while it's listening.

Your conversation is kept with each board, so you can pick up where you left off. **Clear chat** removes it; your board, and anything you've already applied, is unaffected. Deleting a board deletes its conversation too.

Limits: each account has a number of messages per month — 20 on the free plan, 50 on Bronze — shown in the panel and in User Settings, and reset on the 1st. Aion uses its **Fast** model; subscribers can also choose **Balanced** or **Best**. Aion needs an account — it isn't available on a Guest board.

Exporting Your Memoir

Click **Export** next to "My Boards" at the top of your board. There are four ways to export:

- **Simple List** — a quick outline of everything on your board: every chapter, card, and attachment, listed by name. No actual writing, just a map of what you've collected.
- **Pending List** — the same outline, but narrowed to just what's still flagged Pending: chapters marked Pending, and any chapter with at least one Pending card, so you have a punch list of what's left to finish.
- **Graphic Tree** — the same outline with icons and status colors, so it's easier to scan at a glance.
- **Document** — your real manuscript, with a clickable table of contents. Memoir Builder weaves your cards' actual content into the flowing text wherever it can read it — Word, RTF, plain text, and PDF files you've uploaded, text typed directly into a card, and photos are all included. Anything it can't read is still listed as a link or filename rather than left out.

Chapters and cards in the **Secrets** column are left out of every export. A locked chapter can only leave the app as a Protected PDF — see Secrets above.

Just one chapter or one card: the Export menu's Document always covers your whole board. To export less, click **Export** on the tile itself — on a chapter on your main board for that whole chapter (it gets its own title page, "*Chapter* — from *Your Board*"), or on a card inside a chapter for just that card. They use the same Output Format and settings as the full Document, and the file is named after the board, chapter, and card.

Click **Settings** in the Export menu to set:

- **Author's Name** — shown as "By [name]" on your board and your document's title page.
- **Output Format** —
 - **PDF** (default) and **Plain Text** (a `.txt` file that opens anywhere, including on a phone — no bold, italics, or pictures) are free.
 - **MS Word** and **RTF** (opens in Word, Pages, or LibreOffice — not reliably in Apple's TextEdit, which has its own limits reading embedded pictures from other apps' RTF files) are for subscribers. Picking one on the free plan shows a "Subscription feature" message with **Subscribe Now**, and your format stays as it was.
 - **Audio Book** — your Document read aloud as a single MP3 file — is coming soon for subscribers.
- **Preserve Document Formatting** — on by default; keeps each uploaded Word document's own headings/bold/lists when combined into your manuscript.
- **Exclude Pending Attachments** — off by default; when on, any card still marked Pending has its attachments left out of the Document export (the card's own title and description still appear), so unfinished material doesn't slip into your manuscript by accident.

A few things exports can't do yet: read text from a scanned/photographed PDF, reliably order text from a complex multi-column PDF, keep formatting from anything other than a `.docx` file, read older `.doc` Word files, pull in a document link other than a publicly-shared Google Doc, or read the content of a "Remember a File on This Device" attachment (that method never sends the file to Memoir Builder, so its content can't be included — it always appears as a reference/link instead).

Multiple Boards

Open the "My Boards" menu (top right) to create, name, and switch between boards — handy if you're working on more than one project. The free plan includes **one board**; subscribers can create as many as they like (accounts that already had several boards before subscriptions began keep them all). While a board opens, is created, or is deleted, a spinning "Opening board..." message covers the page — wait for it rather than clicking again. Deleting a board can't be undone, so you'll be asked to confirm first. Memoir

Builder remembers which board you had open, so signing back in returns you right where you left off.

Account & Settings

Everything below is in the "My Boards" menu, top right. The menu also shows your **user name** — with your profile photo beside it if you signed in with Google.

- **App Settings** — Card Style (Sticky Notes or Formal), your default attachment method (**Change** opens Attachment Preferences; close it with the **x** or Cancel), and **Language** — a one-line summary with **Change**, opening a separate Language Settings window. **App language** sets the language for menus, messages, emails and exports — English, Italiano, Español, Français or Deutsch; your own writing is never translated. **Speaking language** is what you talk in when you use a microphone or upload a recording — "Same as app" by default, or choose one independently. Starter templates come in whichever app language you're on when you create the board.
- **User Settings** — close it with the **x** at the top right, or the Close button. It shows:
 - Your **user name**, with **Edit** to change it, and your email below. Until you pick one, it's your sign-up username (email accounts) or the part of your email before the "@" (Google and Apple). User names are unique — 2 to 30 characters, no emoji — and a few are reserved (such as "Admin" or "Support").
 - Your **Subscription** — your current plan, the options to subscribe, or Manage subscription (see Paid Subscriber Benefits).
 - Your **Web Storage Limits**, **Audio Transcription Limits** and AI Assistant usage against your plan's allowances. Audio Transcription shows **Usage**: how much audio you've sent for transcription. It isn't storage — the recording and its transcript are saved as attachments and count toward Web Storage. The transcription note says whether your allowance covers the life of your account (free plan) or this month, and when it resets (subscribers).
 - Two permanent, irreversible actions, each with two separate warnings before anything happens:
 - **Factory Reset** — deletes every board on your account and replaces them with a single fresh one. Your account, login and any subscription are unaffected — you're not signed out. Your transcription and AI allowances aren't reset.
 - **Delete Account** — deletes your account entirely. If you have a subscription that will renew, cancel it first: Delete Account shows "Cancel Your Subscription First" with a **Manage subscription** button until you do.
- **Log out**

Author's Name and your export Output Format live in Export Settings instead — see Exporting Your Memoir above.

Paid Subscriber Benefits

Subscribe from [User Settings](#) → Subscription. The **Bronze** plan is **US\$9 a month** or **US\$90 a year** (two months free). Stripe's secure checkout shows and charges the price in your local currency, so the amount you see there may differ slightly. Cancel any time.

	Free	Bronze
Boards	1	Unlimited
Attachment storage	300 MB	600 MB
Attachment files	150	300
Largest upload	25 MB	50 MB
Audio transcriptions	5 for life (25 MB)	5 a month (50 MB a month)
Largest audio file to transcribe	5 MB	10 MB
AI Assistant messages per month	20	50
AI model choice	Fast only	Fast · Balanced · Best
Export formats	PDF · Plain Text	PDF · Plain Text · MS Word · RTF
Family Tree PDF export	Not included	Included

Coming soon for subscribers: **Audio Book** export.

Managing your subscription: in User Settings, **Manage subscription** opens Stripe's secure page, where you can switch between monthly and yearly, update your card, see invoices, or cancel. After cancelling you keep your plan until the end of the period you've paid for — User Settings shows "ends on" and the date — and you can undo it there before then ("Don't cancel subscription").

If your subscription ends (or a payment fails), your account goes back to the free plan's limits. Nothing you've created is deleted or hidden — if you're over a free limit, you'll be asked to subscribe again or to download and remove some content before adding more.

Your Privacy and Security

- **Your files are encrypted on our server.** Everything you upload — and every picture's preview — is stored encrypted, with a key that belongs to your account alone. Someone who got hold of the stored files without going through your signed-in account would see only scrambled data.
- **Deleting your account makes your files unreadable for good.** Your account's key is deleted with it, so nothing you stored can ever be opened again.
- **Exports aren't kept.** When you export, the document is made and sent straight to you; no copy stays on our server. Keep the files you download somewhere safe.

Getting Help

Click **Help** in the footer for the help site at memoirbuilder.org, or **Feedback** to email info@memoirbuilder.org directly.