TheBrain User Guide

For TheBrain 15.0.646 · Last updated October 20, 2026

All of TheBrain's help, section by section. The latest version is always attached as a PDF to the thought *User Guide* in TheBrain Help, the help brain. To open it, choose **Main Menu > Help > TheBrain Help** in TheBrain. This guide was made with TheBrain itself: each topic is a thought in TheBrain Help, embedded here in a single note, and the PDF comes from TheBrain's own Export Notes.

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If You're New, Read These First

These topics introduce TheBrain in the order most people need them:

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Keyboard Symbols

Shortcuts are given first as they are in Windows, and then as they are on a Mac, such as `Ctrl+Z` (`⌘Z` on Mac). The Mac form uses Apple's symbols for its modifier keys:

Symbol	Mac key	Usual Windows key
⌘	Command	`Ctrl`
⌥	Option	`Alt`
⇧	Shift	`Shift`
^	Control	None. Control is a key of its own on a Mac, used by only a few shortcuts.

You can change most shortcuts in **Settings > User > Keyboard**, so this guide gives the default shortcuts.

1 Brains and Thoughts

1.1 Working with Brains

1.1.1 What Is a Brain

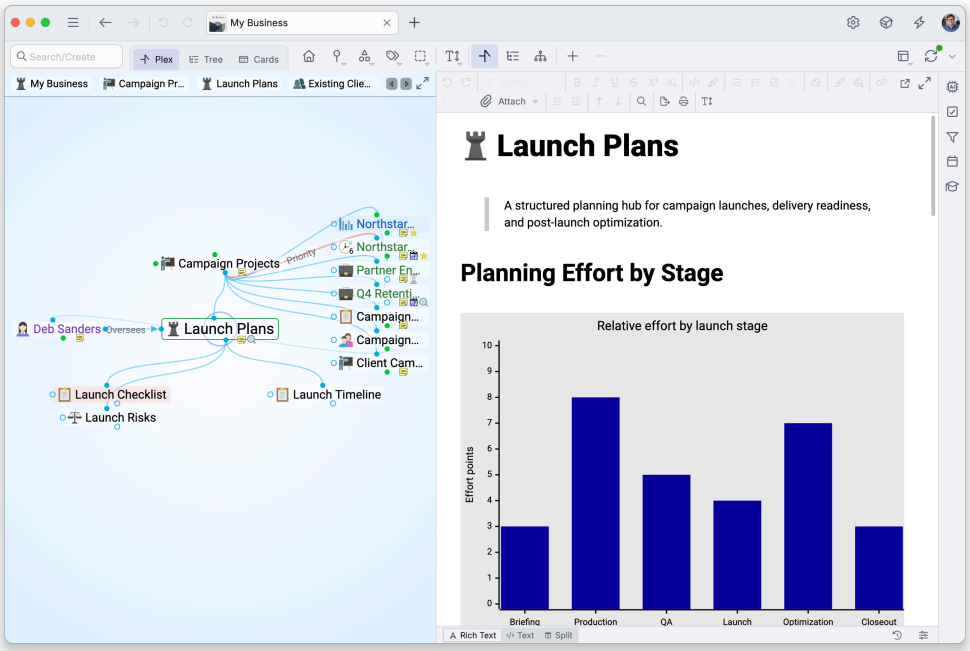
Overview

A **brain** is your personal knowledge space — a self-contained network of **thoughts** and the **links** between them. Where other tools put information into folders and files, a brain lets ideas connect the way your mind actually works: visually and without a fixed hierarchy. The network you navigate, the Plex, is the visual map of one brain (see The Plex).

You can have **many brains**, and each is independent. People often keep separate brains for separate worlds — one for work, one for a research project, one for personal life — so the ideas in each stay together without mixing.

What a Brain Contains

A brain holds:



- **Thoughts** — the ideas, things, and topics you track, each with a name, note, and attachments.
- **Links** — the parent, child, and jump connections between thoughts that give the network its shape.
- **Types and tags** — thoughts that classify and label other thoughts.

Everything you do in TheBrain happens inside a brain, and brains are listed and opened from the brains list (see The Brains List).

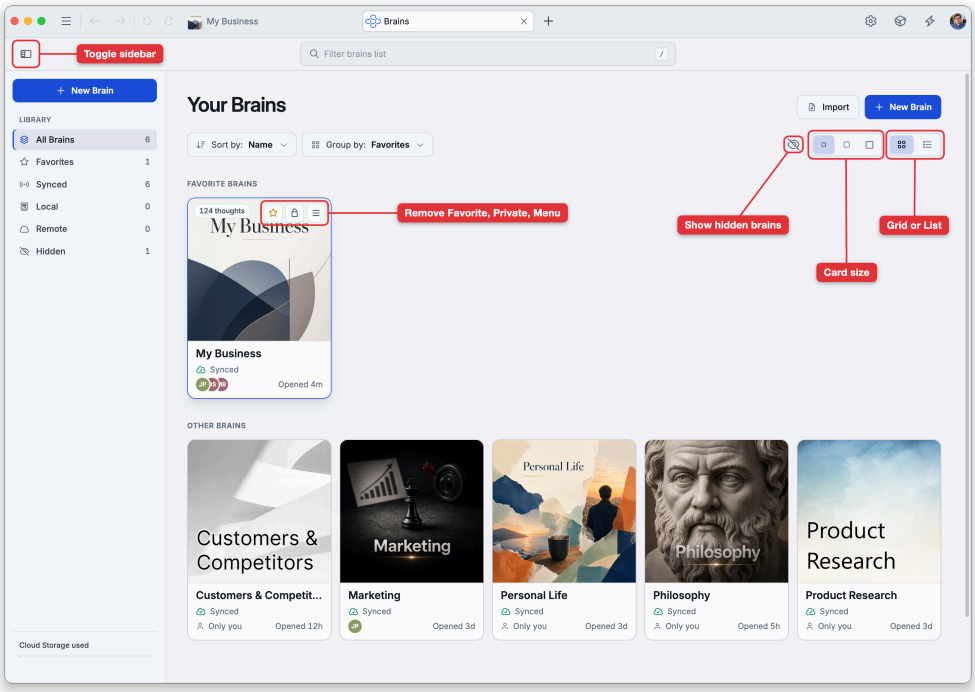
- A brain can stay entirely local on your device or sync to the cloud so it's available across your devices — see Syncing Brains.
- Starting a brand-new brain is quick — see Creating a Brain.

1.1.2 The Brains List

Overview

The **brains list** is the home screen you land on outside of any single brain — the place to open an existing brain or start a new one. A **Library** sidebar on the left focuses the view, a search

box in the top toolbar narrows it as you type, and the main area shows your brains as a grid of cards or a detailed list.



Opening and Creating

From the list you can:

- **Open** a brain by selecting it. Right-click a brain — or use the ≡ button on its card or row — for more ways to open it and its full menu (see Opening a Brain).
- **New Brain** — the button at the top of the sidebar, and again in the page header (see Creating a Brain).
- **Import** — the page-header button opens the **Import/Export** dialog, where you can import a brain archive (a `.brz` file) or content from other apps (see Importing Brains). A narrow window or a phone doesn't show this button.
- **BrainBox** — on the web, the top toolbar also has a **BrainBox** button for your quick-capture inbox (see BrainBox).

When a Brain Is Unavailable

A brain whose local data can't be opened stays in the list, marked **Unavailable brain** with a short reason: **No access**, **Files missing**, **Damaged**, or **Can't read**. Selecting the brain, right-clicking it, or using its ≡ menu opens a **Brain Unavailable** dialog that explains what happened rather than trying to open it.

- **No access** — the same brain was imported or synced by another account on this computer, so this account can't reach its local data. Signing back in as the account that owns that copy is what makes it available again.
- **Files missing** — the brain's folder couldn't be found. The dialog shows the path TheBrain expects; quit the app, put the data back there, and start it again. If you moved the data on purpose, point TheBrain at the new place in **Settings > Device > Storage**.
- **Damaged** / **Can't read** — the local database can't be opened or read.

In the installed apps the dialog also offers **Remove from This Device**, which takes the brain off this computer's list and deletes its local files. You have to tick the confirmation box before the button becomes available. Copies in your cloud account, in other accounts, or on your other devices aren't touched — but if a brain was never synced, removing it is the last of it, so contact support first if you aren't sure.

The Library Sidebar

The **Library** sidebar filters which brains you see. Each entry shows a count:

- **All Brains** — your whole collection.
- **Favorites** — brains you've starred.
- **Shared with Me** — brains someone else administers (appears once you have any).
- **Synced** / **Local** / **Remote** — desktop and mobile apps only: filter by where each brain lives.
- **Hidden** — brains you've hidden (appears once you've hidden any).
- **Featured Public Brains** — web only: a collection of public brains to explore, listed when there are brains to feature (see Featured and Public Brains).

At the bottom, a **Cloud Storage used** meter shows how much of your cloud allowance you're using. The **Toggle sidebar** button at the left edge of the toolbar collapses the sidebar; its sections then appear as tabs across the top of the list. Narrow windows and phones switch to those tabs automatically.

Viewing and Arranging

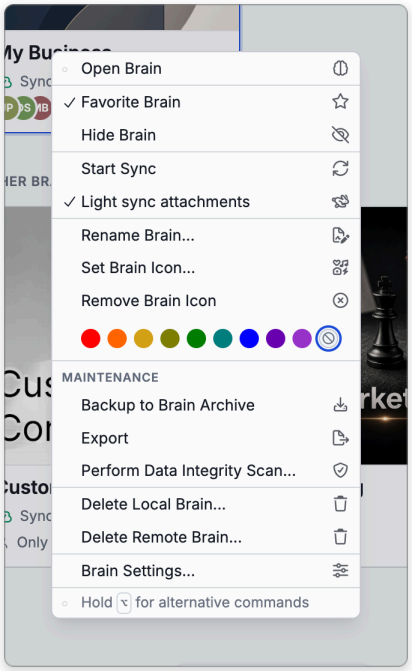
A controls row above your brains tailors the view, and your choices are remembered on your account:

- **Sort by** — **Name** or **Recent**.
- **Group by** — **Favorites**, **Access**, or (desktop/mobile) **Status** — groups the brains within whatever the sidebar is showing.
- **Show/hide hidden brains** — an eye button that appears once you have hidden brains.
- **Grid or List** — cards, or a detailed table with columns for when each brain was last **Opened**, its **Status** (in the desktop and mobile apps), its **Visibility**, and its **ID**.
- **Density** — in Grid view, choose between three card sizes.

Grid cards show who has access to each brain (member avatars), when you last opened it, and — if you've assigned the brain a color — a colored dot next to its name (see Renaming and Brain Icon). Pointing at a card with a mouse also shows the brain's thought count; touch screens don't show it. Each brain that is in the cloud also has a visibility icon whose hint reads **Private**, **Public** (the brain has **Allow unlisted access** on) or **Discoverable** (it has **Allow public access** on); click it to open *Brain Access and Sharing*. On the desktop and mobile apps, a brain that needs attention shows a sync badge under its name — **Unsynced changes**, **Update available**, or **Sync blocked** (see Syncing Brains).

Favoriting a Brain

To mark a brain as a favorite, right-click it (long-press on a touch screen) and choose **Favorite Brain**. The item is ticked while the brain is a favorite, and choosing it again removes the brain from your favorites. With a mouse you can also click the star that appears on a brain's card when you point at it (**Make Favorite** or **Remove Favorite**), or the star beside the brain's thumbnail in List view. Touch devices don't show the buttons on the cards, so use the long-press menu or List view there.



A favorite brain is easier to get to:

- It is listed under **Favorites** in the Library sidebar.
- When you group by **Favorites**, it appears in a **Favorite Brains** section above **Other Brains**.
- It is listed first in the brain switcher.

Favorites are saved with your account. On the web, favoriting a featured public brain also adds it to your own brains list.

Hiding and Unhiding a Brain

To hide a brain, right-click it (long-press on a touch screen) and choose **Hide Brain**. The brain leaves every section of the brains list except **Hidden**, and it leaves the brain switcher.

Hiding changes only where the brain is listed. The brain stays on your device and in your cloud account, you can still open it, and hiding it has no effect on syncing: a synced brain with **Sync automatically** on keeps syncing while it is hidden. Hiding doesn't delete anything or free any storage.

To see your hidden brains, do any of these:

- Select **Hidden** in the Library sidebar.

- Click the eye button in the controls row above the list (**Show N hidden brain(s)**).
- Click **Show Hidden** beside the line that says how many brains are hidden, at the bottom of **All Brains**.

While hidden brains are being shown they appear dimmed in the list, and they are listed in the brain switcher again. Click the eye button again (**Hide N hidden brain(s)**) to put them out of sight.

To get a hidden brain back for good, right-click it and choose **Hide Brain** again — the item is ticked while the brain is hidden. Which brains are hidden is saved with your account.

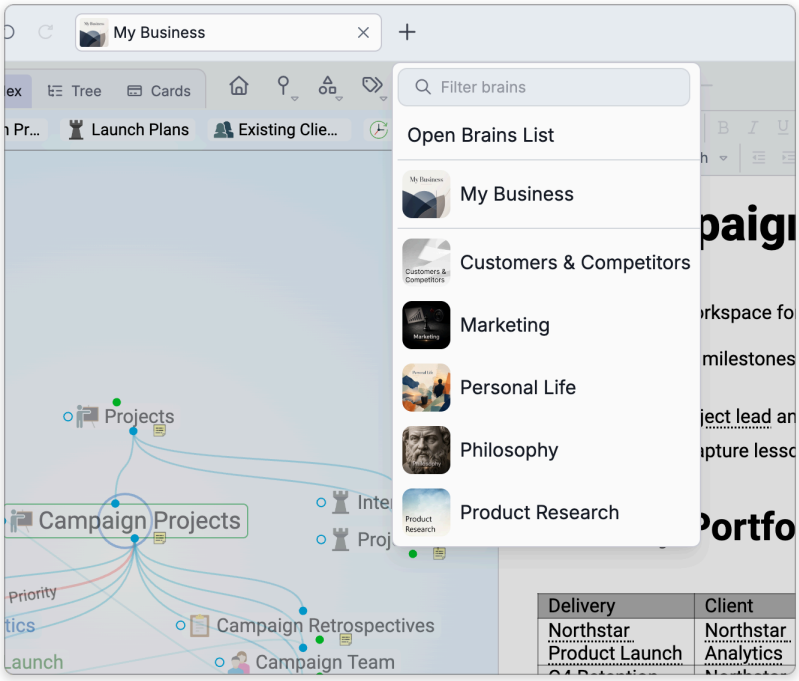
Filtering

Type in the **Filter brains list** box in the top toolbar to narrow the list to matching brains — the header counts how many match while a filter is active.

Returning to the Brains List

When a brain is open, how you get back to the brains list depends on your platform:

- **Desktop client** — Either close all open tabs in the tab bar, or click the `+` button in the tab bar and choose **Open Brains List** from its dropdown. That dropdown is the **brain switcher**: alongside *Open Brains List* it lists your other available brains so you can jump straight to one instead. **Main Menu > File > Open Brains List** opens the list in a new tab.
- **Web** — There is no tab bar. Click the **×** button beside the brain's name in the toolbar (its hint reads **Return to Brains List**), or choose **Main Menu > File > Open Brains List**.
- **Mobile** — Tap the ≡ menu at the top-left of the main toolbar to open the left drawer. From there you can tap the `<` icon to go back to the brains list, or tap the active brain's thumbnail and title to open the **brain switcher** — the same menu the desktop `+` button shows, with **Open Brains List** plus your other downloaded brains to switch between.



- The right-click (or touch long-press) menu on a brain also offers **Start Sync** (in the desktop and mobile apps), **Rename Brain**, **Set Brain Icon**, a row of color swatches that sets the brain's color, **Backup to Brain Archive**, **Export**, **Perform Data Integrity Scan**, the commands that delete the brain, and **Brain Settings**. Holding `Shift` (`⌥` on Mac) while the menu is open adds **Rebuild Brain Search Index** and, in the desktop app, **Assign Brain New GUID**, which gives a copied brain an identity of its own when the server reports that it shares one with another brain.
- Whether you see Open in New Window, Open in Desktop Client, and similar depends on your platform — see Opening a Brain.

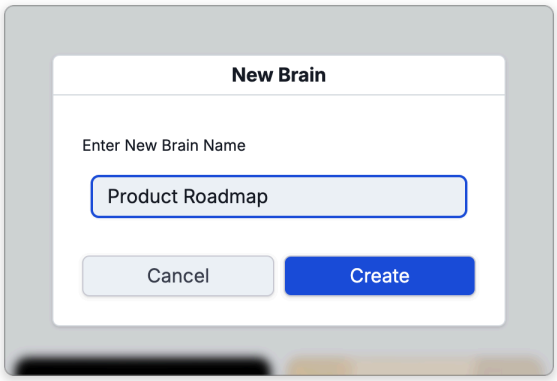
1.1.3 Creating a Brain

Overview

Starting a new **brain** takes one step: give it a name. A brain can be about anything — a project, a topic, a part of your life — and you can always rename it later, so there's no need to overthink the name up front.

How to Create a Brain

1. From the brains list, choose **New Brain**.
2. Type a name for the brain under **Enter New Brain Name**.
3. Choose **Create**.



Your new brain opens, ready for its first thoughts. The **New Brain** dialog only asks for a name — there's nothing else to configure, and no template or generated-content step to step through.

How to Make a Copy of a Brain

TheBrain has no command that duplicates a brain. In the desktop and mobile apps, you can get a second brain with the same content by copying the content into a new brain through a brain archive:

1. Back up the brain you want to copy to a brain archive (a `.brz` file) — see Backup to Brain Archive.
2. Create a new brain as described above, and leave it open.
3. Open **Main Menu > File > Import** and choose **Brain Archive**.
4. Before you pick the file, select the **Add to "..." and link to "..."** option, which names the open brain and its active thought, instead of **Create a new brain**.
5. Pick the `.brz` file, and choose **Import** when TheBrain asks you to confirm.

The archive's thoughts, links, notes, and attachments are added to the new brain as copies, and the copied brain's home thought is linked to the thought that was active. Brain-wide settings, such as the brain's name, theme, and home thought, are not carried over, so the result is a copy of the content and not an exact clone.

Importing the archive with **Create a new brain** does not make a second copy. A brain archive restores the same brain it was made from, so the import stops with the message **This brain already exists** while that brain is still on the device (on the web, while it still exists in the cloud). See Backup to Brain Archive.

- To rename a brain or give it an icon later, see Renaming and Brain Icon.
- If you already have content elsewhere (an archive, Markdown, Obsidian, Evernote, and more), you can **import** it into a new brain instead — see Importing Brains.

Related Topics

- Importing Brains

1.1.4 Opening a Brain

Overview

Select a brain in the brains list to open it. If you want more control — a new tab, a separate window, or a specific starting thought — right-click the brain for the full set of open options. Some options depend on your platform.

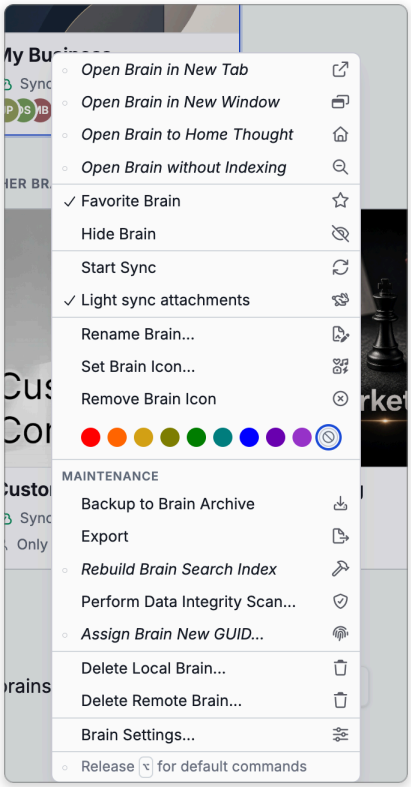
Ways to Open

Right-click a brain in the list for these options:

- **Open Brain** — open it in the current view.
- **Open Brain in New Tab** — open it in another tab (not offered in the mobile app on a phone).
- **Open Brain in New Window** — open it in a separate window (**on a computer only**: in the desktop app, or in a browser on a computer).
- **Open Brain to Home Thought** — open it starting on its home thought (see Home Thought).

- **Open Brain in Desktop Client** — hand the brain off to the installed desktop app (**web only**).
- **Open Brain without Indexing** — open it without rebuilding the search index, for a quick look (**installed desktop and mobile apps only**).

A few of these — **Open Brain in New Tab**, **Open Brain in New Window**, **Open Brain to Home Thought** and **Open Brain without Indexing** — are *alternate* commands: hold `Shift` (⌥ on Mac) while the right-click menu is open to show them in place of the plain **Open Brain**. The menu's last line reminds you of the key, and the alternate commands are shown in italics.



Which Thought a Brain Opens On

A brain doesn't always open on its home thought. Where you land depends on how you open it:

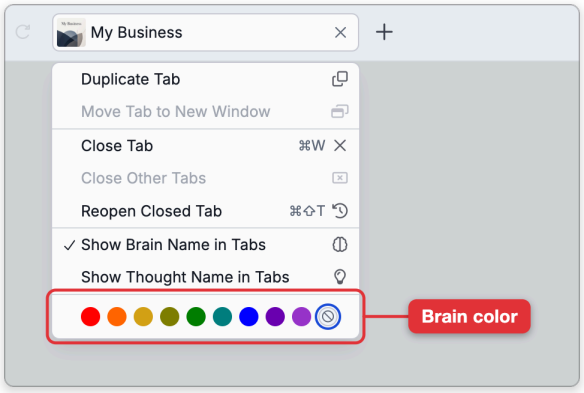
- **Selecting the brain in the brains list, or choosing Open Brain** — the brain opens on the thought that was active the last time you had it open. TheBrain remembers the last active thought for each brain, and uses the home thought only when it has none yet, such as the first time you open the brain. A brain that is set to **Cards** mode opens on its most recently modified thought instead.

- **Open Brain to Home Thought, or picking the brain from the brain switcher** — the brain opens on its home thought. The brain switcher is the menu behind the **+** button in the desktop app's tab bar and, on a phone, behind the brain's thumbnail and title in the left drawer (see The Brains List).

Once a brain is open, the house icon on the brain toolbar takes you to the home thought from wherever you are (see Home Thought).

Managing Open Tabs (Desktop)

On the desktop app, brains open as tabs you can manage. Open a new one with `Ctrl+T` (`⌘T` on Mac), and right-click a tab for **Duplicate Tab**, **Move Tab to New Window**, **Close Tab** (`Ctrl+W`, or `⌘W` on Mac), and **Close Other Tabs**. When a dialog is open in front of the tab, or you are working in a dialog's own window, **Close Tab** closes that dialog instead of the tab. You can also choose what the tabs are labeled with — **Show Brain Name in Tabs** or **Show Thought Name in Tabs** — and pick a **brain color** from the swatch row, which tints the tab's accent line (see Renaming and Brain Icon).



Closed a tab by mistake? **Reopen Closed Tab** — in **Main Menu > File**, in a tab's right-click menu, or with the default shortcut `Ctrl+Shift+T` (`⇧⌘T` on Mac) — brings back the brain tab you closed most recently, at the thought it was showing and with the same thoughts expanded. Use it again to step back through earlier closed tabs (the app remembers up to twenty). It's available only while there's a closed tab to bring back, and only in the desktop app.

To step from one tab to the next, use **Next Tab** and **Previous Tab** in **Main Menu > File** (in the Mac menu bar they are under **Window**). They move through the tabs of the current window, wrap around at either end, and are available when the window has more than one tab.

Working in More Than One Window

Main Menu > File > New Window — the default shortcut is `Ctrl+Shift+N` (`⇧⌘N` on Mac) — opens another TheBrain window showing the brains list, so you can open a brain there and keep two windows side by side. Used in a content window while no brain window is open, it brings back the brain windows and tabs you had open last instead. To put a brain straight into a window of its own, use **Open Brain in New Window** in the brains list, or **Move Tab to New Window** on a tab.

To close the current window, use **Close Window**: the default shortcut is `Ctrl+Shift+W` (`⇧⌘W` on Mac), `Alt+F4` also closes it on Windows and Linux, and on Mac the command is in the menu bar under **File**. When a dialog is open in the window's tab, **Close Window** closes that dialog instead of the window.

When You Quit and Restart

The desktop app remembers its windows and tabs. The next time you start it, it reopens each window with the brain tabs it had, each tab on the brain and thought it was showing, and selects the tab that was active. This happens by itself. On a phone, the app starts on the brain and thought you were on last, or on the brains list or BrainBox if that is where you were.

TheBrain asks before restoring only when it appears to have failed shortly after starting several times in a row. It then shows the **Improper Shutdown Detected** prompt, and answering **No** starts without the saved tabs (see Crash Recovery).

Finding a Brain to Open

Sort the brains list by **Recent** to bring the brains you've used most recently to the top — a quick way back into current work. See The Brains List.

- A cloud brain may need to sync before everything is available — see Syncing Brains.
- A brain last written by a newer version of TheBrain won't open in an older copy — TheBrain shows *This brain needs a newer version of TheBrain*, naming the version required. Update the app to open it (see App Updates).

Related Topics

- Syncing Brains

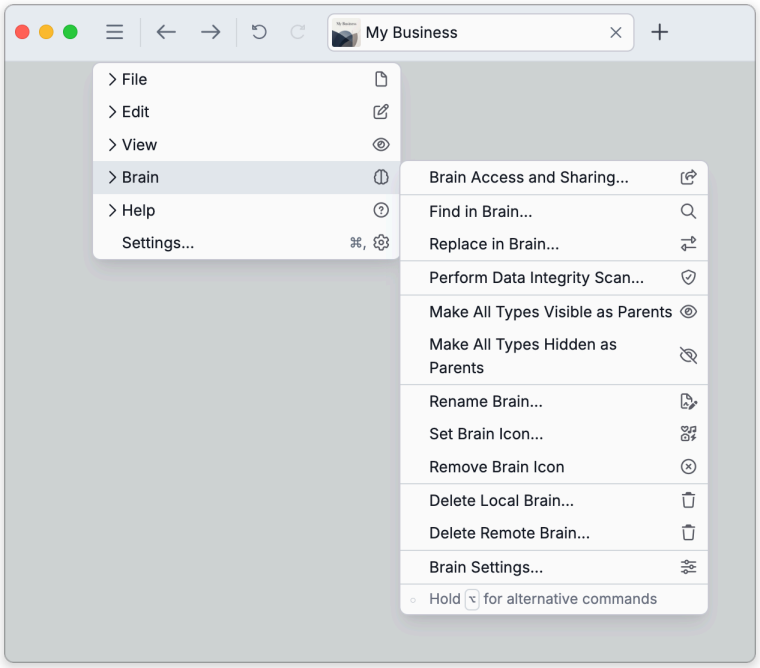
1.1.5 Renaming and Brain Icon

Overview

You can rename a brain at any time and give it a custom **icon**, which makes it easy to pick out in the brains list — especially once you have several. Both need **Admin** access to the brain, and the brain must be on this device, as a local or synced brain.

Renaming a Brain

1. Right-click the brain in the brains list (or open its settings).
2. Choose **Rename Brain**.
3. Enter the new **Name** and choose **Rename**.



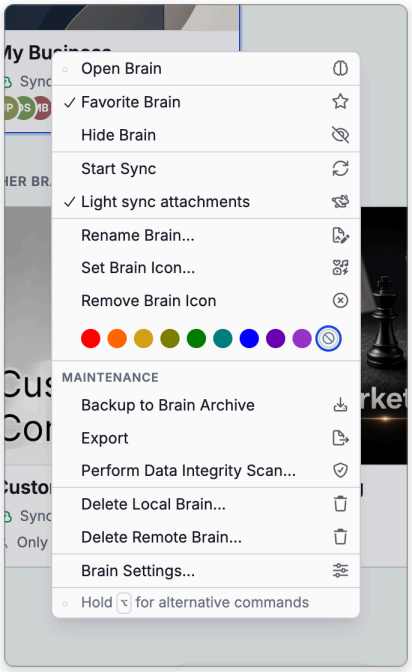
Setting a Brain Icon

1. Right-click the brain and choose **Set Brain Icon**.
2. Choose an image file — `.png`, `.jpg`, `.jpeg`, `.gif`, or `.webp`.

To clear it later, choose **Remove Brain Icon** and confirm.

Setting a Brain Color

The same right-click menu holds a row of nine color swatches, followed by **None** to clear the color; pointing at a swatch shows its color's name. The color shows as a small dot next to the brain's name in the brains list, and on the desktop app it also tints the brain's tab accent line — the tab's right-click menu offers the same swatches. Unlike the name and icon, the color is **yours alone**: it's stored with your account and syncs across your devices, without changing the brain for anyone else. That is also why anyone with access to a brain can set its color, Readers included.



- While a brain is open, **Rename Brain...**, **Set Brain Icon...**, and **Remove Brain Icon** are also on the main menu's **Brain** submenu.
- This is the *brain's* icon in the brains list; to set an icon on an individual *thought*, see Thought Icons.

1.1.6 Brain Statistics

Overview

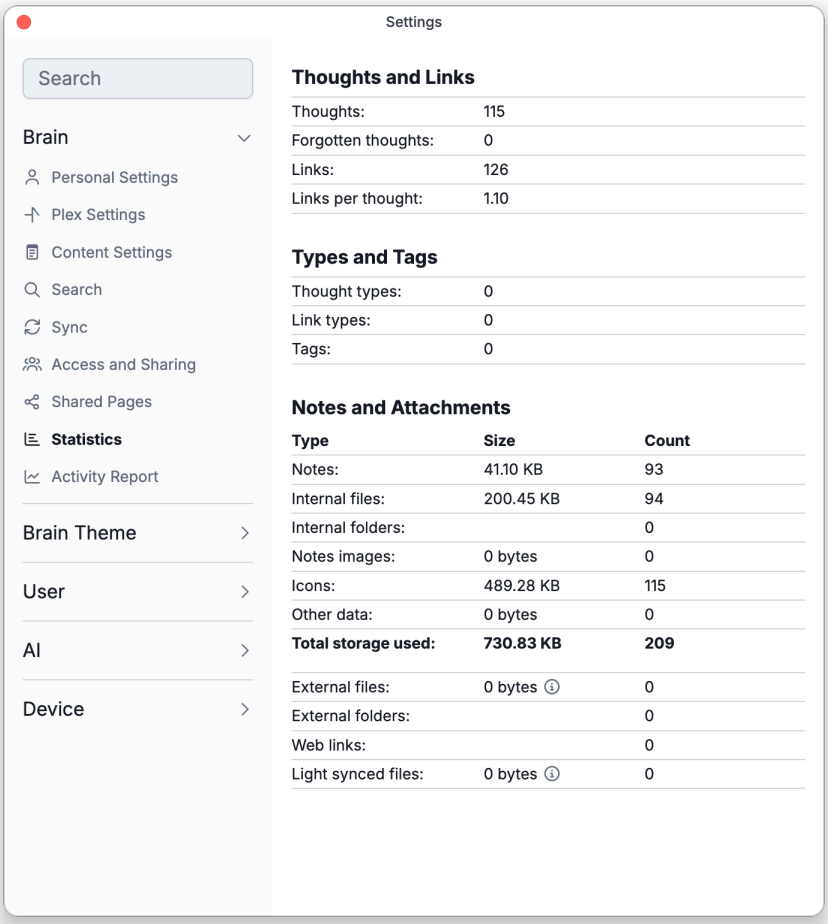
Statistics gives you a snapshot of how big a brain is and what it contains — how many thoughts and links it has, how many types, tags, notes, and attachments, and how much space the attachments take. It's a useful health check for a brain and a quick way to see how much you've built.

What It Shows

The Statistics view groups its counts:

- **Thoughts and Links** — Thoughts, Forgotten thoughts, Links, and Links per thought.
- **Types and Tags** — Thought types, Link types, and Tags.
- **Notes and Attachments** — a table with **Type**, **Size**, and **Count** columns breaking down the brain's storage: **Notes**, **Internal files**, **Internal folders**, **Notes images**, **Icons**, **Other data**, and a bold **Total storage used** row that matches the brain's cloud-storage figure. Below the total come **External files** (marked *Not included in storage used*), **External folders**, **Web links**, and — on synced brains — **Light synced files** with their remotely stored size (marked *Stored remotely*).

It also shows the date generated and the brain's ID. On the desktop and mobile apps, a brain stored on this device also shows its **Brain folder** — two folder names such as **U01/B03** that identify which folder inside TheBrain's brain data holds this brain's files. Brains in the web app, and cloud brains not stored on this device, don't show it.



How to Open It

Open **Statistics** from the brain's settings (the **Statistics** tab). In the Mac desktop app you can also choose **Brain > Statistics...** in the menu bar. It opens read-only — it's a report, not a place to make changes.

- The **Forgotten thoughts** count here pairs with the cleanup options in *Forgetting and Deleting Thoughts*.
- Statistics counts what a brain contains. To see which thoughts were visited, and by which user, see Brain Activity Report.

Related Topics

- Thought History

1.1.7 Brain Activity Report

Overview

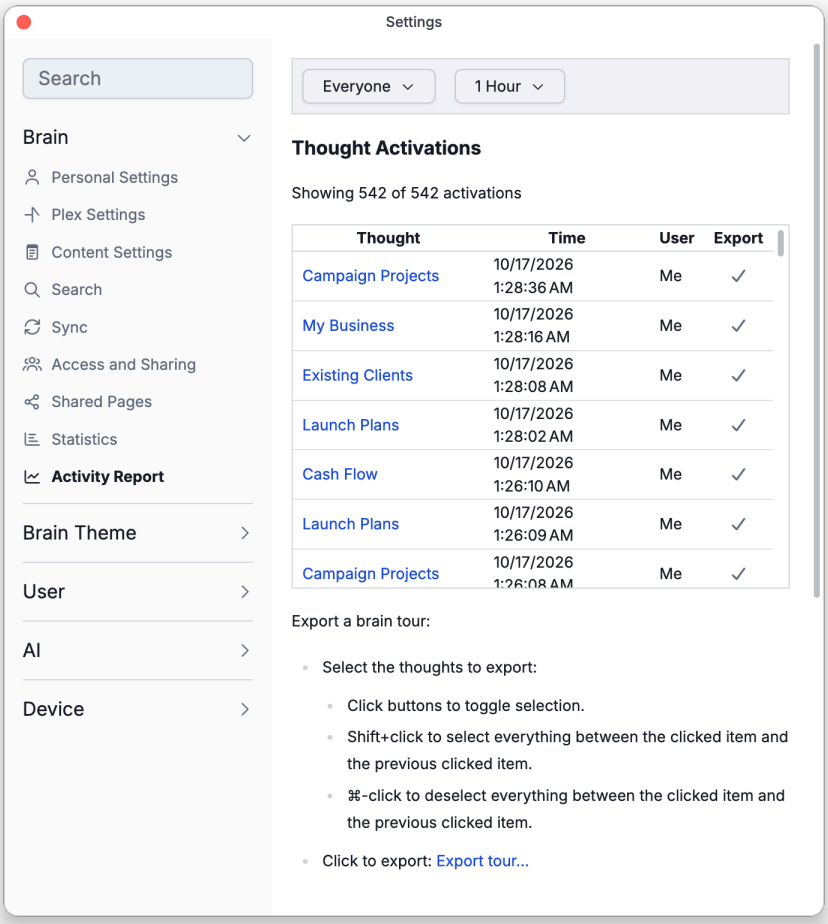
The **Activity Report** shows which thoughts in a brain were recently *activated* — that is, visited — along with when and by which user. It also ranks the thoughts by how many times they were activated. The report is about navigation only; for a record of the changes made to a brain, see Thought History.

The report is for the brain's admin. You have to be signed in and have admin access to the brain. Anyone else who opens the tab sees the message *Access to this resource has been denied.*

How to Open the Activity Report

1. Open the brain's settings: choose **Brain Settings...** from the brain's right-click menu in the brains list, or from **Main Menu > Brain** while the brain is open.
2. Under **Brain**, select the **Activity Report** tab.

In the Mac desktop app you can also choose **Brain > Activity Report...** in the menu bar.



How to Read the Report

Two menus at the top set what the report covers:

- **Whose activity** — **Everyone**, **Me**, or **Custom**, which asks for a user ID.
- **How far back** — **1 Hour**, **4 Hours**, **12 Hours**, **24 Hours**, **2 Days**, or **7 Days**.

The report opens on **Everyone** and **1 Hour**. Below the menus are two tables:

- **Thought Activations** — one row for each activation, with the thought, the time, and the user. The user is shown as **Me**, as **Anonymous** when no signed-in user is attached to the activation, or as a user ID. People are not shown by name. When the same user activates the same thought again within five minutes, with no other activation in between, the repeat is not listed.
- **Thoughts Ordered By Activation Count** — each thought with the number of times it was activated, the most activated first.

A line above each table gives the number of activations or thoughts found, and the ranking lists at most 1,000 thoughts. Select a thought's name in either table to go to that thought.

What the Report Covers on Each Platform

Where you open the report decides which activity it can see:

- **In a browser** — the report reads the activity that TheBrain's web service records, so it covers the activations made in the web app by everyone who viewed the brain there. Activations made in the desktop and mobile apps are not included.
- **In the desktop and mobile apps** — activity is recorded on the device, and the report lists only the activations made in the app on that device. What other people did, and what you did in a browser or on another device, is not included.

How to Export a Brain Tour

A brain tour is a sequence of thoughts that a viewer steps through one at a time. You can build one from the activations in the report:

1. In **Thought Activations**, click the check button in the **Export** column for each activation you want in the tour. You need at least two. `Shift`-click (`⇧`-click on Mac) selects everything between that row and the row you clicked before, and `Ctrl`-click (`⌘`-click on Mac) deselects that range. Click a selected row's check button again to deselect just that row.
2. Below the table, choose **Export tour...** and enter a name for the tour.

TheBrain creates a new thought with that name and attaches the tour to it. The new thought is not linked to any other thought, so use search to find it by name. A message confirms that the thought was created and tells you to send a link to that thought to share the tour. Whoever opens the link needs access to the thoughts in the tour.

To play a tour, open the tour attachment on that thought. A bar appears with the tour's name, arrows for the previous and next thought, and an **Exit Tour** button. A tour also starts by itself when the brain is opened directly on that thought — by a link to the thought, or with **Open in New Tab** — and the tour is the thought's only attachment. In the desktop app, it does not start when you open the brain from the brains list, even if the brain reopens on that thought.

- The report is read-only.
- For counts of what a brain contains rather than what was visited, see Brain Statistics.

Related Topics

- Brain Access and Sharing
- Settings Overview

1.1.8 Find in Brain

Overview

Find in Brain finds exact text, or a pattern, everywhere it appears in one part of your brain: thought names, labels, link labels, notes, external attachment paths or attached URLs. Each result can be clicked to go to it. With **Replace** shown, it also changes every match in one step, after showing you each change side by side.

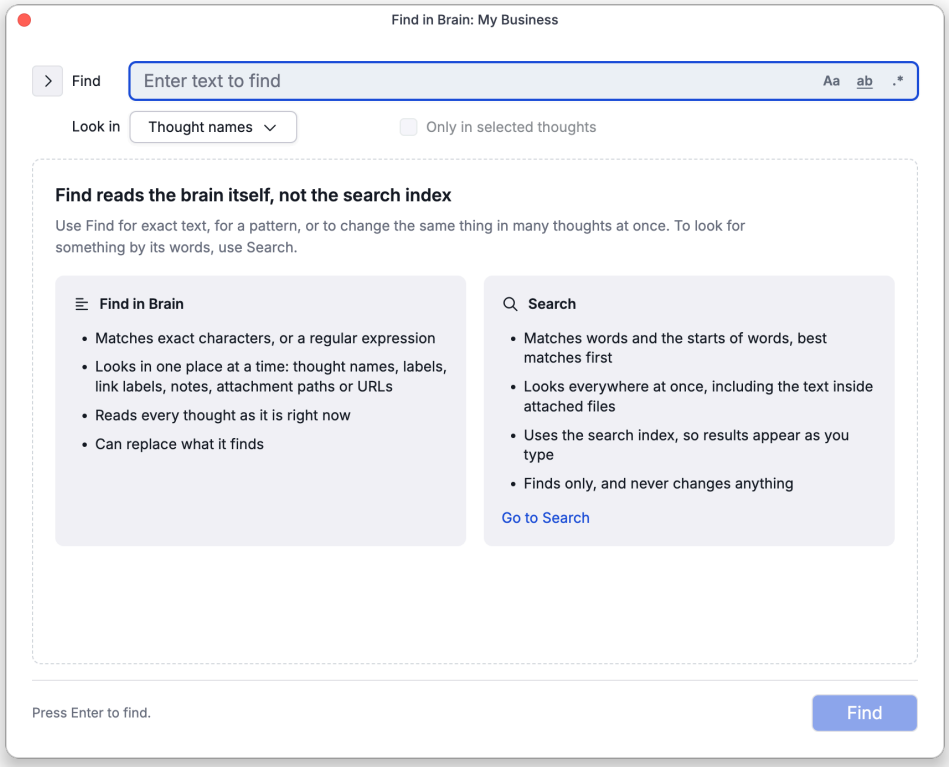
Find and Search

Find in Brain and Search both look for text in the brain, in different ways. Before your first find, the dialog explains the difference:

- **Find in Brain** matches the exact characters you type, or a regular expression. It looks in one place at a time, reads every thought as it is right now, and can replace what it finds.
- **Search** matches words and the starts of words, with the best matches first. It looks everywhere at once, including the text inside attached files. It uses the search index, so results appear as you type, and it never changes anything (see Finding and Creating Thoughts).

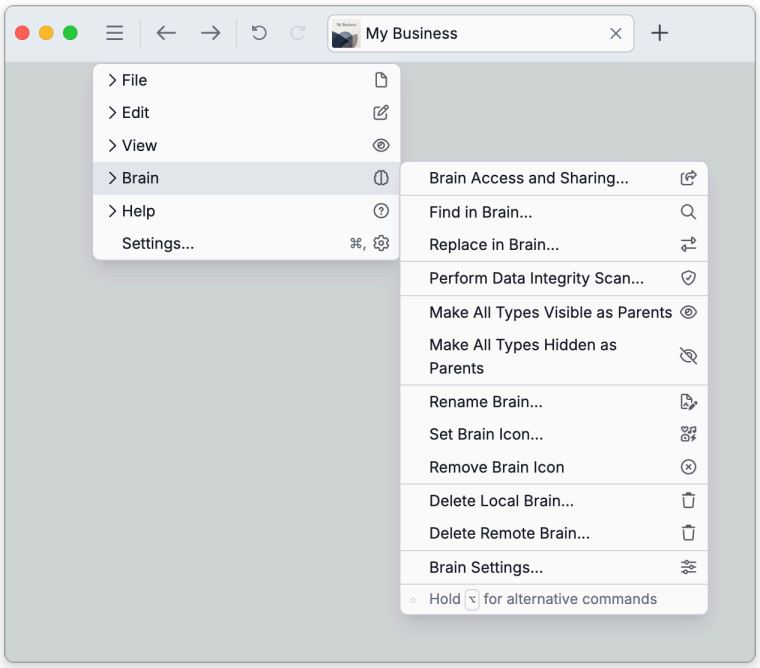
To move a search over, choose **Find Exact Text in this Brain...** from **Search Options**, the gear menu by the search results, while the search box has text in it. Search closes, and Find in Brain opens with your search text already found, looking where Search found it: in thought names,

labels, link labels or notes. **Go to Search** under the explanation does the opposite: it closes the dialog and searches for the text in the **Find** box.

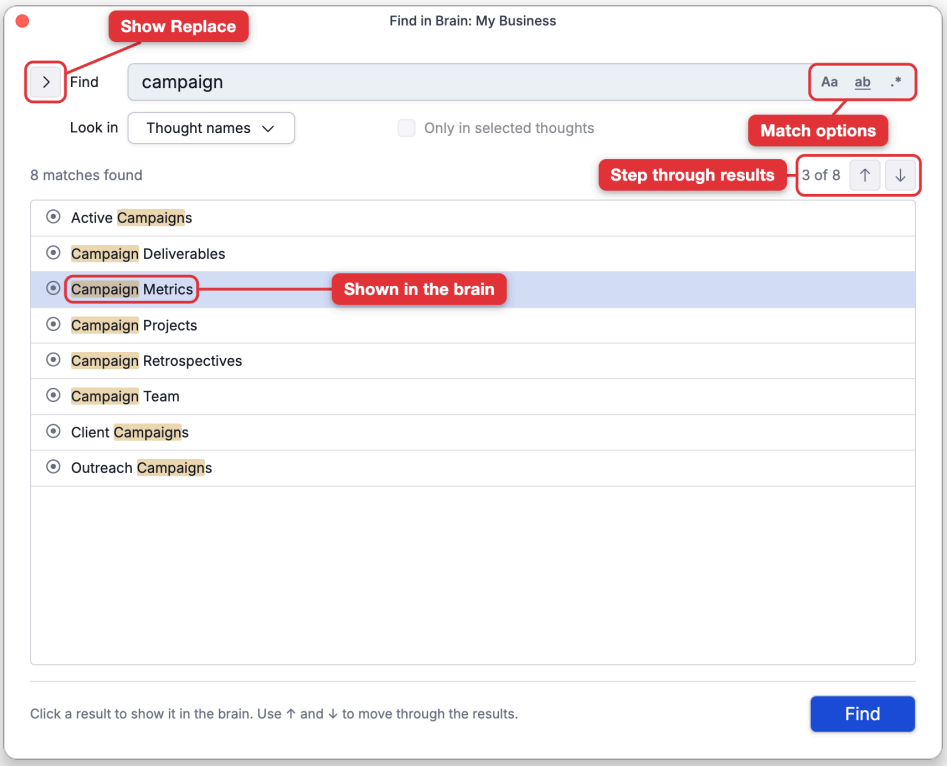


How to Find Text in a Brain

1. Open **Main Menu > Brain > Find in Brain**. In the desktop app on a Mac, it is also in the menu bar's **Brain** menu. (There is no default keyboard shortcut. `Ctrl+F` (`⌘F` on Mac) finds text in the note you're editing instead.)
2. Type the text into **Find**.
3. Choose where to look with **Look in**: **Thought names**, **Thought labels**, **Link labels**, **Notes**, **External attachment paths** or **Attached URLs**.
4. Press `Enter` or select **Find**.
5. Click a result to go to it in the brain. Use `↑` and `↓`, or the arrow buttons above the results, to move from one result to the next.

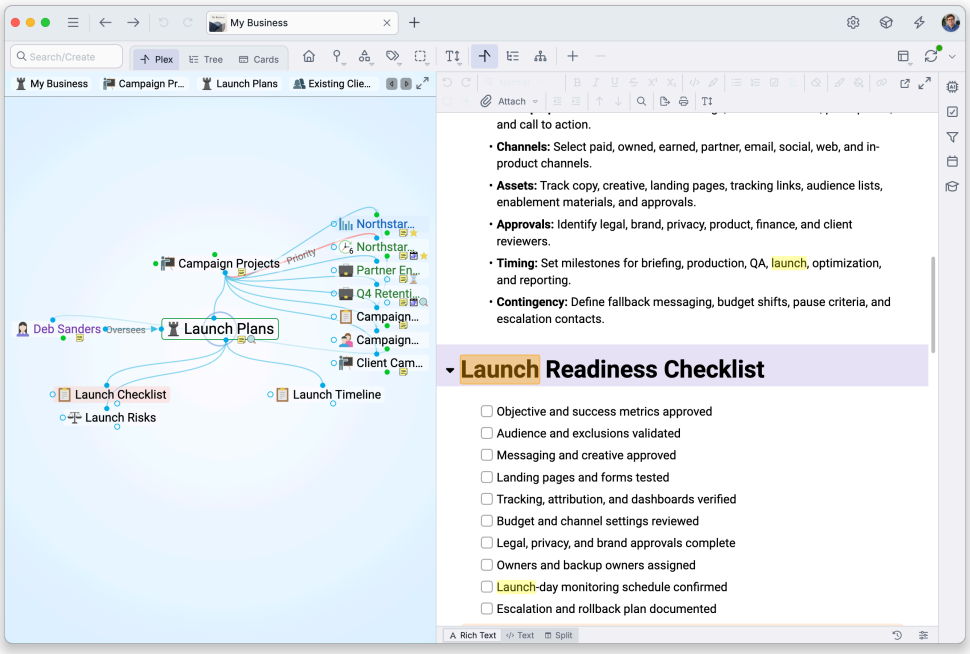


The results list each match with the found text highlighted, and the count above them says how many there are. The result you went to stays highlighted, and the count beside the arrow buttons says which one it is, such as **3 of 8**. The list shows 100 results at a time: select **Show More** at its end for the next 100, or move past the last listed result with ↓ or the arrow button, which lists them too.



Clicking a result shows it in the tab the dialog was opened from:

- **A thought name, label, attachment path or URL** — Its thought becomes the active thought.
- **A link label** — The thought at the start of the link becomes active, with the link selected.
- **A line of a note** — The note's thought becomes active (for a note on a link, the thought at the start of the link, with the link selected), and the note opens scrolled to that match. Every match in the note is highlighted, and the one you clicked stands out.



When you change the **Find** text, a match option, **Look in** or the **Replace with** text, the results stay listed but dim until you find again. You can still click them.

Match Options

Three switches at the right end of the **Find** box change how the text is matched. Each one is highlighted while it is on.

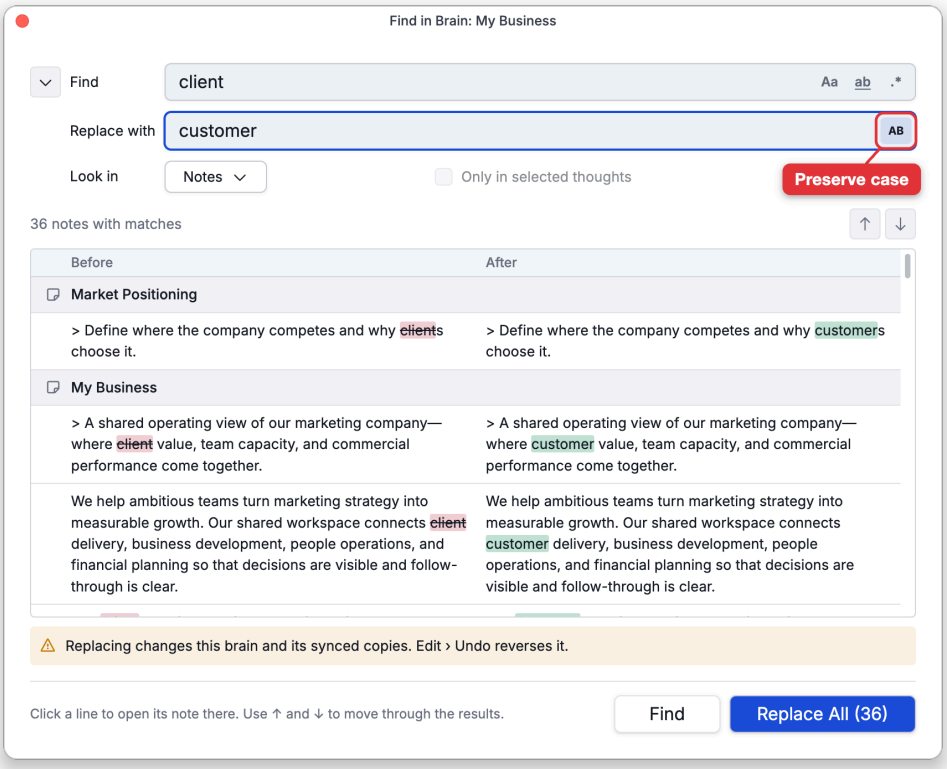
- **Aa — Case sensitive** — Match capital and small letters exactly. It is off by default, so "brain" also finds "Brain".
- **ab — Whole word only** — Match the text only as a whole word, so "plan" doesn't find "planning".
- **.* — Use regular expression** — Read **Find** as a pattern instead of literal text (see *Regular Expressions and the Replacement Text*). A pattern that isn't valid, or one that takes too long to match, shows a message in red under the **Find** box until you change it.

Whole word only and **Use regular expression** can't be on together. Turning one on turns the other off.

Only in selected thoughts, beside **Look in**, limits the find to the thoughts selected in the brain. It is turned on when you open the dialog with thoughts selected, and it isn't available when looking in link labels, which belong to no thought.

How to Replace Text Across a Brain

1. Open **Main Menu > Brain > Replace in Brain**, or select the arrow button to the left of **Find** to show **Replace with** in a dialog that is already open. The same button hides it again.
2. Type the text to **Find** and the text to **Replace with**, and choose where to **Look in**.
3. Press `Enter` or select **Find**. Each result now shows the text **Before** and **After** the change, with the old text struck through and the new text highlighted.
4. Check the changes, then select **Replace All**. The button shows how many items it will change.



Nothing is changed until you select **Replace All**. Above it, a reminder says that replacing changes this brain and its synced copies, and that **Edit > Undo** reverses it: the whole replace is a single undo step, named "Find and Replace". Consider a backup first (see Backup to Brain Archive). When the replace finishes, the dialog closes.

Preserve case, the **AB** switch at the end of the **Replace with** box, makes each replacement copy the capitalization of the text it replaces, so "client" becomes "customer" and "Client" becomes "Customer". It is on by default. It is available when **Case sensitive** is off and you're looking in thought names, thought labels, link labels or notes.

Regular Expressions and the Replacement Text

With **Use regular expression** on, **Find** is read as a regular expression in the .NET syntax, and **Replace with** can reuse what was matched: `$1`, `$2`, and so on for numbered groups, `${name}` for a named group, and `$&` for the whole match.

Replace with is read for these substitutions even when **Use regular expression** is off. If you want a literal dollar sign in the replacement — a price, for example — type `$$`.

What Each Search Covers

- **Thought names** and **Thought labels** — every thought in the brain, including types, tags, and forgotten thoughts.
- **Link labels** — link type names as well as the labels on links.
- **Notes** — notes on links as well as notes on thoughts.
- **External attachment paths** — linked folders as well as linked files.

What Is Left Alone in Notes

When looking in **Notes**, TheBrain changes the text you read and leaves the parts that make a note work, so a replace does not break links, images or formatting:

- The address of a link or an image — the part in parentheses after the link text — is never changed, and neither is a `brain://` thought link. The visible text of a link is replaced like any other text.
- HTML tags and comments, such as the ones that color text or align a block, are never changed.
- Inline code and fenced code blocks, including diagrams, are skipped.

Notes are matched one line at a time, so a match cannot run across a line break.

Note Results

When looking in **Notes**, the results are grouped by note, and the count says how many notes have matches. Each note shows up to five of its matching lines, with a "+N more" row when it

has more. Lines are shown as the note stores them, in Markdown. The list shows 100 notes at a time, and **Replace All** changes every note that was found.

Rows Shown in Red

With **Replace** shown, an **After** shown in red is a change that TheBrain will skip, and the message **Some results have validation errors and cannot be replaced** appears under the results. A change is skipped when the result would be longer than 1,024 characters, or when it would leave a thought name, an external attachment path, or a URL empty. (A thought label or a link label may be emptied.) Every other result is still replaced.

Items Changed After the Find

Replace All changes only what is still as the find saw it. An item that changed after you found it, such as a note you edited in the meantime, is left alone, and the notification that reports the replace says how many items were left as they are. Find again to include them. Notes that are open with unsaved edits are saved first, so those edits count as changes.

- Once you select **Replace All**, it runs to the end. There is no cancel, and closing the dialog does not stop it: progress carries on in a notification titled **Replacing in** followed by the brain's name, and a dialog reopened for that brain follows the same run. You can't start another replace in that brain until it finishes.
- Replacing requires write access to the brain; on a read-only brain the replacement will not apply.
- To find and replace within just the note you're editing, use the in-note find bar instead — see Find and Replace in Notes.
- The dialog's title names the brain it looks in. Results can be clicked only while that brain is open in the tab the dialog belongs to; otherwise the dialog says to open the brain in a tab.
- On the desktop app the dialog opens in a window of its own beside the brain window, and the brain stays usable while it is open, so you can change the selection or look at a result. It closes when you close its tab or switch to another tab.
- In a browser the dialog sits over the brain without darkening it, and you can drag it aside. On a phone it fills the screen, and it closes when you tap a result, to show it. On a phone, **Find in Brain** and **Replace in Brain** are also on the **Actions** tab of the panel that the menu button (≡) opens (see Using TheBrain on a Phone).

Related Topics

- Finding and Creating Thoughts
- Selecting Multiple Thoughts
- Backup to Brain Archive

1.1.9 Featured and Public Brains

Overview

Beyond your own brains, TheBrain showcases **featured public brains** — brains that others have made public for anyone to explore. They're a good way to see what a fully built-out brain looks like and to browse interesting collections of knowledge without creating anything yourself.

Where to Find Them

Featured public brains appear in **TheBrain on the web**, whenever there are brains to feature. The installed desktop and mobile apps don't list them, so open TheBrain in a browser to explore them.

- Before you sign in, the welcome screen lists them under **Explore someone else's brain...** (see Welcome and First Launch).
- When you're signed in but don't have any brains yet, the **brains list** shows a **Featured Public Brains** section below the welcome message so you can explore right away.
- Once you have brains of your own, **Featured Public Brains** is an entry with a globe icon in the brains list's **Library** sidebar, or a tab across the top of the list when the sidebar is hidden. Select it to browse the curated collection.

Select one to open it. You're browsing it **read-only** — you can navigate its thoughts, notes, and attachments, but you can't change it, since it isn't yours. To keep a featured brain at hand, right-click it in the brains list (long-press on a touch screen) and choose **Favorite Brain**: it is then listed with your own brains (see The Brains List).

- To widen your *search* to include public brains, see Searching Other and Public Brains.
- To make one of *your* brains public so others can find it, see Brain Access and Sharing.

Related Topics

- Brain Access and Sharing
- Welcome and First Launch

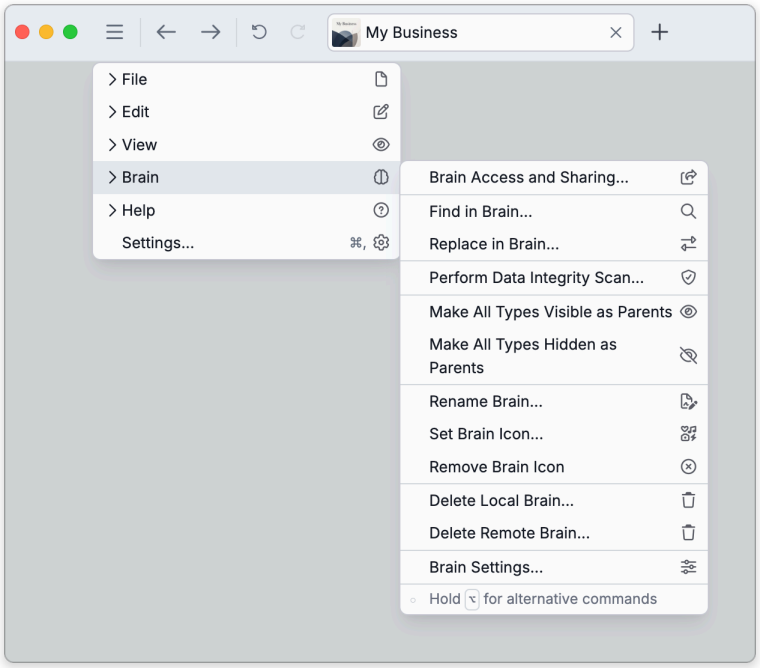
1.1.10 Deleting a Brain

Overview

Deleting a brain is **permanent** and **cannot be undone**, so TheBrain treats it carefully. There are two kinds of deletion depending on where the copy lives — the **local** copy on your device and the **remote** (cloud) copy — and both require you to confirm that you understand what you're doing.

Local vs. Remote

- **Delete Local Brain** — removes the copy stored on your device's local filesystem. (Available on the desktop and mobile apps.)
- **Delete Remote Brain** (shown as **Delete Brain** on the web and in the Mac menu bar) — removes the brain's content from the server. This affects the cloud copy that syncs across your devices.



Deleting the **remote** (cloud) copy requires **admin** access to the brain. Deleting your own **local** copy does not — anyone can remove the copy stored on their device.

What Each Deletion Leaves Behind

The two deletions are independent: neither one removes the other copy.

Delete Local Brain removes only the copy on the device you are using. The brain's files are deleted from the device directly; they are not moved to the Recycle Bin or Trash. Nothing in the cloud changes, and nobody else's copy changes.

- **If the brain was synced** — the cloud copy and the copies on other devices stay as they are. The brain remains in your brains list as a **Remote** brain, and selecting it offers to download it again. Changes you made on this device that had not synced yet are lost with the local copy, because the deletion does not sync first. Sync before you delete if the device holds work you want to keep.
- **If the brain was never synced** (a **Local** brain) — the local copy was the only copy, so the brain is gone.

Delete Remote Brain removes the brain from the cloud for everyone who had access to it, and frees the cloud storage it used.

- **Your downloaded copy stays.** Deleting the remote brain from the desktop or mobile app does not delete the copy on that device. The copy stays in your brains list and becomes a **Local** brain, with no cloud copy behind it.
- **Other people's downloaded copies stay too.** A copy that someone already downloaded to a device, including your own other devices, is not removed. It stays on that device as a local brain.
- **Anything that was only in the cloud is gone.** People who used the brain only on the web, or who had not downloaded it, no longer have it.

How to Delete

1. Right-click the brain in the brains list and choose the delete option (or use **Main Menu > Brain**).
2. In the confirmation dialog, read the warning — it spells out that this *cannot be undone* — and tick both boxes: *Delete all of the information in this brain* and *I understand that this cannot be undone*.
3. Choose **Delete**.



- **Back up first if you're unsure.** You can save a brain to an archive before deleting it — see Backup to Brain Archive.
- If **Delete Local Brain** stops with the message *Could not proceed because a file contained in this brain is open. Please close all files and try again.*, a file in the brain's folder is in use, usually because another program has it open. None of the brain's files have been deleted; close the file and delete again.
- If a brain uses light-synced attachments, deleting the **remote** copy can leave those attachments undownloadable. On the desktop and mobile apps TheBrain blocks the deletion until you either **Disable Light Sync** (so all attachments are stored locally) or delete the local copy first; on the web it shows this as a warning.

Related Topics

- Syncing Brains

1.2 Creating and Connecting Thoughts

1.2.1 Creating Thoughts and Links

Overview

A brain grows one thought at a time. You create a thought and connect it to an existing one, and the connection's *direction* is what gives it meaning. There are three directions:

- **Child** — the new thought belongs under the active thought. Children are grouped together beneath their parent.
- **Parent** — the new thought sits above the active thought; the active thought becomes one of its children.
- **Jump** — a lateral connection. Jumps relate two thoughts without forming a parent/child group, which is useful for "see also" style links between ideas that aren't hierarchically related.

These directions correspond to the **gates** around the active thought in the Plex — parents above, children below, jumps to the side (see The Plex). The gates show you where each relationship lives; the sections below cover the actual ways to create a thought.

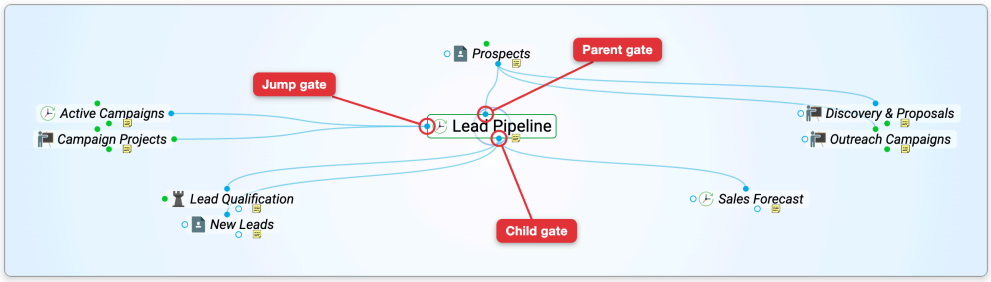
Ways to Create a Thought

There are several ways to create a thought. Most of them end the same way: a small **Create Thought** prompt appears where you type the new thought's name and press `Enter`. The Search/Create box is the exception: you type the name in the box itself. Unless you're making an orphan, the new thought is linked, in the direction you chose, to the thought you started from. By default the new thought does **not** become the active thought; to land on each new thought instead, see *Jumping to a New Thought as You Create It* below.

Drag a gate to empty space

Each thought has **gates** — parent (top), child (bottom), and jump (side). **Drag a gate out to an empty spot in the Plex and release it.** A Create Thought prompt opens at that spot; type the

name and the new thought is created and linked through that gate.



Note that *clicking* a gate does not create anything — a plain click navigates to (activates) that thought. **Dragging** the gate is what creates. On a touch device, **press and hold** the thought to open its radial gate menu, then drag the matching direction out to an empty spot.

Use the Search/Create box

Type a name into the **Search/Create** box in the brain toolbar, then click the **Create Child** button beside it to add it as a child of the active thought. Holding `Shift`, `Ctrl` or `Ctrl+Shift` (`⇧`, `^` or `^⇧` on Mac) changes the button to **Create Parent**, **Create Jump** or **Create Orphan**. While `Ctrl` (`^` on Mac) is held, press `Enter` to create the thought; on a Mac, a click on the button with `^` held doesn't create it. The Create button always makes a **new** thought. To connect a thought that already exists, use the **Create Link** button on that thought's row in the search results instead — see *Linking Two Existing Thoughts* below. See also Finding and Creating Thoughts.

Keyboard shortcuts

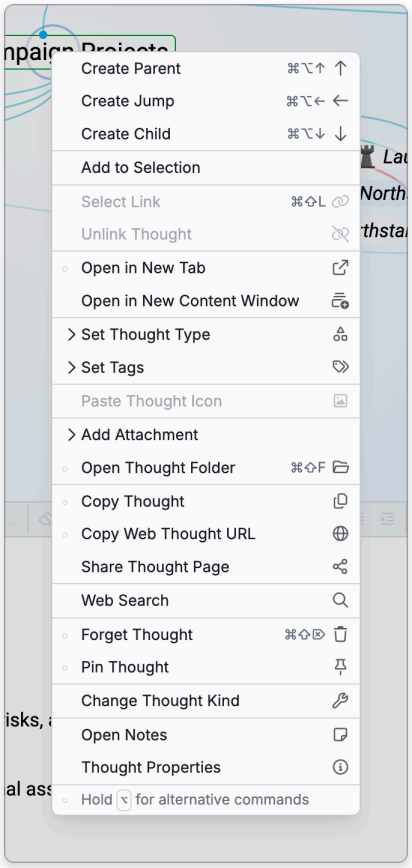
You can create a linked thought without leaving the keyboard. The default shortcuts, which you can change in **Settings > User > Keyboard**, are:

Create…	Default shortcut
Child	`Ctrl+Alt+↓` (`⌥⌘↓` on Mac)
Parent	`Ctrl+Alt+↑` (`⌥⌘↑` on Mac)
Jump	`Ctrl+Alt+←` (`⌥⌘←` on Mac)

Each opens the Create Thought prompt with that direction already set — type the name and press `Enter`.

Menus

Right-click a thought and choose **Create Parent**, **Create Jump**, or **Create Child**. The same three commands are in the thought's **More Actions** (⋯) menu in the properties header, and in the Mac desktop app they are also in the menu bar's **Thought** menu. **Right-click empty Plex space** for **Create Orphan**.



Several thoughts at once, and labels

In the Create Thought prompt and the Search/Create box, a few characters in the name do extra work:

- **Semicolon — several thoughts.** `Alpha; Beta; Gamma` creates three thoughts, all linked the same way.
- **Vertical bar — a label.** `Paris | Capital of France` creates the thought **Paris** with the label **Capital of France**.
- **Comma at the start or end — the source thought's name.** When the new thought is being linked to a thought (so not for an orphan), `, Budget` created from **Projects** is named

Projects, Budget, and `Budget,` is named **Budget, Projects**. See Context-Sensitive Thought Names.

In the Create Thought prompt, the **Set Type** and **Set Tags** buttons apply the type and tags you pick to every thought the prompt creates.

Jumping to a New Thought as You Create It

When you create a child, parent, or jump, TheBrain links the new thought and leaves you where you were. In the Plex, if you started from a thought other than the active one (by dragging its gate or right-clicking it), that thought becomes the active thought so the new one is in view. An orphan is the exception: it becomes the active thought as soon as it's created, since nothing else would bring it into view.

To jump to each new thought as you make it, turn on **Activate last created thought** in **Settings > User > General**, under **Thought Behavior**. It is off by default. See General and Appearance.

In the **Outline** and **Mind Map** layouts, a thought you add from the Create Thought prompt that the layout can already show is added in place, and the active thought doesn't change even with the setting on.

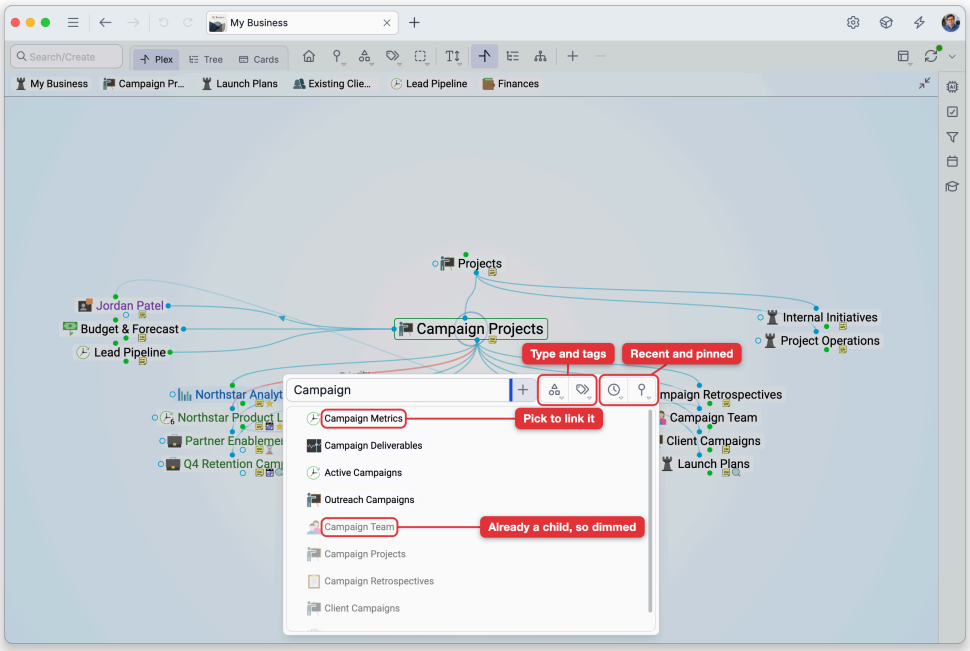
Linking Two Existing Thoughts

To connect two thoughts that **both already exist**, link them through a **gate**, or find one of them in the search box and link it from the results:

- **Both thoughts are visible in the Plex** — Drag a **gate** from one thought and drop it **directly onto the other thought**. The gate you drag sets the relationship: drag the **child** gate onto it to make it a child, the **parent** gate to make it a parent, or a **jump** gate for a lateral link. (Holding `Shift` (⇧ on Mac) while you drop a **parent** gate reparents the thought: the new parent replaces its current one instead of being added as another — see Moving and Reordering.)
- **The other thought isn't on screen** — Open the **Create Thought** prompt (drag a gate to empty space, right-click the thought and choose **Create Child**, **Create Parent**, or **Create Jump**, or use a create shortcut), type the other thought's name, and **pick it from the results list**. Choosing an existing match links to it through that gate instead of creating a duplicate. The thought you're linking from, and any thought already linked to it in that same direction, still appear in the results but are dimmed and can't be chosen; clicking

one shows a short explanation under the list (**This is the source thought**, or that the thought is already linked). A thought linked in a different direction stays selectable — for example, an existing jump can still be picked as a child. With the keyboard, press `↓` and then `Enter` right after typing to pick the first match as soon as it appears; `Enter` on its own always creates a new thought from what you typed. You can pick several matches in a row: each pick adds that thought and clears what you typed while the results stay listed, so you can pick another match or start a new search without deleting anything. The **Recent Thoughts** (clock) and **Pins** buttons at the right end of the prompt list up to ten thoughts you visited recently and your pins; choosing one links it in the same way.

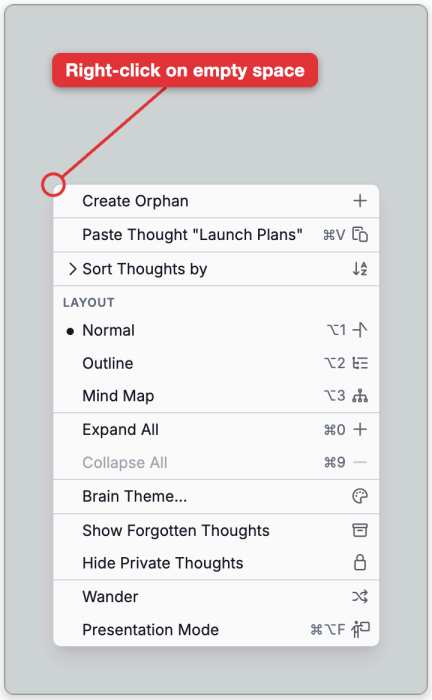
- **From the search box** — Activate one of the two thoughts, then type the other's name in the toolbar **Search/Create** box. Each thought in the results for the brain you're in has a **Create Link** button — a link icon at the right end of its row, shown when you point at the row and always visible on a touch screen. Click it and choose **Link as Child**, **Link as Parent**, or **Link as Jump**: the thought you found becomes a child, parent, or jump of the active thought, and nothing new is created. The rows of the **Recent Thoughts** list, shown while the box is empty, have the same button. The button is offered only in a brain you can edit, and results from other brains don't have it. (Clicking a row itself just jumps to that thought.)



A thought can have as many parents, children, and jumps as you like. Linking the same thought into several places is how one thought ends up with **multiple parents** — it appears in each place without ever being copied.

Creating an Orphan Thought

An **orphan** is a thought with no links yet — a standalone starting point you can connect later. Create one with the **Orphan** option in the Search/Create box, by **right-clicking empty Plex space** and choosing **Create Orphan**, or with the default shortcut `Ctrl+Alt+→` (`⌥⌘→` on Mac).



Unlinking

Removing a link does **not** delete the thought — it just disconnects the two. Right-click the link and choose **Unlink**, or right-click the thought and choose **Unlink Thought**. The thought remains in the brain and can be reached through its other connections or by searching. To remove a thought entirely, see Forgetting and Deleting.

Related Topics

- General and Appearance
- Context-Sensitive Thought Names

1.2.2 Link Types and Properties

Overview

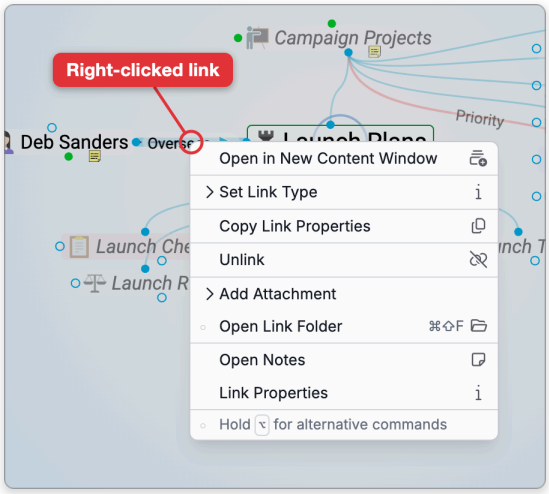
Links are the connections between thoughts, and TheBrain has three of them, distinguished by the **gate** they come from:

- **Child links** (bottom gate) — organize ideas hierarchically beneath a parent.
- **Parent links** (top gate) — create broader categories above a thought.
- **Jump links** (side gates) — connect related ideas laterally, with no hierarchy.

Every thought can have unlimited links of any of these kinds, so your ideas connect in as many ways as they naturally relate. Beyond its direction, each individual link can carry its own properties — a label, a link type, a visual direction, a thickness, a color, and even its own notes — so the connection itself can mean something, not just the thoughts it joins. For how to create links in the first place, see Creating Thoughts and Links.

Editing a Link

1. Right-click the link between two thoughts in the Plex.
2. Choose **Link Properties** to open the link edit dialog.

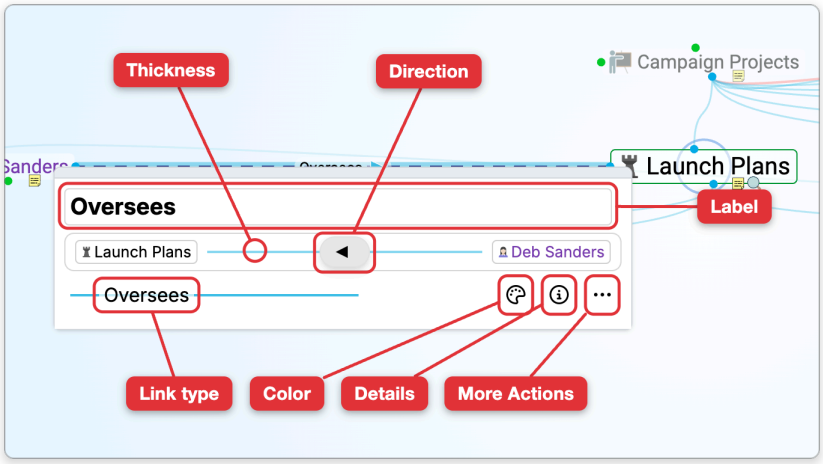


With a mouse there is a quicker way: click the link once to select it, then click it again to open **Link Properties** directly. Holding `Alt` (`⌥` on Mac) while clicking a link opens the dialog in one

step. The dialog opens just below the link.

From top to bottom, the dialog holds:

- **Label** — A name for the link, such as "reports to" or "depends on", shown along the connection, in the box at the top.
- **Thickness** — Click the line between the two thought names to show a slider, from **Default** through 0.5 to 15.
- **Link direction** — Click the button in the middle of that line to cycle through no direction, an arrow toward one thought, and an arrow toward the other. This sets only the arrow drawn on the link. To make the link **One Way**, see *One-Way Links* below.
- **Link type** — The **Type** button at the lower left, or the chip of the link's type once it has one; see *Link Types* below.
- **Color** — The palette button sets a custom color for the link.
- **Details** — The info button shows when the link was created and last modified, and its ID.
- **More Actions** — The **…** button holds **Unlink** and **Edit Link Types...**.



One-Way Links

A **one-way** link can be followed only from its source — the thought the arrow points away from. When the thought the arrow points *to* is active, the link is left out of the Plex, and so is the thought at its other end if nothing else connects it. From the source thought the link shows as usual. There are two exceptions: a one-way link stays visible when its source is the thought you just came from, and while the link itself is selected.

To make a link one-way:

1. Right-click the link in the Plex and choose **Link Properties**.
2. Right-click the direction indicator on the line between the two thought names. On a touch screen, press and hold it.
3. Choose **One Way** from the menu that appears. The item shows a check mark while one-way is on; choose it again to turn it off.

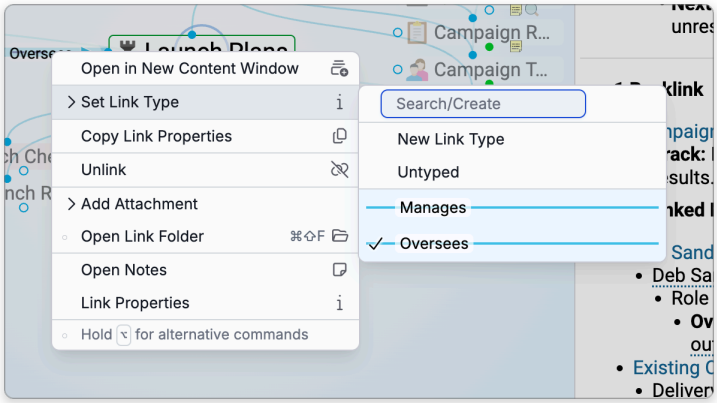
If the link had no direction, turning **One Way** on gives it an arrow from the thought shown on the left to the one on the right. While **One Way** is on, clicking the indicator only flips the arrow. There is no separate "Two Way" setting: a link is two-way unless **One Way** is on.

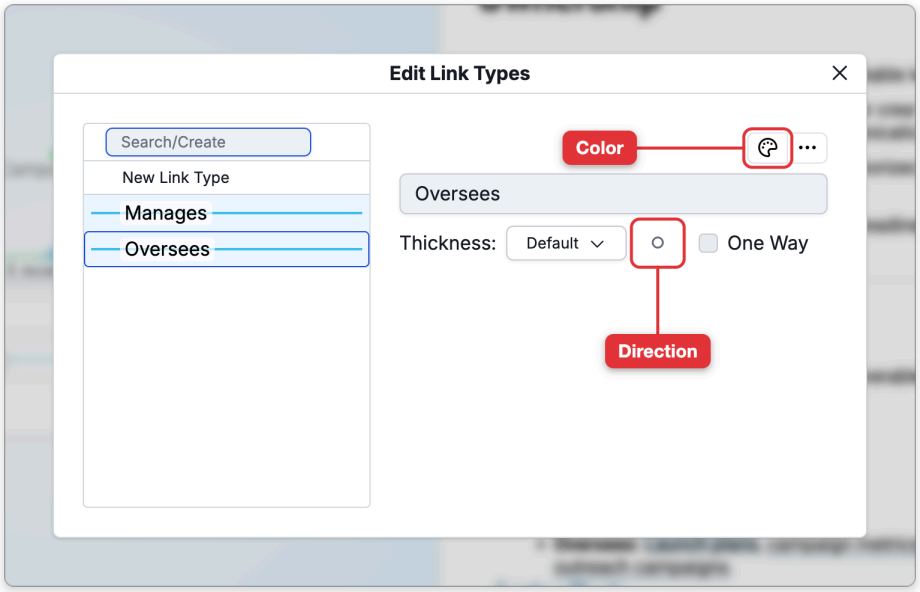
When you edit a link type, the **Edit Link Types** dialog has a **One Way** checkbox beside the **Link Direction** button.

Link Types

A **link type** is a reusable definition you can apply to many links so related connections look and read the same way.

- **Set Link Type** — Right-click a link and choose **Set Link Type**, then pick one of the brain's link types, or type a name in the **Search/Create** box and choose **New Link Type** to create that type and apply it. **Untyped** takes the type off the link.
- **Edit Link Types** — Choose **Edit Link Types...** from **More Actions** in **Link Properties**. The dialog lists the brain's link types; pick one to rename it or set its **Thickness**, direction, **One Way** and color. Its **…** button holds **Delete Link Type**.
- **Copy / Paste Link Properties** — Copy the properties from one link and paste them onto another to apply the same look quickly.





Link Notes

A link can hold its own note, independent of the thoughts it connects. Right-click a link and choose **Open Notes** to write notes about the relationship itself. (This right-click option is available on desktop and web, not on mobile.)

Selecting and Unlinking

- **Select a link** — The default shortcut to select the link to the active thought is `Ctrl+Shift+L` (`⇧⌘L` on Mac).
- **Unlink** — Right-click the link and choose **Unlink** to disconnect the two thoughts. This does **not** delete either thought: both remain and can still be reached through their other links or by searching. To remove a thought entirely, see Forgetting and Deleting Thoughts. If the link has its own note or attachments, TheBrain warns you before removing it (e.g. *This link has a note. Are you sure you want to remove it?*).



- Link types are separate from thought types — a **thought** type classifies thoughts, while a **link** type classifies the connections between them.

Related Topics

- The Plex

1.2.3 Moving and Reordering Thoughts

Overview

As a brain grows, you'll want to tidy how thoughts sit relative to one another — changing whether a connected thought is a parent, child, jump, or sibling, putting a parent's children in a sensible order, and choosing how each group of thoughts is sorted. None of this moves a thought "out" of the brain; it only changes the connections and the arrangement.

Changing How a Thought Relates

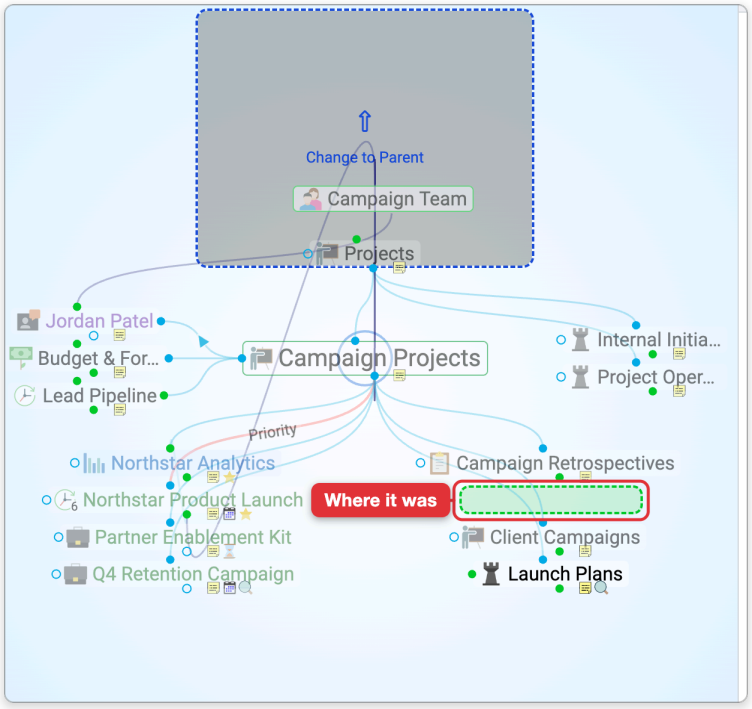
Re-relating thoughts is core to shaping a brain, and you do it by dragging — either the thought itself or one of its gates. Both ways **move the existing link** rather than unlinking and recreating it — so you never end up with a duplicate link, and the connection's history is preserved. If the two thoughts aren't connected yet, the same actions create a fresh link.

Drag the thought (drop zones)

The most direct way: **drag a thought in the Plex and drop it relative to the active (center) thought.** There is a drop zone on each side of the active thought. As you drag, the zone under the pointer is outlined, with an arrow and the change a drop there makes, such as **Change to Parent**, and where you let go sets the new relationship:

Drop it…	…and it becomes a
Above the active thought	**Parent**
Below	**Child**
To the left	**Jump**
To the right	**Sibling** (it joins the active thought's parent)

Dropping the thought back where it started cancels with no change. This is a mouse/pointer gesture (desktop and web).



Drag a gate

Every thought shows **gates** — a parent gate at the top, a child gate at the bottom, and a jump gate on the side. **Drag a gate from one thought onto another thought**, and the two become related by that gate's type:

- Drag thought **T**'s **parent gate** onto **A** → **A becomes a parent of T**.
- Drag **A**'s **jump gate** onto **T** → **A and T become jump-linked**.
- A **child gate** dropped on a target makes that **target a child** of the gate's owner.

While you drag a gate, the thought under the pointer is outlined, so you can tell which thought the link will land on even in a tightly packed list.

Gate dragging has two extra tricks:

- **Drop onto empty space** (not on a thought) to create a brand-new thought that's already linked through that gate.
- `Shift`-drag (`⇧`-drag on Mac) a **parent gate** to *reparent*: it replaces the thought's current normal parent with the new one, instead of adding a second parent.

On a touch device you don't grab the small gate directly — **press and hold a thought** to open its radial gate menu (parent at top, child at bottom, jump on the sides), then drag your finger to the target thought.

Menu and keyboard

A thought's right-click menu has no command for this: **Move to Parent**, **Move to Child**, and **Move to Jump** are not in it, so use one of the two drags above. For example, to turn a child into a jump or a parent, drag it and drop it on the jump or parent drop zone (see the drop-zone table earlier in this topic).

Those three commands are available from the keyboard instead. They have no default shortcuts, but each is listed in **Settings > User > Keyboard**, where you can assign one. The shortcut then acts on the connected thought you are pointing at.

To learn what each direction means, see Creating Thoughts and Links and Link Types and Properties.

Reordering Siblings

Within a group of children, you can set a custom order:

- **Reorder Thought to Beginning** moves a thought to the front of its siblings; **Reorder Thought to End** sends it to the back.
- You can also drag thoughts within a gate to arrange them by hand.

Once you arrange thoughts by hand, that group uses a **custom order**. To discard it and return to the automatic sort, use **Clear Custom Order**, which the Plex's right-click menu lists while the active thought has a custom order. The default shortcut is `Ctrl+Shift+0` (`⇧⌘0` on Mac). When clearing would affect five or more thoughts, TheBrain asks you to confirm first.

Sorting Thoughts

Right-click empty space in the Plex and open **Sort Thoughts by** to choose the order of the thoughts in every gate of the brain:

Sort by	Orders thoughts by
Name	Alphabetical order
Type	Their thought type
Created	When they were created
Modified	When they were last changed
Activated	When they were last visited

Each of these is listed twice: under **Sort by · A to Z, newest first**, and again under **Reversed · Z to A, oldest first** for the opposite direction. While the active thought has a custom order, the menu also starts with **Custom**, which is checked, and **Clear Custom Order**, and the sort you choose orders whatever your hand arrangement doesn't cover. See Sorting and Arranging Thoughts.

- Sorting and custom order change only how thoughts are *displayed*, not their links.
- Moving a thought between gates changes the relationship's meaning — make sure the new direction reflects how the two thoughts actually relate.

Related Topics

- The Plex

1.2.4 Copying and Duplicating Thoughts

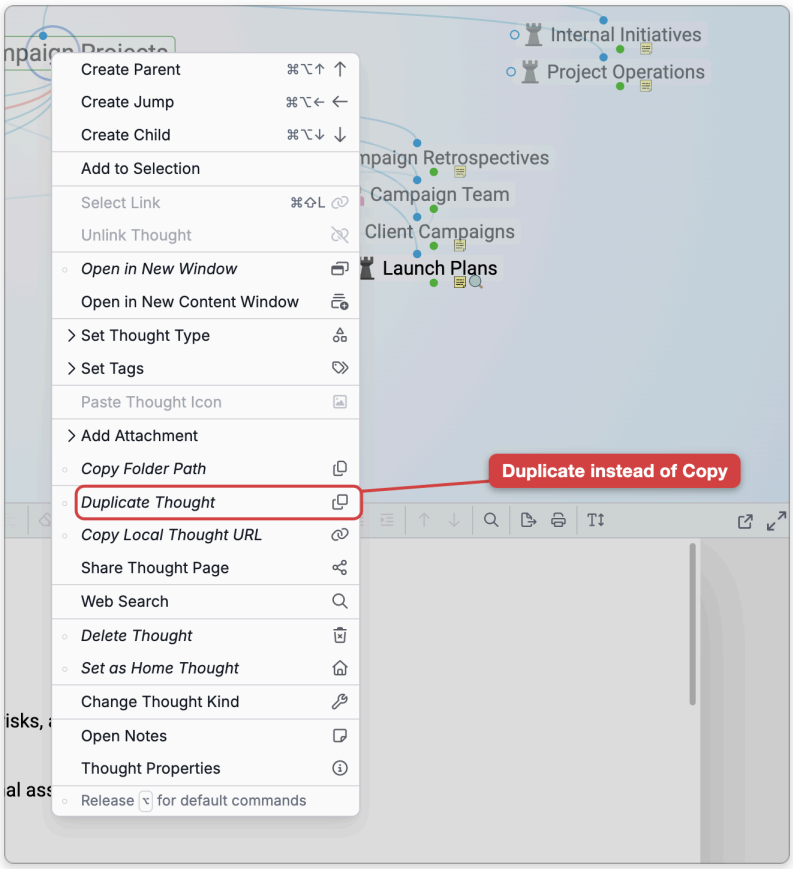
Overview

There are two different things people mean by "copy" a thought: making a **duplicate** thought in the brain, and copying a **link** to a thought so you can paste it somewhere else. TheBrain supports both, plus copying thoughts and pasting them under another thought, and copying a selection of thoughts as plain text.

Duplicating a Thought

Duplicate Thought is an *alternate command*: it takes the place of **Copy Thought** in the menu while you hold a modifier key.

1. Right-click the thought, or open the **More Actions** (⋯) menu in its properties header.
2. Hold `Shift` (`⌥` on Mac) — **Copy Thought** changes to **Duplicate Thought** in the same spot. On a device with no keyboard, tap the *"Tap for alternative commands"* notice at the bottom of the menu instead.
3. Choose **Duplicate Thought**.



In the Mac desktop app, **Duplicate Thought** is also in the menu bar's **Thought** menu, where no modifier is needed. The command isn't available for a type or tag thought, or for a thought you can't edit.

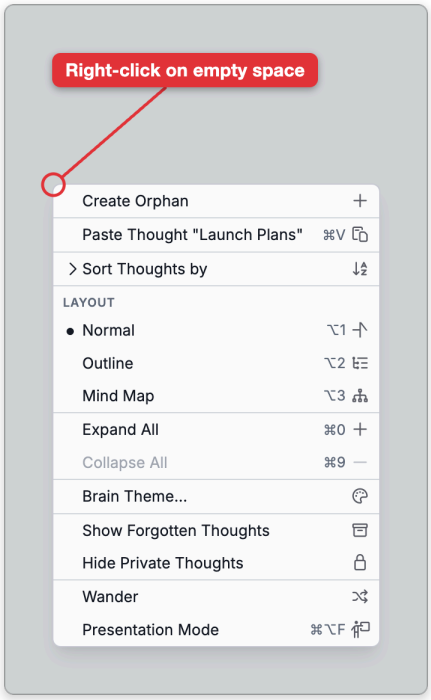
The duplicate is a full copy — it gets the original's **links** (the same parents, children, and jumps), **type**, **tags**, **notes**, **icon**, and **attachments** — and it is also made a child of the original. Only its identity is new, so later edits to one don't affect the other.

Copying and Pasting Thoughts

Copy Thought, in a thought's right-click menu and its **More Actions** (⋯) menu, copies the thought so you can paste it somewhere else — in this brain or in another one. To copy several thoughts at once, select them and choose **Copy Thoughts** from the selection menu (see Selecting Multiple Thoughts).

To paste what you copied:

1. Activate the thought you want the copies to go under.
2. Right-click an empty part of the Plex and choose **Paste Thought "name"** — or **Paste N Thoughts** when you copied several. The same command is in **Main Menu > Edit**, and in the Mac desktop app it is **Edit > Paste onto Plex** in the menu bar. On an iPhone or iPad the item reads just **Paste**.



Pasting makes new copies and leaves the originals where they were. The copies are linked under the active thought as children (as jumps when the active thought is a type). When you paste into the same brain, each copy also keeps the links its original had to thoughts that weren't copied — the same parents, children, and jumps — so it also appears under the original's parent. Thoughts that were linked to each other when you copied them stay linked, and such a group hangs from the active thought by one of its thoughts.

The same Paste item also turns other things on the clipboard into a new thought under the active thought, and its label tells you what it is about to do:

- **Paste Thought "text"** — a single line of text becomes a child thought with that name.
- **Paste URL** — a web address becomes a child thought with that link attached.
- **Paste Text Outline as Thoughts** — in the desktop app, text of two or more lines is pasted as an outline of thoughts.
- **Paste File**, **Paste Folder**, or **Paste Image** — in the desktop app, a file, folder, or image on the clipboard becomes a child thought with it attached.

Copying a Link to a Thought

A thought has two kinds of link, available from the right-click menu (and the share menu):

- **Copy Web Thought URL** — The standard `https://` web link. Opening it loads the thought in the web app; the viewer needs access to the brain to see it. (The desktop app doesn't offer it for a brain that exists only on this device; in the mobile app, TheBrain offers to upload such a brain first.)
- **Copy Local Thought URL** — A `brain://` link that opens the thought directly in the desktop app on a machine that has the brain. This command is available in the **desktop app only**. For a brain that is in the cloud, the menu shows it only while you hold `Shift` (`⌥` on Mac) with the menu open; a brain that exists only on this device shows it straight away. See Copy Thought Links.

Either link points at the original thought; it doesn't copy the thought's content. Use the web URL for sharing and the local `brain://` URL for linking between thoughts and apps on your own device. For the share-menu versions and shared public pages, see Copy Thought Links and Shared Thought Pages.

Copying Several Thoughts as Text

When you have multiple thoughts selected, you can copy them out as plain text from the selection menu:

- **Copy as Text Outline** — An indented outline of the thoughts.
- **Copy as Text Outline with Notes** — The same, including each thought's notes.

There is no command that copies a selection as a Markdown list; use **Copy as Text Outline** for an indented list. **Copy Thoughts** is the other option: as well as copying the thoughts themselves for pasting into a brain, it puts their names on the clipboard as plain text, one per line.

See Selecting Multiple Thoughts for how to build a selection.

Pasting into a Brain That Already Has Some of the Items

When you paste thoughts into a brain that already contains some of them — typically a cross-brain paste of thoughts that came from that brain — TheBrain shows an **Existing Objects Detected** dialog instead of silently making copies. Each conflicting item (grouped by kind: thoughts, types, tags, links, and so on) gets a choice of **Replace** (overwrite the existing item with the pasted one), **Copy** (paste as a new copy and keep the existing one), or **Skip** (keep the existing item and don't paste this one), with set-all controls on each group. Links and link types offer only **Replace** and **Skip**. Nothing is written until you confirm — **Cancel aborts the entire paste**, including the items without conflicts.

1.2.5 Selecting Multiple Thoughts

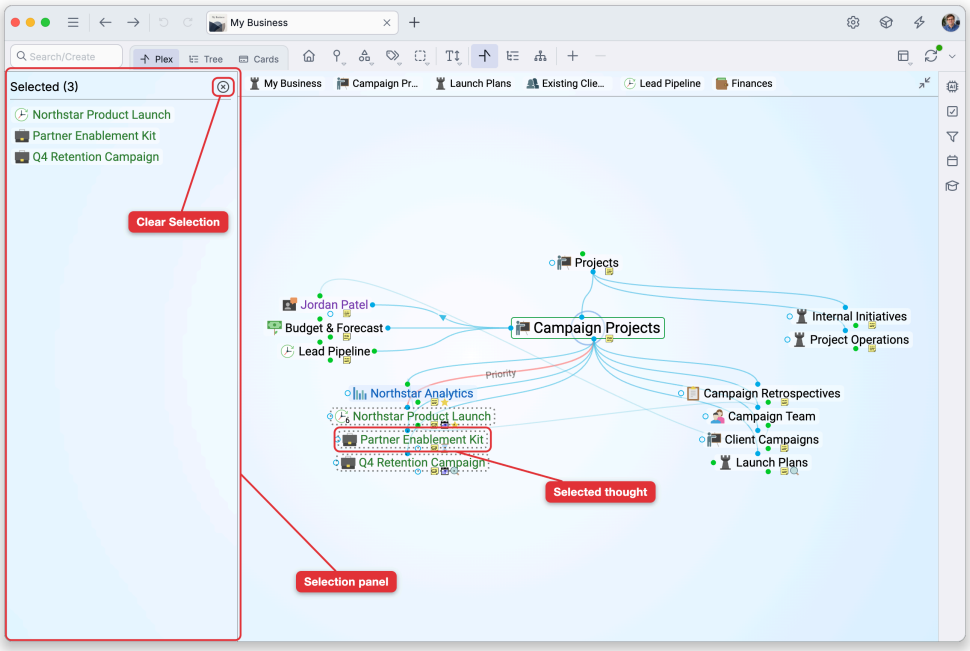
Overview

Most actions in TheBrain work on one thought, but you'll often want to do the same thing to many at once — tag a dozen thoughts as "Important", link a group under a new parent, or forget a batch you're done with. **Selecting** multiple thoughts lets you act on all of them together.

How to Select Thoughts

- **Add to a selection** — Hold `Ctrl` (`⌘` on Mac) and click two or more thoughts in the Plex. Selected thoughts get an animated dashed outline.
- **Rubber-band select** — Hold `Ctrl` (`⌘` on Mac) and drag across empty Plex space to draw a rectangle around several thoughts.

- **Select through a gate** — Hold `Ctrl` (⌘ on Mac) and click a thought's gate to select every thought linked to it through that gate. If any of them is already selected, the same click takes them all out of the selection instead.
- **On a touch screen** — Clicking with a key held and the rubber band need a mouse and keyboard, so choose **Add to Selection** from a thought's right-click menu instead.
- **From search results** — Run a search, then use the **More Actions** (…) button on the **Thoughts and Links** or **Notes and Attachments** header of the results and choose **Add Results to Selection** (or **Remove Results from Selection**) to add or remove everything in that section at once — see Finding and Creating Thoughts.
- **Selection panel** — Once you've selected thoughts, a selection panel appears listing them, so you can see and manage what's selected.
- **Clear Selection** empties it again.

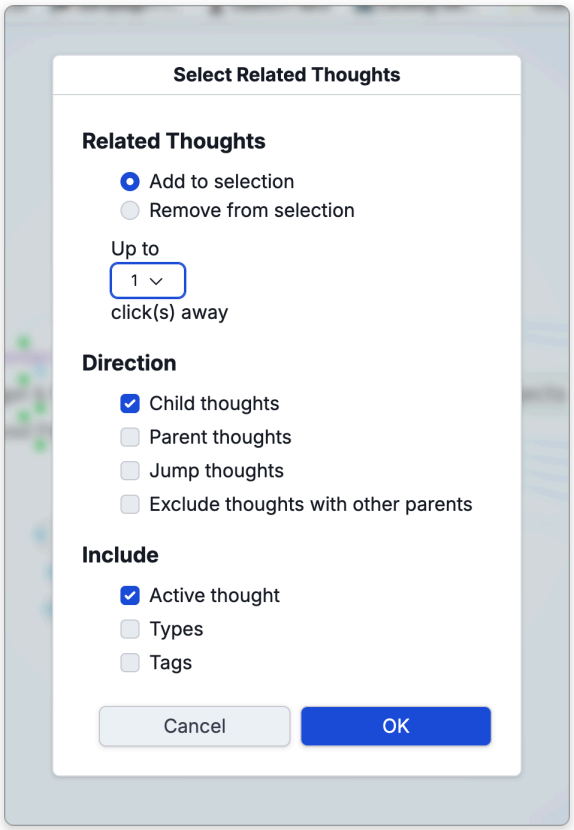


Select Related

Rather than clicking each one, **Select Related…** builds a selection by relationship. In the **Select Related Thoughts** dialog you can:

- Choose a **Direction** — child, parent, and/or jump thoughts.
- Set how far to reach — *up to N click(s) away* from the active thought.
- **Exclude thoughts with other parents**, and choose whether to include the active thought, types, and tags.

- **Add to** or **remove from** the current selection.



The dialog remembers the options you last used to select, and they follow your account to your other devices. Canceling leaves the remembered options as they were.

Acting on a Selection

With thoughts selected, the selection panel appears on the left side of the Plex and lists them. (On phone-width screens the panel is hidden.)

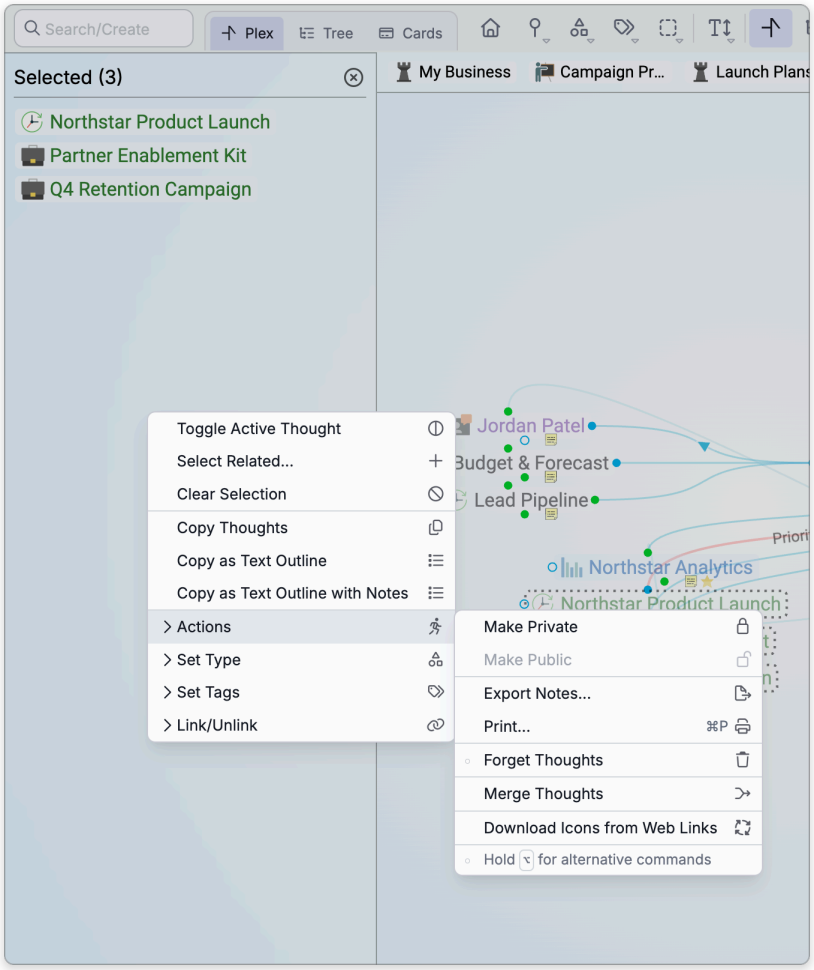
Right-click anywhere in the panel to open the selection menu. It begins with three items that change the selection itself: **Toggle Active Thought** adds the active thought to the selection, or takes it out; **Select Related...** opens the dialog described above; and **Clear Selection** empties the selection. The other **top-level** items act on all selected thoughts:

- **Set Type** / **Set Tags**.
- **Copy Thoughts**, **Copy as Text Outline**, **Copy as Text Outline with Notes** (there is no Markdown-list copy; see Copying and Duplicating Thoughts).

- **Paste Thought Colors** — Gives every selected thought the text and fill colors of a thought you copied with **Copy Thought** (desktop app only; shown only while a copied thought is on the clipboard). See Thought Properties.
- The **Link/Unlink** options (below).

An **Actions** submenu groups the rest:

- **Make Private** / **Make Public**.
- **Forget Thoughts**, **Remember Thoughts**, **Delete Thoughts**. As with **Delete Thought**, **Delete Thoughts** is shown only while you hold `Shift` (`⌥` on Mac), and it deletes at once without asking for confirmation; **Undo** brings the thoughts back for as long as the brain stays open. See Forgetting and Deleting Thoughts.
- **Export Notes...** (formerly Create Document — export the selection's notes as one PDF, HTML, Markdown, or text document) and **Print...** (the default print shortcut is `Ctrl+P`, `⌘P` on Mac). **Export Notes...** is offered in the installed apps only, and **Print...** in the desktop app and in a browser on a computer (see Exporting and Printing Notes).
- **Merge Thoughts** (see below).
- **Download Icons from Web Links** — For each selected thought that has a web link attached, TheBrain fetches an image from the linked page, as it does when you first paste a web address, and makes it the thought's icon. Only the icons change. A notification shows the progress and can cancel it. At the end it says how many icons were updated, how many thoughts had no web link, and which thoughts it could not fetch an icon for.



Linking and Unlinking a Selection

The **Link/Unlink** options connect a whole selection to one thought at once:

- **Link Selection as Children of** a thought, **as Parents of** it, or **as Jumps of** it.
- **Unlink Selection** removes those links.

Merging Thoughts

Merge Thoughts combines a selection into a single thought, gathering their links and content. If the thoughts have conflicting attributes (type, icon, color), the **Resolve Merge Conflict** dialog asks you to pick a **primary thought** to define the result. Some thoughts can't be merged — TheBrain will tell you if, for example, a **type or tag**, the **home thought**, or thoughts with light-synced (not-yet-downloaded) attachments are in the selection.

- A selection is temporary — it's a working set for the next action, not a saved group.
- Bulk actions follow the same rules as their single-thought versions.

Related Topics

- Thought Types
- Tags

1.2.6 Forgetting and Deleting Thoughts

Overview

TheBrain separates getting a thought out of your way from destroying it. **Forgetting** a thought removes it from the Plex and from normal search results but keeps it in the brain, so you can bring it back later. **Deleting** removes it permanently. Most of the time you want to *forget* — it's the safe, reversible option — and reach for *delete* only when you're sure something should be gone for good.

How to Forget a Thought

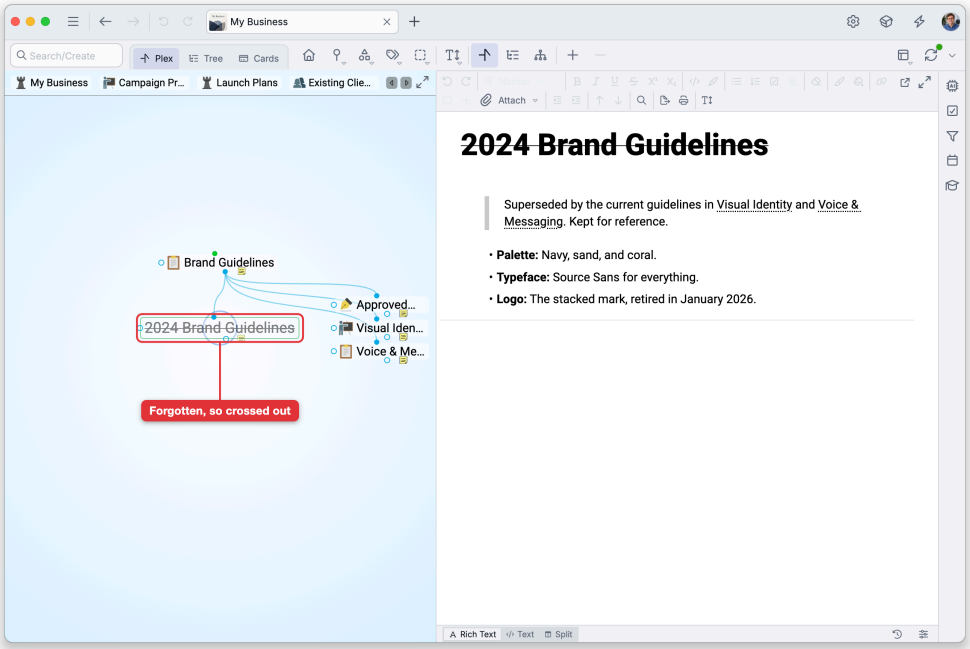
1. Right-click the thought.
2. Choose **Forget Thought**.

The thought disappears from the Plex and from search, but it still exists in the brain as a **forgotten** thought. Forgetting a thought doesn't forget its neighbors: its links simply stop showing while it's hidden, and reappear when you remember it. The default shortcut is `Ctrl+Shift+Delete` (`⇧⌘Delete` on Mac).

To forget several thoughts at once, select them and choose **Forget Thoughts** from the selection panel — see Selecting Multiple Thoughts.

How to Bring a Forgotten Thought Back

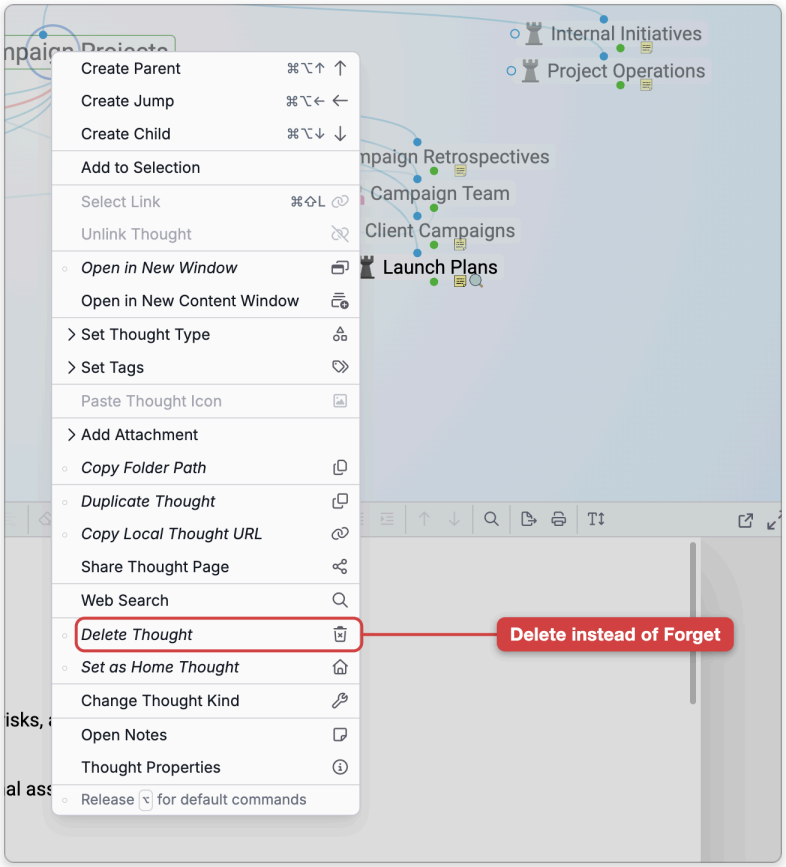
Forgotten thoughts are hidden, not gone. To see them, turn on **Show Forgotten Thoughts** (from the Plex right-click menu), which displays thoughts that have been forgotten in the Plex and search results, with their names crossed out. Then right-click the one you want and choose **Remember Thought** to restore it to normal. On a forgotten thought's menu, **Remember Thought** takes the place of **Forget Thought**, and **Delete Thought** is there without holding a key. Right after you forget a thought, **Undo** brings it back too.



How to Delete a Thought

Delete Thought is an *alternative command* — it's deliberately kept out of the default menu so you don't reach it by accident. In a thought's right-click menu, holding the modifier key swaps **Forget Thought** for **Delete Thought** in the same spot:

1. Right-click the thought.
2. Hold `Shift` (`⌥` on Mac) — **Forget Thought** changes to **Delete Thought**. On a touch device with no keyboard, tap the *"Tap for alternative commands"* notice at the bottom of the menu instead.
3. Choose **Delete Thought**. The thought is deleted at once — TheBrain does **not** ask you to confirm.



Deleting is **permanent**: a deleted thought cannot be remembered the way a forgotten one can. (One safety net: **Undo** brings the thought back for as long as the brain stays open on that device — syncing doesn't clear the undo history, though if the thought was changed elsewhere in the meantime TheBrain asks before proceeding. Once the brain is closed, the delete is truly permanent. See Undo and Redo.)

To delete many thoughts at once, select them, then hold `Shift` (`⌥` on Mac) and choose **Delete Thoughts**. This also deletes at once, without a confirmation prompt.

In the Mac desktop app, **Delete Thought** is also listed in the menu bar's **Thought** menu, where no modifier is needed; it deletes without asking too.

If a delete can't be completed, nothing is deleted and TheBrain tells you so with a **Could Not Delete Thought** (or **Could Not Delete Thoughts**) notification.

A thought that is **already forgotten** can be deleted directly — when you right-click a forgotten thought (with *Show Forgotten Thoughts* on), **Delete Thought** is offered without needing the modifier, since there's nothing left to forget. The same goes for a **type** or **tag** thought: **Forget Thought** isn't offered for those, so **Delete Thought** shows without the modifier. The **home**

thought can't be deleted; to remove it, make another thought the home first (see Home Thought).

Clearing Out Forgotten Thoughts

Forgotten thoughts still take up space in the brain. You can permanently remove all of them in one step using **Delete Forgotten Thoughts**, which the **Report** panel's menu offers while the report's only filter is **Kind: Forgotten** (TheBrain confirms first, e.g. *Are you sure you want to permanently delete {count} forgotten thoughts?*). See Reports. You can see how many a brain holds in its statistics — see Brain Statistics.

> TheBrain uses the word "forgotten," not "trash," for set-aside thoughts.

Related Topics

- Home Thought

1.2.7 Undo and Redo

Overview

TheBrain keeps an **undo history** of the edits you make to a brain — creating a thought, linking two thoughts, moving one under a new parent, forgetting or deleting, renaming, recoloring, saving a note, and so on. If you make a change you didn't mean to, **Undo** reverses it, and **Redo** puts it back.

Undoing and Redoing

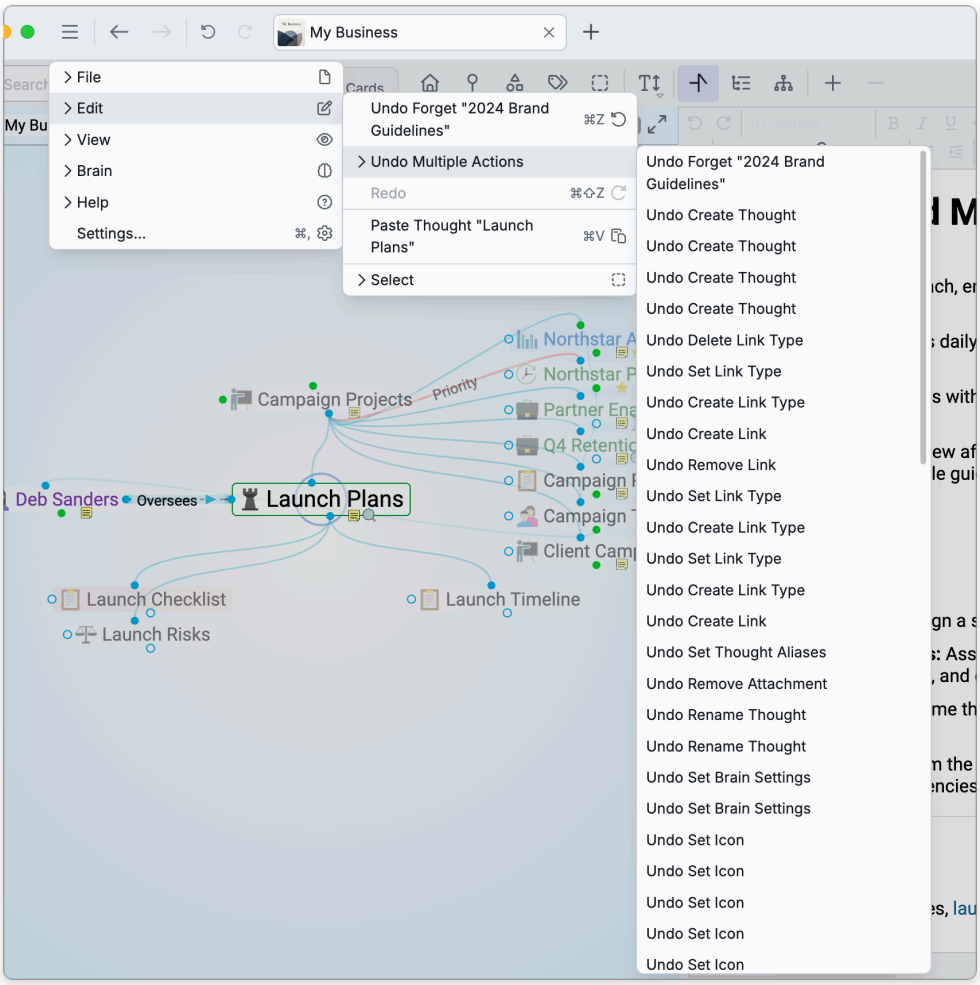
- **Undo** — **Main Menu > Edit > Undo**, or `Ctrl+Z` (`⌘Z` on Mac). The menu names the specific action, so it reads something like *Undo Create Thought* or *Undo Forget "Budget"*.
- **Redo** — **Main Menu > Edit > Redo**, or `Ctrl+Shift+Z` or `Ctrl+Y` (`⇧⌘Z` or `⌘Y` on Mac).

- **On the desktop app** — the window toolbar has **Undo** and **Redo** buttons by default, after the **Back** and **Forward** buttons. A window toolbar you've customized keeps your layout; resetting it to its default brings them in (see Customizing Toolbars).
- **On a phone** — **Undo** and **Redo** buttons sit at the right end of the top toolbar, next to the settings button. They're available only when there's something to undo or redo.

Usually undo and redo happen **immediately** — there's no confirmation beforehand. Afterwards a brief notice names what was reversed (for example *Undid Create Thought*, or *Redid Create Thought* after a redo) and then fades on its own; on a phone it appears as a small strip under the toolbar — see Notifications. As usual, once you make a *new* edit after undoing, the redo history is cleared. When there's nothing to reverse, **Undo** is unavailable in the menu. The one time TheBrain asks first is when something the step would change has itself changed since — see *When TheBrain Asks Before Undoing* below.

Stepping Back Several Edits

When you've made several changes, **Undo Multiple Actions** (and **Redo Multiple Actions**) list your recent edits newest-first. Pick an action in the list to undo everything up to and including it in a single step.



What Can Be Undone

The history covers brain edits broadly — creating, renaming, forgetting, deleting, and reparenting thoughts; creating and removing links and changing their properties; setting types, tags, and colors; adding and removing attachments; saving notes; creating, changing, and deleting calendar events; and more.

Each undo and redo is also written into the thought's **history** as its own **Undo** or **Redo** entry naming the action, so on a shared brain collaborators can see that a change was reversed — see Thought History.

A deleted file attachment has one extra safety net on the desktop app: a copy also goes to your computer's trash, so it stays recoverable even after this undo history is gone — see Managing Attachments.

Undo here is a **brain-edit** history. Undo *while you're typing in the note editor* is the note editor's own text undo — it happens to share the shortcut `Ctrl+Z` (`⌘Z` on Mac) but is a separate history for the note's text.

When TheBrain Asks Before Undoing

Undo works by putting things back the way they were when the action was recorded. If one of the items involved has changed since — most often because a sync brought in a change made on another device or by another person, but also when something on this device changed it without going through undo, such as Cerebro, a bulk operation, or a file edited directly in the brain's folder on the desktop — TheBrain doesn't overwrite that change silently. It asks first.

The question is the title of the dialog: *Undo Rename Thought?*, or *Undo 3 actions?* when you're undoing several steps at once. Beneath it, each affected item says what changed and what proceeding will do about it:

- **What changed** — for example *"Budget" was changed on another device 5 minutes ago*, or *renamed*; a cloud icon marks a change that arrived by sync, while *was changed here since* means something on this device changed it.
- **What Undo Anyway does** — *Undoing puts it back as it was before, discarding that change.*, with *Its name goes back to "…"* when the name differs; for a note, *Undoing restores the earlier note text, discarding the note as it is now.*; when the step deletes the item, *Undoing deletes it, including that change.*
- **Items that were deleted since** — *"Budget" was deleted; Undoing brings it back, without the notes and attachments it had.*, or *was deleted and stays deleted.* when the step only removed it; an item that was created again since is called out as *was created again.*
- **Notes and files are not lost** — when proceeding would overwrite a note or file that changed since, the line ends with *the note as it is now is kept on the thought as a conflict file* (or *the file as it is now is kept beside it as a conflict copy*). The current version is saved first as a separate attachment named `[Conflict] name (who, when).ext` — see Working Offline and Sync Recovery for how these copies are named and what to do with them.

Choose **Undo Anyway** (or **Redo Anyway**) to proceed with every step, or **Cancel** to leave everything as it is. With a multi-step undo it's all or nothing: either every action is undone, conflicts included, or none is.

If an Undo Fails

If a step can't be applied — a file locked by another program, say — TheBrain shows an **Undo Failed** (or **Redo Failed**) message with the reason, *The change could not be applied: …*, and the brain is left as it was.

Important Limits

- **It's this device's history, for as long as the brain is open.** The undo history is kept per brain, on the device you're working on. It is cleared when you **close the brain**, so a change from an earlier session has to be edited back by hand. Syncing does **not** clear it: you can sync and keep undoing, and an undo is applied as a fresh edit that syncs out to your other devices like any other change.
- **Undo can bring back a deleted thought — even after a sync.** Right after a delete, **Undo** restores the thought, and that stays true after the brain has synced, as long as it hasn't been closed. Once the brain is closed, that history is gone and the delete is permanent. To set a thought aside more safely, **Forget** it instead — that's separately reversible; see Forgetting and Deleting Thoughts.
- **You can't undo someone else's edits.** Undo only covers your own actions on this device. When a collaborator's change overlaps something you're undoing, TheBrain asks first, as described above, rather than reversing their work silently.



- Cerebro's **Undo All** and **Redo All** buttons go through the same check, so they too ask before overwriting a change that arrived since.
- Undo/Redo is about *edits*; to retrace which thoughts you were *looking at*, see Back and Forward Navigation.

Related Topics

- Customizing Toolbars
- Syncing Brains
- Managing Attachments
- Notifications

1.3 Describing Thoughts

1.3.1 Thought Properties

Overview

When you open a thought, its **properties header** sits at the top of the content area. It shows the thought's **icon**, **name**, and **label**, and gives you a row of controls for everything *about* the thought — its type, tags, color, privacy, and details — all in one place. The edit controls appear when you click the name; you can keep them always visible if you prefer.

Name and Label

A thought has both a **name** and an optional **label**:

- The **name** is the primary text — what shows in the Plex and search.
- The **label** is a short subtitle or description shown beneath the name, for extra context at a glance.

Edit either one inline by clicking it in the header. If you ever want to switch them, use **Swap Name and Label** (shown when a label is present).

Beneath the label, a thought can also have an **Aliases** row: alternate names, separated by semicolons, that search and unlinked-mention detection treat like the name. The row appears only once the thought has aliases or you've asked for it with the **Aliases** button in the control row. See Thought Aliases.

While editing these fields in the content area, `Enter` moves you to the next one — name, then label, then aliases when that row is shown — and past the last field it takes you into the note. In the Properties dialog, `Enter` in the name or label field saves it and closes the dialog. `Esc` saves and returns you to the Plex.

Names and labels written in a right-to-left language such as Hebrew or Arabic are laid out right to left automatically, wherever they appear — the Plex, search results, tabs, and the properties

fields — based on the first letter of the text. There's no manual direction override for names and labels; that exists only for paragraphs in notes (see Writing and Formatting Notes).

How to Rename a Thought

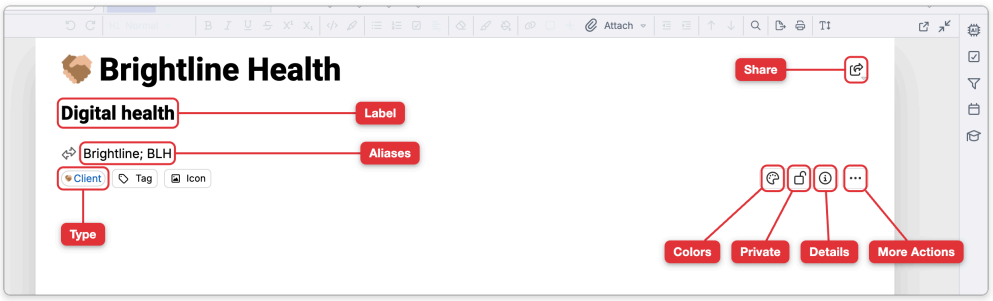
1. Click the thought's name in the properties header at the top of the content area.
2. Type the new name. It is saved when you press `Enter` or click somewhere else.

On a computer you can also rename a thought in the **Thought Properties** dialog, which opens with the name already selected, so you can just type the new name and press `Enter`. To open it, click the active thought in the Plex a second time, `Alt`-click (`⌥`-click on Mac) any thought in the Plex, press `Alt+Enter` (`⌥Enter` on Mac), or right-click the thought and choose **Thought Properties**. On a phone, tapping the active thought again switches to the content view and puts the cursor in the name.

If the brain's **Context sensitive thought names** option is on, renaming a thought can bring up a **Rename Related Thoughts?** prompt — see Context-Sensitive Thought Names.

The Control Row

The header's controls (grouped roughly into *type/tag/icon* and *color/lock/info*) are:

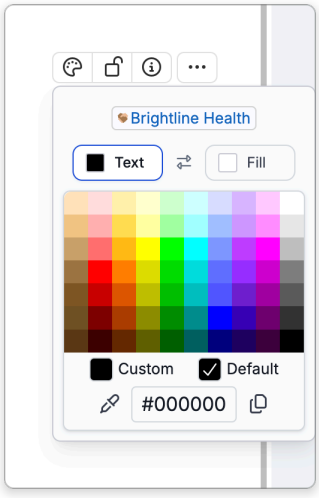


- **Type** — Set the thought's type. Once a type is set, its chip takes the button's place. See Thought Types.
- **Tag** — Add or remove tags. See Tags.
- **Icon** — Set a custom icon. See Thought Icons.
- **Aliases** — Show the aliases row and start typing alternate names. Shown only while the row is hidden. See Thought Aliases.

- **Colors** — Set the thought's text color and its fill (background) color, or reset them. See *How to Change a Thought's Colors* below.
- **Lock** — Toggle the thought between **Public** and **Private** (a lock icon). Disabled on the home thought and on type/tag thoughts, which are always public. See Private Thoughts.
- **Info** (**Show Thought Details**) — Reveal the thought's **Created** date, **Modified** date, and **ID** (which you can copy).
- **More Actions** — A three-dot overflow menu with the rest: show history, create linked thoughts, copy/duplicate, copy web/local URLs, share, web search, forget/delete, pin, set as home, and change thought kind.
- **Share** — The share button next to the name. See Shared Thought Pages.

How to Change a Thought's Colors

1. Open the thought and click its name to show the properties header's control row, then click the **Colors** button (the palette icon) in that row.
2. Choose what to color: **Text** (selected to begin with) or **Fill**, the thought's background. The **Swap Colors** button between them exchanges the two colors.
3. Pick a color from the palette, click **Custom** to choose any other color, or type a hex value such as `#RRGGBB`. Where it is available, the eyedropper button picks a color from the screen.

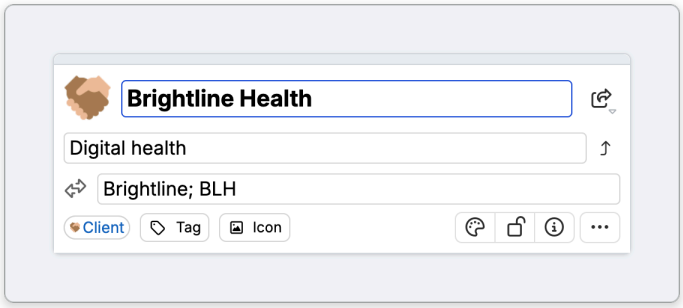


To reset a color to normal, select **Text** or **Fill** and click **Default**. This removes the thought's own color for that one target, so the thought goes back to the color of its type if the type has one, and otherwise to the brain theme's color.

To copy one thought's colors to another in the desktop app, use **Copy Thought** on the source thought, then choose **Paste Thought Colors** on the target thought, from its right-click menu or its **Icon** menu. The target gets the source thought's own text and fill colors. If thoughts are selected, the colors are applied to the whole selection. **Paste Thought Colors** is shown only while a copied thought is on the clipboard.

The Properties Dialog

The same header content is also available as a standalone popup, the **Thought Properties** dialog; *How to Rename a Thought* lists the ways to open it. This is a convenience on desktop and web; on mobile the properties live in the header itself.



- By default the edit controls appear when you click the thought's name. Right-click the header (or use the **View Options** button at the right end of the notes status bar) for the **Properties** options **Keep visible when scrolling** and **Always show edit controls**.
- When the content area is narrow, the **Type**, **Tag**, **Icon**, and **Aliases** buttons drop their text and show only their icons. In the Properties dialog the labels stay visible.
- The header is also where mapped links, backlinks, and unlinked mentions can be toggled for the note below — see Links in Notes.

Related Topics

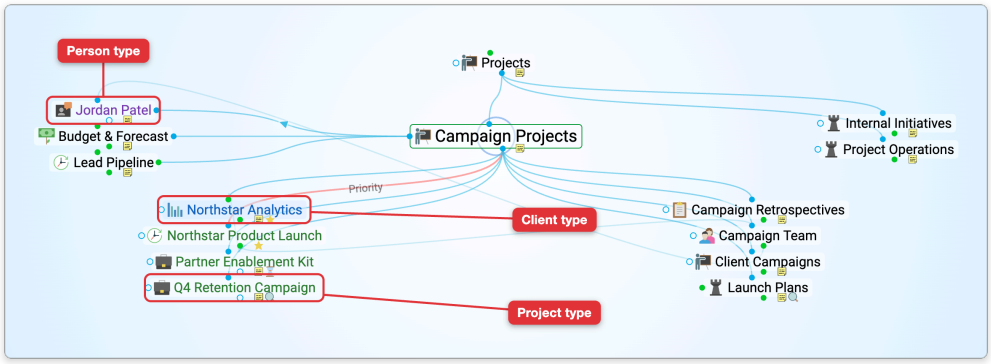
- Copying and Duplicating Thoughts

1.3.2 Thought Types

Overview

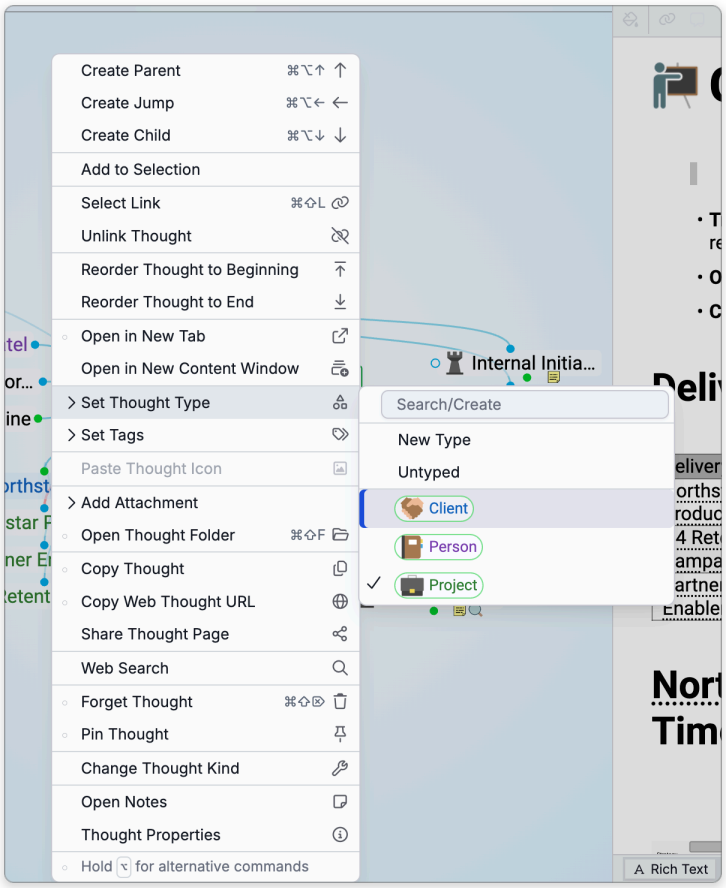
A **type** is a thought that classifies other thoughts. When you give a thought a type, it inherits that type's icon, label styling, and colors, which makes everything of the same type instantly recognizable across the brain. Types pass their appearance down to their children, so setting up a "Person" type once gives every person you add the same look automatically.

Types are best for broad classes of information that aren't otherwise related to each other — TheBrain's own examples are **Person**, **Organization**, and **Country**. Because a type is itself a thought, it can have its own notes, attachments, and links, and you can navigate to it like any other thought. Reports and the To-Do List can filter by type, so you can list everything of one type (see Reports).



How to Set a Thought's Type

1. Right-click the thought (or open it and use the properties header in the content area).
2. Choose **Set Thought Type**.
3. Pick one of the brain's types, or type a name in the **Search/Create** box at the top of the submenu and choose **New Type** to create that type and apply it in a single step. Typing also narrows the list to the matching types, and a tick marks the thought's current type.



The thought immediately takes on the type's icon and colors. To set the type on several thoughts at once, select them and use **Set Type** from the selection panel — see Selecting Multiple Thoughts.

How to Remove or Change a Type

You can do both from the typed thought itself:

- **From the right-click menu** — Right-click the thought, open **Set Thought Type**, and choose **Untyped** (just under **New Type**, above the list of types) to remove its type. To change the type instead, pick a different one from the list; a thought has only one type, so the new type replaces the old one.
- **From the properties header** — Click the thought's name to show the header's controls, then hover the type chip and click the red **×** on it; the type is removed straight away. On the active thought you can also right-click the chip and choose **Remove Type**. (Clicking the chip itself goes to the type.) The header's **Type** button is shown only while the thought has no type, so to change a type from the header, remove it first and then pick the new one.

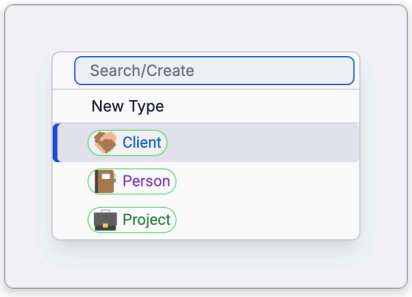
- **For several thoughts at once** — Select them, open **Set Type** on the selection panel, and choose **Untyped**. See Selecting Multiple Thoughts.

The thought becomes **untyped** again and reverts to its own styling. Removing a type from a thought does not delete the type thought itself — other thoughts that share it keep it.

Going to a Type

Because a type is a thought, you can open it to see everything classified under it. There are several ways to get there:

- **From a thought of that type** — Click the thought's name in the properties header to show the header's controls, then click the **type chip**.
- **From the list of all types** — Click the **Types** button on the brain toolbar. It opens a list of the types in the brain, with subtypes indented under their supertype; click a type to jump to it. The default shortcut is `Ctrl+Alt+T` (`⌥⌘T` on Mac), the **Activate Type** command. If you can edit the brain, the list starts with a **Search/Create** box: type to filter the list, or choose **New Type** to create a type with the name you typed and go to it. The list shows at most 200 types, so narrow it with the box if the brain has more. On a phone-width screen, the same list is on the **Types** tab of the side panel.
- **In Tree View** — Expand **Types** in the tree to see the brain's types.



While the **Create Thought** prompt or the **Thought Properties** dialog is open, the same shortcut opens the type menu there instead, so you can set the type of the thought you're creating or editing.

Types as Parents

A type can act as a parent of the thoughts it classifies. Because a type can have many members, TheBrain lets you control whether it shows up in the Plex as a parent of the active thought, so type thoughts don't clutter the view:

- **Per type** — Toggle **Visible When Parent of Active Thought** on a type (from its menu). When it's on, thoughts of that type stay visible as parents of the active thought; when it's off, they're kept out of the parent area.
- **All types at once** — From **Main Menu > Brain**, use **Make All Types Visible as Parents** or **Make All Types Hidden as Parents** to flip every type in the brain in a single step.

Giving a Type Its Own Wallpaper

A type can have a **dynamic wallpaper**: a background image that takes over the Plex background while you're on that type or on anything of that type.

1. Right-click the type thought itself and choose **Set Dynamic Wallpaper**. You can also open the type and use the **More Actions** (three-dot) button next to **Type Thought** in its properties header.
2. Pick a JPG or PNG image.

The Plex background then fades to that image whenever the active thought is the type, one of its subtypes, or a thought of any of them, and goes back to the brain's normal background when you move elsewhere. Subtypes get the wallpaper too, unless a subtype has a dynamic wallpaper of its own, which is then used for that subtype and its thoughts. Choose **Set Dynamic Wallpaper** again to replace the image; **Remove Dynamic Wallpaper** appears in the same menus once the type has one. You need to be able to edit the brain, and converting the type to another kind of thought removes its dynamic wallpaper. For the wallpaper of the brain as a whole, see Plex Theme and Wallpaper.

What Happens When You Delete a Type

Deleting a type thought deletes only the type itself, along with its own notes and attachments. The thoughts that use the type stay in the brain: they become **untyped** and lose the icon, label, and colors they were inheriting from it. Their link to the type is deleted with it, so a thought whose only parent was the type is left without a parent. Subtypes of the deleted type remain as types. Tags work the same way: deleting a tag thought takes that tag off every thought that carried it, and those thoughts themselves stay in the brain.

Forget Thought isn't offered for a type or a tag, so **Delete Thought** appears directly on its right-click menu. **Undo** brings the type back and puts it back on the thoughts that had it, for as long as the brain stays open. See Forgetting and Deleting Thoughts.

- A thought can have many **tags**, which are shown as icons on their children and are better for cross-cutting characteristics — see Tags.
- A normal thought can be converted into a type (and back) through the **Change Thought Kind** dialog — see Types vs. Tags vs. Normal Thoughts.

Related Topics

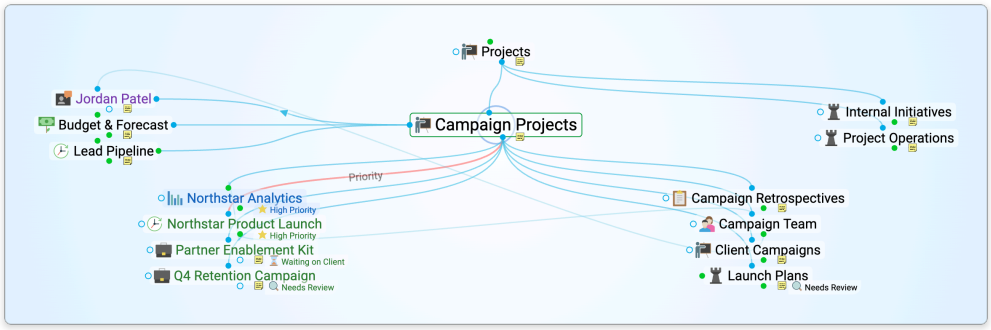
- Forgetting and Deleting Thoughts
- Plex Theme and Wallpaper

1.3.3 Tags

Overview

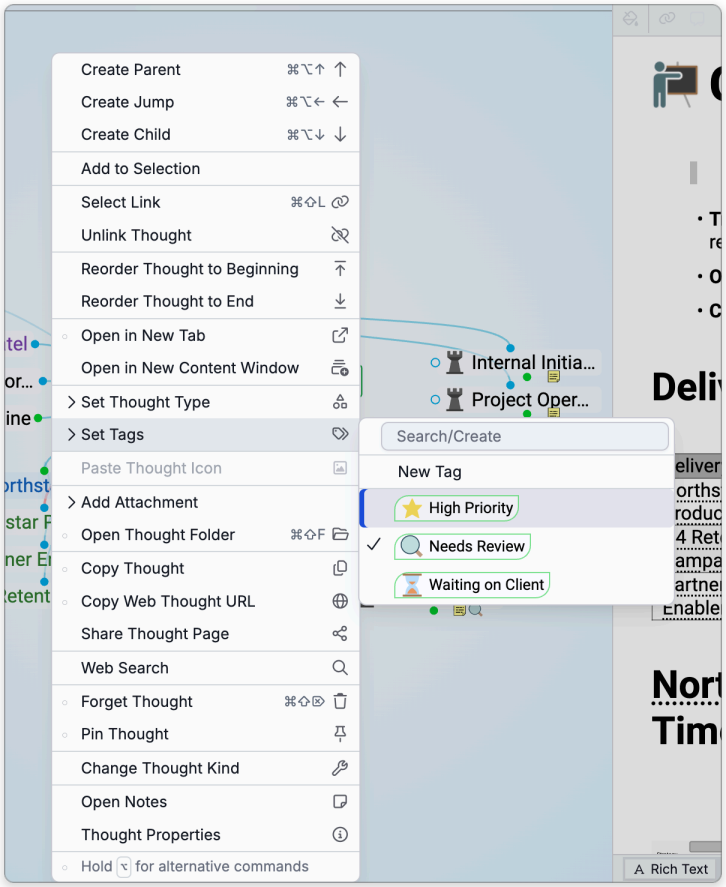
A **tag** is a thought used to mark a characteristic that can apply to many other thoughts. Unlike a type, a thought can carry **as many tags as you like**. Tags show up as small icons on the lower-right of each thought they're applied to, so you can see a thought's tags at a glance, but otherwise they stay out of the way and don't clutter the Plex unless you activate them. You can also show tag names, resize the tags, or hide them — see *Showing Tag Names, Resizing, or Hiding Tags in the Plex* below.

Tags are ideal for characteristics you want to apply across a variety of thoughts that aren't otherwise related to each other. TheBrain's own examples are **Important**, **To Do**, and **Favorite** — a project, a person, and a document could all be tagged "Important" without having anything else in common. Reports and the To-Do List can filter by tag, so you can list everything that shares one (see Reports).



How to Set Tags on a Thought

1. Right-click the thought (or open it and use the properties header in the content area).
2. Choose **Set Tags**.
3. Pick one of the brain's tags, or type a name in the **Search/Create** box at the top of the submenu and choose **New Tag** to create that tag and apply it. Typing also narrows the list to the matching tags, and a tick marks the tags the thought already has.



To tag several thoughts at once, select them and use **Set Tags** from the selection panel — see Selecting Multiple Thoughts.

How to Remove or Replace a Tag

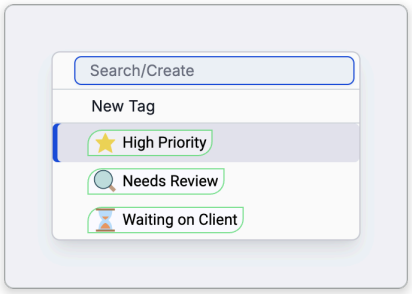
You manage a tag by acting on the **tag itself** — its icon on the thought, or the tag where it appears as a relative — not from the tagged thought's own right-click menu.

- **Remove a tag** — Right-click the tag and choose **Remove Tag**; you can also un-toggle it from the **Set Tags** menu.
- **Replace a tag** — Right-click a tag and choose **Replace Tag** to swap it for a different one.
- **Tag properties** — Right-click a tag and choose **Show Tag Properties** to open the Properties dialog for the tag, where you can change its name, its **Tag Abbreviation**, its icon, and its colors. This does not take you to the tag.

Going to a Tag

Because a tag is a thought, you can open it to gather everything that carries it: when a tag is the active thought, the thoughts that have it are its children. There are several ways to get there:

- **From a tagged thought in the Plex** — Click the tag's icon on the thought. This works with a mouse; on a touch screen, tapping a tag icon activates the thought it sits on instead.
- **From the properties header** — In the header of a thought that has the tag, click the thought's name to show the header's controls, then click the tag's chip.
- **From the list of all tags** — Click the **Tags** button on the brain toolbar and pick the tag. The default shortcut is `Ctrl+Alt+G` (`⌥⌘G` on Mac), the **Activate Tag** command. If you can edit the brain, the list starts with a **Search/Create** box: type to filter the list, or choose **New Tag** to create a tag with the name you typed and go to it. On a phone-width screen, the same list is on the **Tags** tab of the side panel.
- **In Tree View** — Expand **Tags** in the tree to see the brain's tags.



While the **Create Thought** prompt or the **Thought Properties** dialog is open, the same shortcut opens the tag menu there instead, so you can set tags on the thought you're creating or editing.

Showing Tag Names, Resizing, or Hiding Tags in the Plex

By default a thought's tags show in the Plex as icons only. To change that, open **Settings > Brain > Plex Settings** and look under **Display**:

- **Tag Text** — Whether tag names are shown: **Do not show** (the default), **Show on hover** (shown when you point at the thought), or **Show always**.
- **Tag Icons** — The same three choices for the tag icons. The default is **Show always**.
- **Tag size** — Makes the tags in the Plex bigger or smaller, from 75% to 150% (100% by default).

Setting both **Tag Text** and **Tag Icons** to **Do not show** hides tags in the Plex altogether. These settings are saved with the brain, so in a shared brain they apply to everyone who uses it.

A tag thought's label field is called **Tag Abbreviation**. When tag text is shown, a tag that has an abbreviation shows it in place of its full name, and pointing at the tag shows the full name.

- **Tags vs. types:** use a type for what a thought fundamentally *is* (Person, Project), of which it can have only one, and tags for characteristics layered on top (Important, To Do). See Thought Types and Types vs. Tags vs. Normal Thoughts.
- A normal thought can be converted into a tag through the **Change Thought Kind** dialog.
- Deleting a tag thought takes that tag off every thought that carried it; those thoughts themselves stay in the brain. **Forget Thought** isn't offered for a tag, so **Delete Thought**

appears directly on its right-click menu.

1.3.4 Types vs. Tags vs. Normal Thoughts

Overview

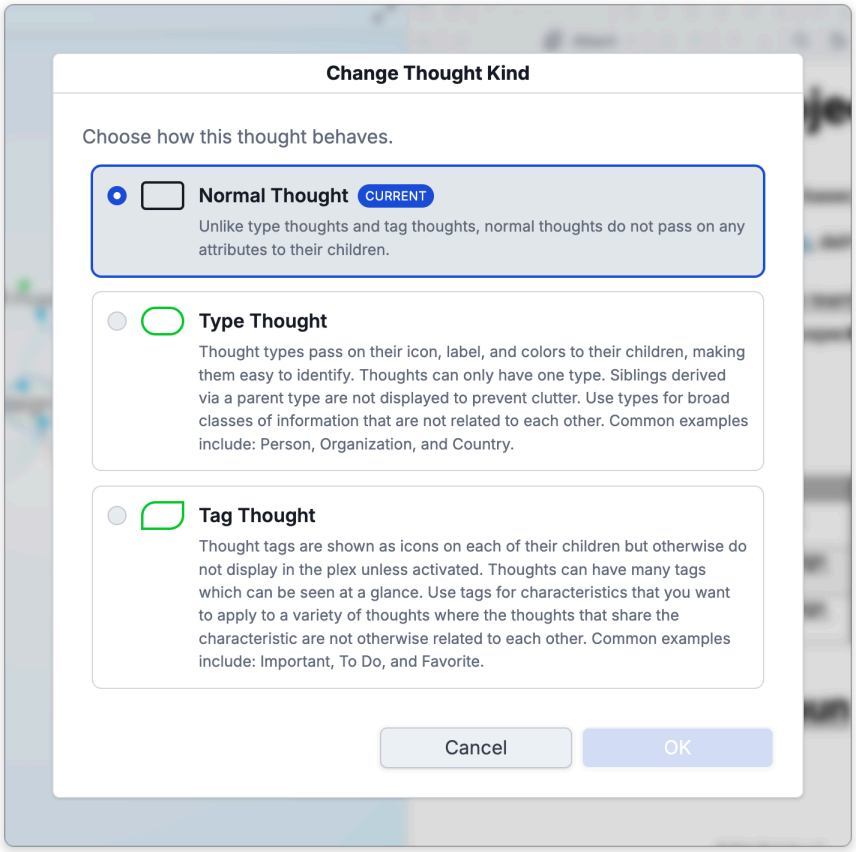
In TheBrain every thought is one of three **kinds**: a **Normal Thought**, a **Type Thought**, or a **Tag Thought**. Types and tags are just thoughts that have been given a special job — classifying or labeling other thoughts — so you can change most thoughts' kind without losing anything: the thought, its notes, and its links stay as they are, and only its role changes. (The **home thought**, **private thoughts**, and **forgotten thoughts** can't have their kind changed.)

- **Normal Thought** — The default. A normal thought does not pass on any attributes to its children.
- **Type Thought** — Classifies the thoughts under it, for broad classes of information that aren't related to each other. See Thought Types.
- **Tag Thought** — Marks a characteristic shared by thoughts that aren't otherwise related. See Tags.

Choosing Between a Type and a Tag below compares the two.

How to Change a Thought's Kind

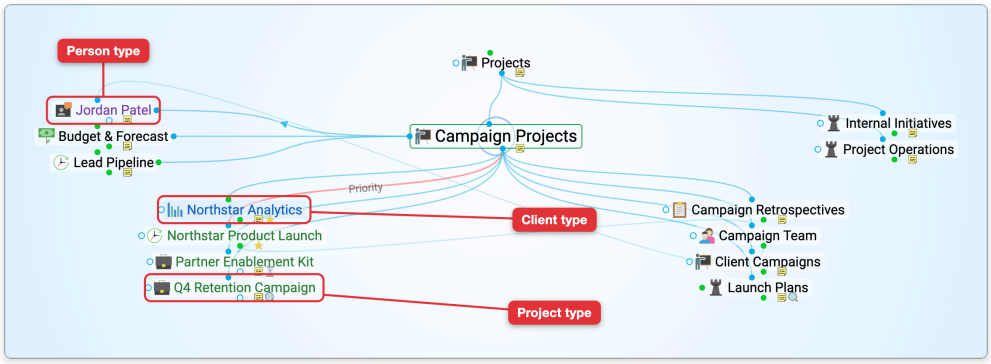
1. Right-click the thought and choose **Change Thought Kind**.
2. The dialog shows the three kinds — **Normal Thought**, **Type Thought**, and **Tag Thought** — with a **Current** badge on the one in effect and a short description of how each behaves.
3. Choose the kind you want and confirm.



You can also open the same dialog by clicking the **kind chip** shown in the thought's properties header.

Choosing Between a Type and a Tag

The deciding question is "how many and how exclusive?":



	Type	Tag
How many per thought	One only	Many
In the Plex	Passes icon, label, and colors to its children	Shows as an icon on its children; otherwise hidden until activated
Best for	What a thought fundamentally *is*	A characteristic layered across unrelated thoughts
Examples	Person, Organization, Country	Important, To Do, Favorite

A thought that already has children will start (or stop) passing its styling to them when you convert it to (or from) a type.

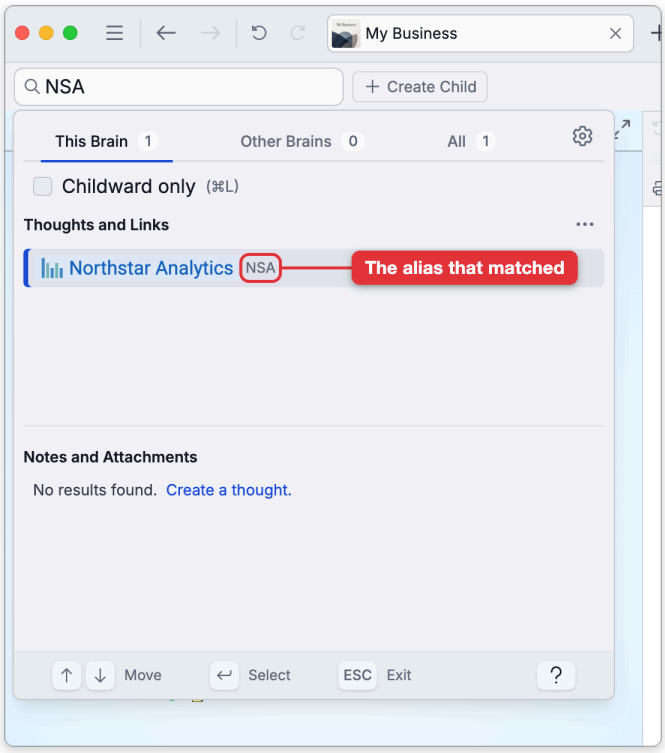
1.3.5 Thought Aliases

Overview

A thought has one **name**, but the things it stands for often go by several. A person might be "John Smith" and "Smith, John"; a country might be "United States", "USA", and "États-Unis"; a project might have a code name and an official title. **Aliases** let a thought carry any number of these alternate names alongside its real name, so you can find it and TheBrain can recognize it whichever one you use.

An alias is treated like the name in three places:

- **Search** — Typing an alias in the search box finds the thought, ranked close to a name match. The result shows the real name, followed by the alias you hit.
- **Unlinked mentions** — When an alias appears in another thought's note without being linked, TheBrain points it out just as it does for the name, so you can link it from there.
- **Links in notes** — When you insert a thought link and find the thought by typing an alias, the link's text is that alias rather than the thought's name.



The thought's **label** works as an implicit alias everywhere an alias is honored, with nothing to set up. When the same text could belong to more than one thought, a real name wins over an alias, and an alias wins over a label.

How to Add Aliases

1. Open the thought so its properties header is showing at the top of the content area (or open its **Thought Properties** dialog, whose default shortcut is `Alt+Enter`, `⌥Enter` on Mac).
2. In the header's control row, click the **Aliases** button that sits with **Type**, **Tag**, and **Icon**. (The button is hidden while the aliases row is already visible.)
3. The first time any alias is added to a brain, a warning tells you that older versions of TheBrain will no longer be able to sync or open the brain. The first alias sets a minimum app version for the brain: devices running an older version refuse to open or sync it until they update, and this is permanent for that brain (see Syncing Brains). Choose **Continue** to go on.
4. An **Aliases** row appears beneath the label with the placeholder **Add aliases**. Type the aliases separated by semicolons, for example `USA; United States of America; États-Unis`. Pressing `Enter` inserts the next `;` separator for you so you can keep typing.
5. Press `Esc`, or click elsewhere, to save. TheBrain tidies the list for you: extra spaces are trimmed, duplicates are dropped, and an alias identical to the thought's name is ignored.

Once a thought has aliases, the row is always shown in its properties, and the **Aliases** button steps aside. Click the row to edit it. If you clear every alias, the row disappears when you leave it and the button returns.



- You don't need an alias for accents or capitalization. Matching already ignores both, so "etats-unis" finds and mentions **États-Unis** on its own.
- An alias can't contain a semicolon, because the semicolon is what separates one alias from the next.
- Aliases sync between your devices, take part in undo and redo, and show in the thought's history as **Changed aliases**.
- Importing a Markdown folder or Obsidian vault reads each note's front-matter `aliases:` list into the thought's aliases. See Importing Brains.
- Linking an unlinked mention keeps the alias as the link's text; it isn't rewritten to the thought's name, and renaming the thought later leaves it alone too. See Links in Notes.
- Aliases don't appear in the Plex; they are for finding and recognizing the thought, not for display.

Related Topics

- Importing Brains
- Syncing Brains

1.3.6 Thought Icons

Overview

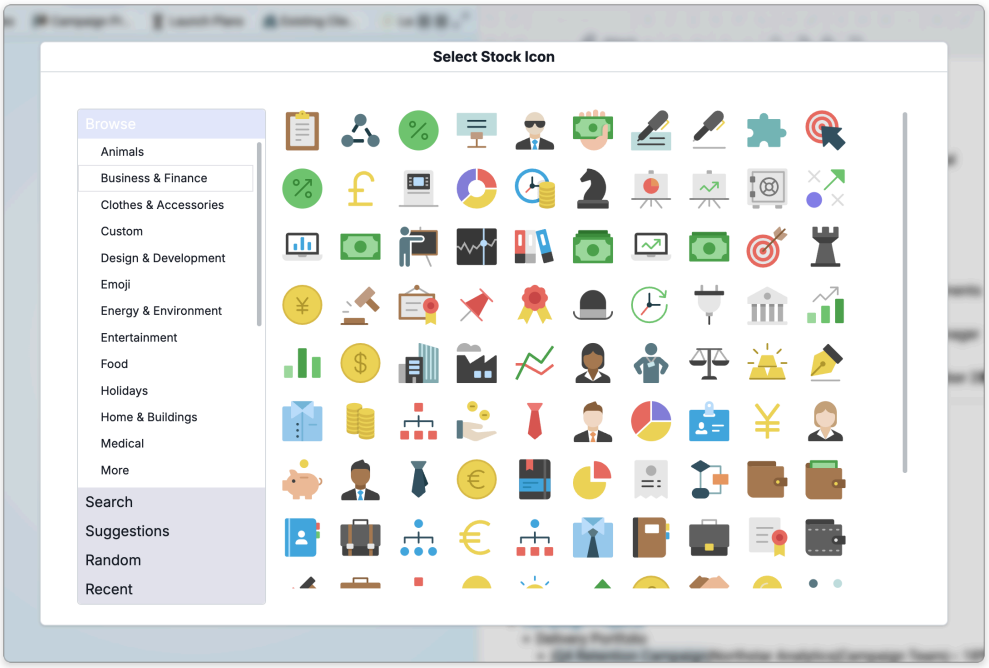
A thought can carry a **custom icon**, and once set, that icon shows up everywhere the thought appears — in the Plex, in search results, in lists, and on links. Icons make a brain far easier to scan: a recognizable picture catches the eye faster than text. You can choose from a large library of **stock icons** (including emoji and flags), or supply your own image, such as a logo or a photo.

How to Set an Icon

1. Open the thought, click its name to show the properties header's controls, then click the **Icon** button.
2. Choose from the icon menu:
    - **Select Stock Icon** — Open the stock icon library. The default shortcut is `Ctrl+Alt+I` (`⌥⌘I` on Mac).
    - **Upload Icon** — Pick an image file from your device (PNG, JPG/JPEG, GIF, or WEBP).
    - **Paste Thought Icon** — Use an image you've copied to the clipboard (desktop app only).

The Stock Icon Library

The **Select Stock Icon** dialog lets you **Browse** by category or **Search** by keyword. It offers:



- **Suggestions** based on the thought's name and label.
- **Recent** icons you've used, and a **Random** / **Shuffle** option to discover ideas.
- Categories spanning Animals, Business & Finance, Food, People, Technology, Travel, Weather, **Emoji**, **World Flags**, and more.

Click any icon to assign it. In the desktop app you can also add your own by placing **SVG or PNG** files into TheBrain's **Custom Icons** folder (subfolders supported). To open that folder, hold `Shift` (`⌥` on Mac) in the **Icon** menu and choose **Add Stock Icons...**.

Copying, Pasting, and Viewing

- **View Icon** opens the current icon at full size.
- **Copy Icon** copies the thought's icon so you can **Paste Thought Icon** onto another thought (both desktop app only).
- **Paste Thought Colors** applies the text and fill colors of a thought you copied with **Copy Thought** (desktop app only). See Thought Properties.

Removing an Icon

To clear a thought's icon, open the Icon menu and choose **Delete Icon**. This removes an icon that was set on the thought itself. Afterwards the thought shows its type's icon if its type has one, or else an automatic icon from its attachments (see *Automatic Icons* below), or no icon at all.

Automatic Icons

A thought that has attachments but no icon of its own gets an icon automatically from them, which is why a thought can have an icon you never set. Notes don't count as attachments here.

- **One attachment** — A web link shows the website's own icon (an email link shows a mail icon), an image file shows the image itself, any other file shows the icon of its file type, and a folder shows a folder icon.
- **Several attachments** — Web links that all go to the same site show that site's icon, and links to different sites show a general link icon. Files that are all of one type show that file type's icon, or one of the images if they are images. Any other mix shows an image from

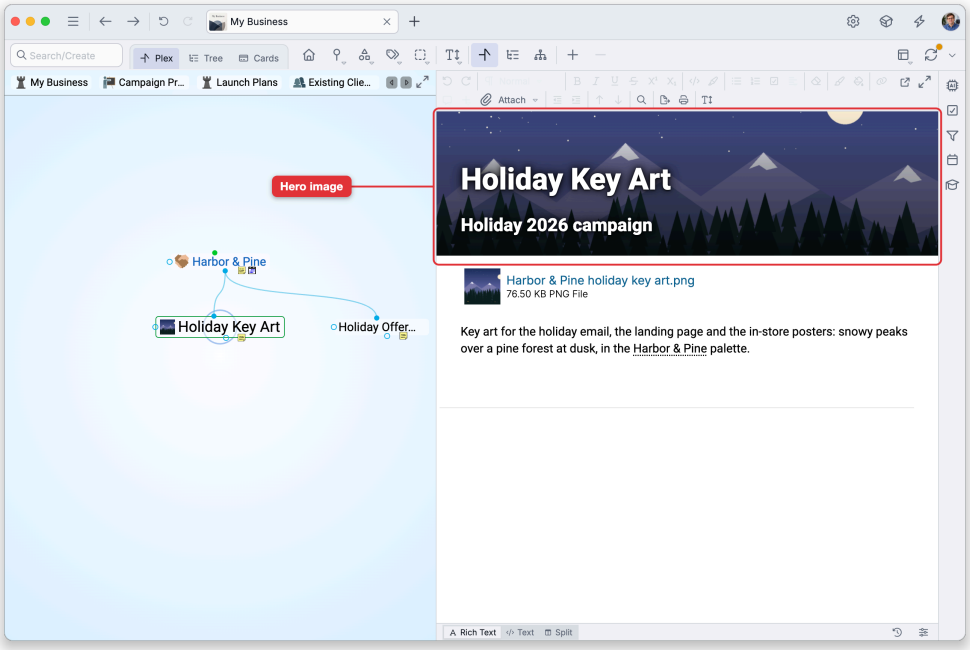
among the attachments, or a general icon for multiple attachments when there is no image.

If the thought has a type that has an icon, the type's icon is shown in place of these automatic icons. An icon you set on the thought with the **Icon** button takes the place of both.

To get rid of an automatic icon, set your own icon, give the thought a type that has an icon, or remove the attachment the icon comes from. **Delete Icon** does not remove an automatic icon.

Hero Images

When a thought's icon is a large picture, TheBrain shows it as a wide banner across the top of the content area — a **hero image** — with the thought's name and label drawn over it, in place of the small icon beside the name. The picture can be an icon you set, an image attachment that TheBrain is using as the icon automatically, or an icon the thought inherits from its type. Small images stay ordinary icons, and website icons and SVG icons are never shown as a banner.



To turn the banner off, open **Settings > Brain > Content Settings**, choose the **Attachments** tab, and clear **Show hero images on thoughts**. The option is on by default. It is saved with the brain, so in a shared brain it applies to everyone who uses it. The banner is not used in the Thought Properties dialog. See Brain Content Settings.

Using an Attachment as an Icon

On the **desktop app**, you can set an attachment as the thought's icon with **Set as Thought Icon** from the attachment's menu. See Managing Attachments.

- **Image attachments** — The image itself becomes the icon.
- **Web link attachments** — The website's own icon (its favicon) becomes the thought icon. This works for `http` and `https` links. If the site doesn't provide a usable icon, TheBrain shows a message and leaves the thought's icon unchanged.

Types pass their icon down to their children — setting an icon on a *type* styles everything of that type at once. See Thought Types.

Related Topics

- Brain Content Settings

1.3.7 Private Thoughts

Overview

A **private** thought is one you keep to yourself even when the rest of the brain is shared. Marking a thought private keeps it out of the ways a brain reaches other people and systems — shared pages, public brains, and (by default) Cerebro — while everything else about it works normally for you, the owner.

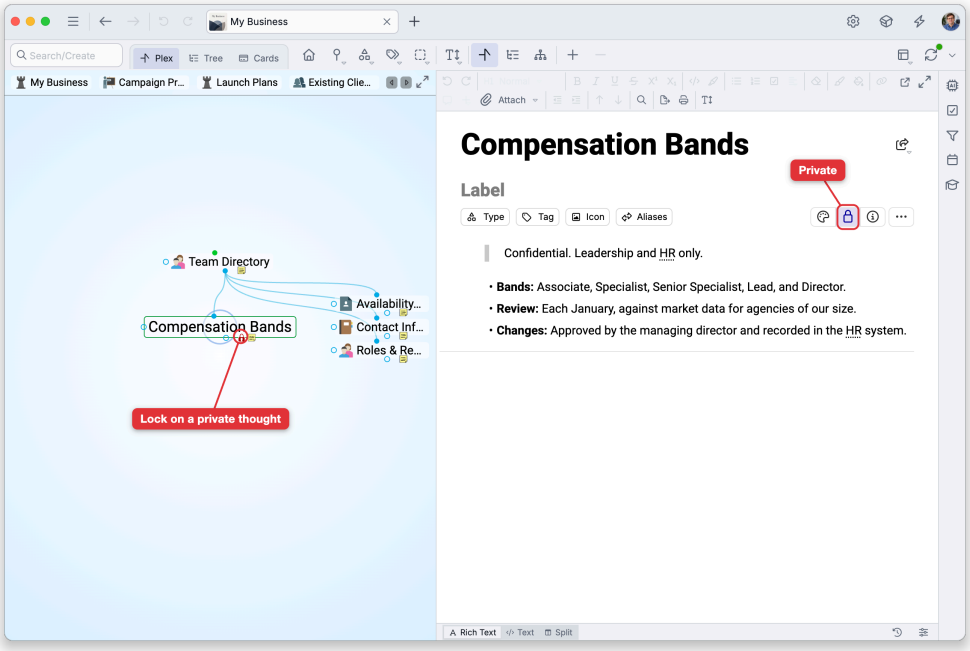
How to Make a Thought Private

Anyone who can edit the brain can change a thought's privacy.

- **One thought** — In the properties header, click the thought's name to show the header's controls, then click the **Lock** button to toggle the thought between **Public** and **Private**. The lock icon shows its current state. Only **normal** thoughts can be made private: **type**

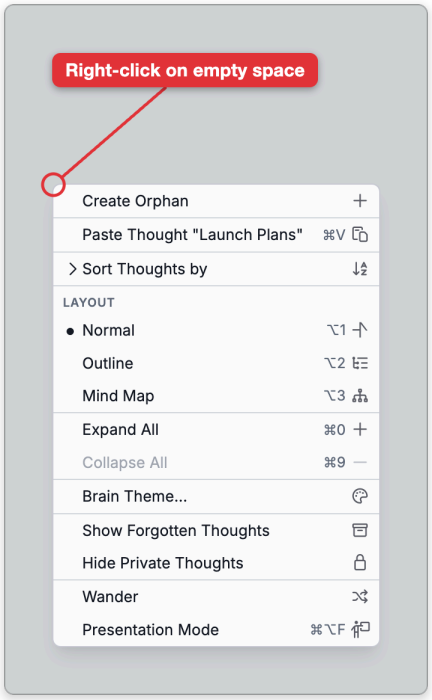
and **tag** thoughts are always public, and the **home thought**, the brain's entry point, can't be made private either (see Home Thought), so the Lock button is unavailable on them.

- **Many thoughts** — Select several thoughts and choose **Make Private** (or **Make Public**) — see Selecting Multiple Thoughts.



Hiding Private Thoughts

Private thoughts still appear to you by default. When you want them out of sight — for example while presenting or screen-sharing — turn on **Hide Private Thoughts**. It is in **Main Menu > View**, and on the menu you get by right-clicking the background of the Plex or of Cards view. Choose it again to turn it off and bring the private thoughts back.



While it is on, private thoughts are left out of the Plex, search results, the pins bar, and the past thoughts list. If the active thought is private when you turn it on, TheBrain moves you to the most recent thought you visited that is not private, or to the home thought.

Hide Private Thoughts is a view option for the tab you turn it on in, not a saved setting. It stays on while you keep working in that tab, but it is not kept when you quit: after you close and reopen TheBrain, private thoughts are shown again. It also turns itself off whenever a private thought becomes the active thought anyway, for example when you open one from a report's results, because TheBrain has to show private thoughts again to display that thought.

What "Private" Affects

- **Shared pages** — Private thoughts can't be published as shared thought pages; the share command is disabled on a private thought. See Shared Thought Pages.
- **Public / unlisted brains** — When a brain is made public or unlisted, private thoughts are **not** available to viewers, and search engines, which can list the thoughts of a public brain, never get them. See Brain Access and Sharing.
- **AI access** — By default Cerebro does **not** read private thoughts. You can allow it in **Settings > AI** if you want. See AI Settings.
- **Per-user access lists** — Users explicitly granted access to a brain *do* see its private thoughts, so use access lists deliberately.

- **Embedded notes** — A private thought's note can be embedded in another thought's note (see Embedded Notes). When you're logged in with access to the brain, the embed shows the private note as usual. When someone without access views the note that embeds it in a public or unlisted brain, the private content is not displayed; the embed shows **Missing thought:** followed by the thought's name instead. On a shared thought page, a private note can show only on a page set to **Requires Login**, to viewers with access to the brain (see Shared Thought Pages).

Privacy is per-thought; making a thought public again simply reverses it, with no effect on its links or content.

1.3.8 Context-Sensitive Thought Names

Overview

Some thought names carry their own context: "Budget, 2024", "Smith, John", "Minutes, Project X". **Context sensitive thought names** is a brain option that stops such names from repeating what the Plex already shows. When a thought's name is made of parts separated by commas, the Plex leaves out a part that is already the name of the thought it is linked to. With "2024" as the active thought, its child "Budget, 2024" is drawn as "Budget", and "Smith, John" shows as "John" next to "Smith".

The option is on by default. It changes only what is displayed; the thought's real name is not altered.

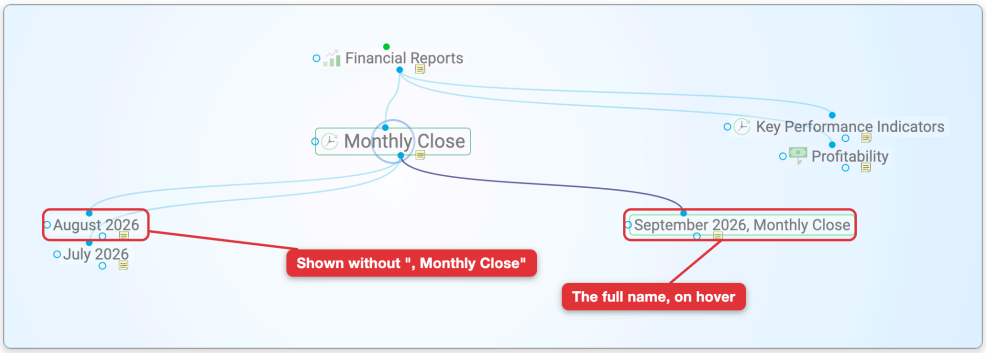
The same option is behind the **Rename Related Thoughts?** prompt that can appear when you rename a thought.

How Names Are Shortened

- **Only names with commas** — A name is shortened only if it contains a comma. Each part between commas is checked on its own.
- **Compared with the linked thought** — The parts are compared with the names of the linked thoughts one step closer to the active thought. For a parent, child, or jump of the active thought, that is the active thought itself.

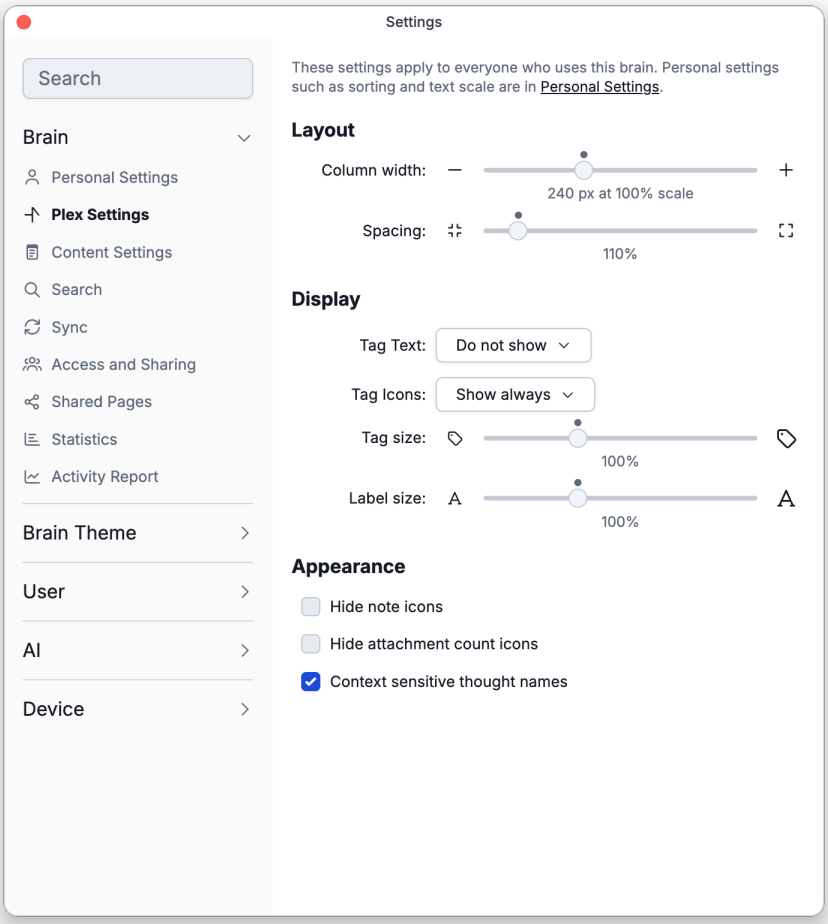
- **An exact match** — A part is left out when it is the same as that thought's name, or the same as one comma-separated part of it, including capitalization. Singular and plural forms count as the same, so "Notes, Meeting" under "Meetings" shows as "Notes". A part that merely contains the other name is kept: "Budget, 2024" under "Plans 2024" is shown in full.
- **The active thought** — The active thought always shows its full name.
- **Never empty** — If every part of a name would be left out, the full name is shown.
- **Numbers** — A comma inside a number, such as 1,000, does not split a name.

To read a shortened name in full, point at the thought in the Plex with the mouse.



How to Turn It Off

1. Open the brain, then open **Settings** (the default shortcut is `Ctrl+,`, `⌘,` on Mac).
2. Choose **Brain > Plex Settings**.
3. Under **Appearance**, clear **Context sensitive thought names**.



Thoughts then show their full names. The option is saved with the brain, so in a shared brain it applies to everyone who uses it. See Plex Settings.

The Rename Related Thoughts? Prompt

While the option is on, TheBrain also helps you keep related names in step. When you rename a normal thought in its name field and exactly one comma-separated part of the name changes (for a name with no commas, that part is the whole name), TheBrain looks at the thoughts linked to it for names that use the old text as one of their parts. If it finds any, it asks **Rename Related Thoughts?** and tells you how many it found, for example: "Project X" was found in 3 related thoughts. Rename these thoughts also?

- **Rename** — Changes the old text to the new text in those thoughts' names as well. Renaming "Project X" to "Project Y" this way also turns "Budget, Project X" into "Budget, Project Y".

- **Cancel** — Leaves the other thoughts as they are. The thought you renamed keeps its new name.

The prompt does not appear for type or tag thoughts, or when the option is off.

> To rename a thought, see Thought Properties.

Related Topics

- The Plex
- Creating Thoughts and Links

2 Capturing and Importing

2.1 Quick Thoughts

Overview

Quick Thoughts is a small inbox that belongs to your account, not to any one brain. It exists so you can write something down the instant it occurs to you — from inside TheBrain, from a browser extension, from a global keyboard shortcut on your desktop, or from a widget or tile on your phone — without first deciding which brain or which thought it belongs to. Every note lands in the same inbox on every device you are signed in to, and later, when you have a moment, you open the **Quick Thoughts** panel and move each note into a brain with one click. The inbox is meant to empty out: material you want to keep for reference belongs in a brain, where it can be linked and searched.

The panel is where notes are read, edited, and filed: as a new child thought, as an addition to a thought's notes, or as an attached Markdown file, in any of your brains, not just the one you have open.

Quick Thoughts needs a signed-in TheBrain account, on any plan. If you are using the desktop app as a guest, the button does not appear.

Quick Thoughts is separate from **BrainBox**. BrainBox is the inbox for files, links, and web clippings; Quick Thoughts is for notes you write yourself, which can carry links and files along with the text. Both buttons sit together in the toolbar.

How to Open the Quick Thoughts Panel

The panel opens as a dialog on top of whatever you are doing, both inside a brain and from the brains list. On the desktop app it opens in a window of its own, which you can place anywhere and keep open while you work; you can open more than one.

1. Click the **Quick Thoughts** button — the lightning-bolt icon — in the top toolbar, next to the **BrainBox** button. The same button appears on the brains list.

2. Or press the default shortcut `Ctrl+Alt+N` (`⌥⌘N` on Mac). Like every shortcut, you can change it in **Settings > User > Keyboard**.

On a phone

Inside a brain, open **More Actions** on the action bar and tap **Quick Thoughts**. You can pin it to the action bar like any other button. On the brains list, tap the lightning-bolt button in the toolbar.

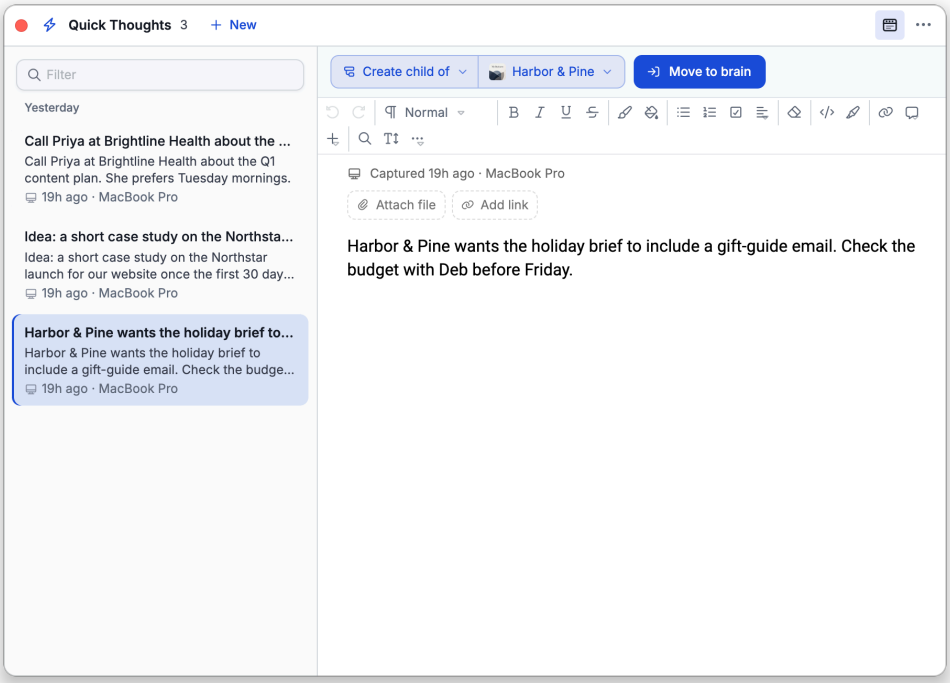
On a phone the panel is a sheet. You see the inbox list first; tapping a note opens it, and the back arrow at the top left returns you to the list. Swipe the sheet down to close it.

On the Mac desktop app

In the Mac desktop app, the menu bar also lists **Quick Thoughts** under **View > Panels**, next to BrainBox.

Reading Your Quick Thoughts

The top of the panel shows **Quick Thoughts** with a count of the notes waiting in it, and a **New** button. On the left, a **Filter** box narrows the list as you type. Notes are grouped by date, newest first, and each row shows the note's first line as its title, a short preview, when it was captured or last edited, and which device it came from. A note with links shows a link icon and how many it has; a note with only links and no text takes its title from its first link. A note with attached files shows a paperclip and how many files it has, and the **Filter** box matches file names as well as text.



Select a note to read it on the right. The top of the note shows when it was **Captured** and, if it has been changed since, when it was last **edited**.

The filter box is also the keyboard home: with the cursor in it, the `↑` and `↓` keys move through the list, and `Enter` puts the cursor into the selected note's text.

The **Filter** box matches only what the list holds for each note: its title (the start of the first line), its preview (the start of the note's text), the name of the device it came from, and the names of its attached files. Upper and lower case make no difference. A word further down a long note is not found by the filter. To find it, ask Cerebro, which can search the full text of your quick thoughts, or file the note into a brain where it can be searched.

The panel loads your inbox when you open it and then checks for new and changed notes regularly for as long as it stays open, so a note captured on another device shows up shortly, briefly highlighted in the list. Closing the panel and opening it again checks right away, and on phones and tablets the inbox is also refreshed whenever you return to the TheBrain app. Nothing announces a new quick thought: TheBrain shows no notification for it, and the **Quick Thoughts** toolbar button carries no count or badge. The number of notes waiting is shown in the panel's title row.

If a note was captured with formatting that could not be converted, the note carries a **Plain text** chip and a notice that some formatting from the original capture could not be converted; the text itself is intact.

Writing a Note in the Panel

1. Click **New**. An empty note opens on the right with a placeholder row at the top of the list that reads **New note · Not saved yet**.
2. Type. The panel saves automatically: a small hollow dot next to the date reads **Unsaved** while you type, pulses as **Saving…**, and fills in as **Saved** before fading out. There is no Send button in the panel.
3. Leave the note whenever you like. An empty new note that you walk away from is simply discarded; anything with text in it is already in your inbox.

The editor is the same rich-text editor used for thought notes, with a slightly smaller toolbar: text styles, lists, tables, images, links, math, diagrams, find and replace, and text size. On desktop the toolbar button beside the ⋯ button at the right end of the panel's title row shows or hides the formatting toolbar. Images you insert are stored with the note and become real attachments when you file it. The toolbar's link button, which inserts links to thoughts and web pages, works only when you open the panel from inside a brain, so it doesn't work in the desktop app's Quick Thoughts window or from the brains list; to add a web link there, use **Add link** (see *Adding Links to a Note*).

You can also drag text, or a link, from another app or a web page and drop it into the note. It goes in where you drop it, just as if you had pasted it there. Dragging a selection within the note moves it; hold `Ctrl` (`⌥` on Mac) as you drop to copy it instead.

The text size control in the panel affects only the panel, and only until you close it; it does not change the size of your thought notes. Each time the panel opens, the text is back at its normal size and the formatting toolbar is shown.

Size limits

Quick thoughts have size limits, which in practice only images reach (attached files upload separately and have limits of their own; see *Attaching Files to a Note*). A note is refused when a save would send more than 5 MB, and TheBrain Cloud also limits how many images one note can hold and how large they can be. To keep notes small, a large picture you paste or insert is scaled down and re-compressed automatically (GIF and SVG images are left as they are).

When a note goes over a limit it shows a **Not saved** chip and a message naming the limit, such as **This note is too large to save (limit 5 MB).** What you wrote stays in the editor. Remove

some images, or split the note into two, and it saves on its own once it fits.

Adding Links to a Note

A quick thought can carry web links beside its text. They appear as chips in a strip above the note's text, whether the note was written in the panel or captured with the browser extension, which can add the page you were on (see Quick Thoughts Capture Shortcuts).

1. Click **Add link** above the note's text.
2. Paste a web address into the **Paste a link** box and press `Enter` or click **Add**. Only web addresses are accepted — a bare address like `example.com` gets `https://` added for you — and anything else shows **This isn't a web address**.
3. To change a link's title or address, click its pencil (**Edit link**) button, edit the **Title** and address, and press `Enter`. To take a link off the note, click its **x** (**Remove link**). Click a link's title to open it in your browser.

You can also drag a link from a web page or another app onto the panel, anywhere but the note's text, to add it as a chip. A note can carry up to 20 links. Link changes save automatically along with the note. When you file the note, its links become web link attachments on the destination thought, in the same order and named with their titles.

Attaching Files to a Note

A quick thought can also carry files: a PDF, a photo, a spreadsheet, anything you want to file along with the note. They appear as chips at the start of the same strip, before the links, and become real attachments on the thought when you file the note.

1. Click **Attach file** in the strip above the note's text and choose one or more files. You can also drag files from your computer anywhere onto the panel. An image file dropped onto the note's text goes into the text as a picture instead. A file you attach is read once, when you attach it; the original on your computer or phone is never changed, moved, or deleted.
2. Each file starts uploading at once, and its chip shows how far along it is (**Uploading, 40%**, or **Waiting for connection** while you are offline). You can keep typing meanwhile. A note that has only files and no text appears in the inbox once its first file has uploaded, titled with that file's name.
3. Once a file has uploaded, click its name to open it: the web app downloads it, and the desktop and phone apps open a copy in the app your device uses for that kind of file.

Click its pencil (**Rename file**) to change the name it will have on the thought, or its **x** (**Remove file**) to take it off; removing asks **Remove** *name*? first, because the file is deleted for good.

Limits: up to 100 MB per file and 10 files per note, and a limit on the total size of the files waiting in your Quick Thoughts inbox. A file over a limit turns into a red chip that says why (for example **Over the 100 MB limit**, or **Inbox full** with how much is used); remove it, and file or delete quick thoughts with attachments to make room.

On the desktop and phone apps, uploads carry on after you close the panel, and an upload interrupted by quitting the app picks up where it left off the next time you open the app. Closing the panel asks first only while a file is still being added (**Files are still being added**, with **Keep adding** and **Stop and close**). On the web, an upload needs the page: closing the panel mid-upload asks **Files are still uploading** (**Keep uploading** or **Stop and close**), and the browser warns before you leave the page.

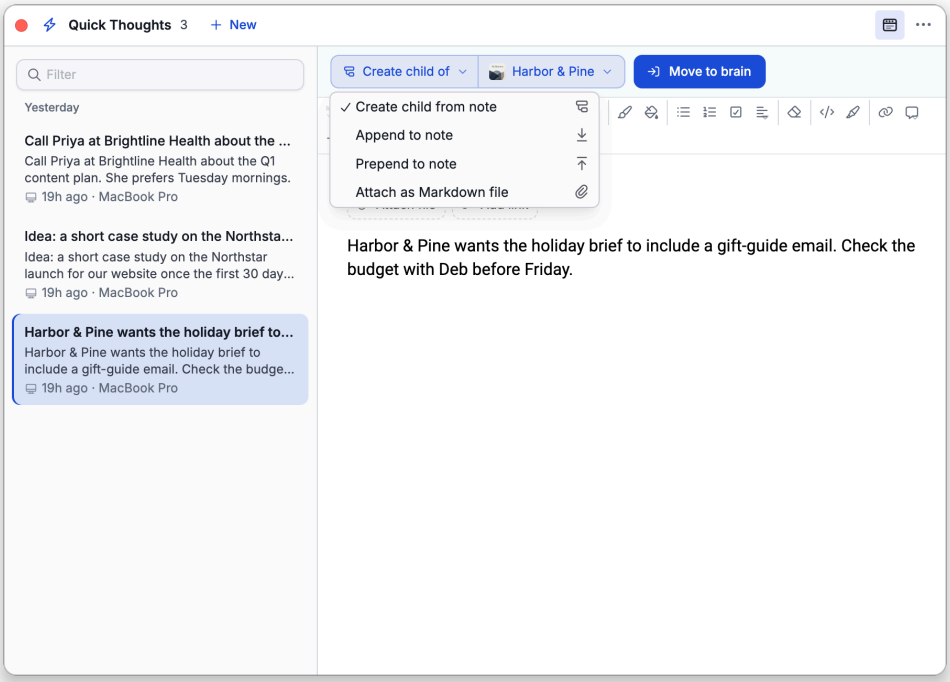
A file being uploaded from another of your devices shows as **Uploading from** that device with its progress, and turns into a normal chip when it arrives.

A note with files shows only in versions of TheBrain that support attachments. If it is missing from your Quick Thoughts on one of your devices, update TheBrain on that device.

The capture tools have **Attach file** too: the browser extension, the desktop capture window, and the phone capture card (where it offers **Photos & videos** or **Files**). There the files upload while you write. In the browser extension and on iPhone and iPad, **Send** waits until they have finished, showing their progress; in the desktop capture window and on Android, the note is sent right away and its files follow as they finish uploading. See Quick Thoughts Capture Shortcuts.

How to File a Note into a Brain

The bar above the note reads like a sentence: an action, a destination, and a **Move to brain** button.



1. Select the note in the inbox.
2. Click the action chip on the left and pick one of:
    - **Create child from note** — makes a new child thought under the destination thought. The thought is named from the note's first line, and the rest of the note becomes its notes. (The first line is left out of the notes so the name is not repeated.) A one-line note becomes a thought with no notes. A long first line is shortened in the name, and the whole line then stays at the top of the notes. A note with no text is named from its first link, or from its first attached file's name when it has no link, or **Untitled note** when it has neither, as with a note that holds only an image.
    - **Append to note** — adds the whole note to the end of the destination thought's existing notes.
    - **Prepend to note** — adds the whole note to the start of the destination thought's existing notes, above what is already there. Useful for logs kept newest first.
    - **Attach as Markdown file** — saves the whole note as a Markdown file attached to the destination thought, named from the note's title.

    The chip then reads **Create child of**, **Append to**, **Prepend to**, or **Attach to**. Your choice carries from note to note for as long as the panel stays open, which suits working through a batch. It is not kept after that: each time you open the panel, the action starts on **Create child from note** again.

While **Append to note** or **Prepend to note** is picked, the same menu also shows **Separate with a line**. When it is checked (the default), a horizontal line sets the added note apart from the existing notes; uncheck it to separate them with just a blank line. TheBrain remembers this choice on all your devices, and it applies to the AI's filing as well.

1. Click the destination chip. Inside a brain it starts as the active thought (on the desktop app, the active thought of the tab you opened the panel from, when you opened it); click it to search for another thought — in this brain or any of your other brains. Recent thoughts are listed first, each with its brain's icon so you can tell them apart. Opened from the brains list, the chip starts as **Choose destination** and you pick the target the same way.

   A destination you pick applies to the note you are on. When you select another note, start a new one, or finish a move, the chip goes back to where it started (the active thought, or **Choose destination**). When you search in the picker, the results come only from brains you can edit, so thoughts in brains you can only read, and in public brains, are left out. If the brain you have open is one you cannot edit, the chip starts as **Choose destination**, and **Move to brain** stays dimmed until you pick a destination.
1. Click **Move to brain**. On a phone the button is an icon without the label.

After a successful move, a confirmation under the filter box reads **Moved:** followed by the thought's name, with an **Open thought** link that takes you to the new child (for Create child) or to the destination thought (for Append, Prepend, and Attach) — even if it lives in another brain. A thought in another brain opens in the tab where that brain is already open, or in a new tab (a new browser tab on the web). The note leaves the inbox. If filing fails, the note stays in the inbox unchanged and the panel says so: **Couldn't file the note — it was not deleted.**

If the note has links, they are attached to the destination thought — the new child for **Create child from note**, the destination thought for the other three actions — as web link attachments. A link the thought already has is skipped rather than attached twice. A note with only links and no text, filed with **Attach as Markdown file**, just adds the links, without an empty Markdown file.

Files go the same way: they become file attachments on the new child, or on the destination thought for the other three actions (beside the Markdown file for **Attach as Markdown file**), in the order they had on the note. A note with only files, filed with **Create child from note**, makes a child named after its first file, without the file's extension. A file is never skipped and never replaces anything: if the thought already has a file of that name, the new one is added with a number, such as `report (1).pdf`.

Moving a note with files takes a moment, because the files are downloaded first. The button reads **Moving** with how far along it is, and while the files download, a **Cancel** button beside it stops the move and leaves the note in Quick Thoughts with nothing changed. If a file is still uploading when you click **Move to brain**, the panel says so and offers **Move without it**: the note moves now, and the file arrives as a quick thought of its own when it finishes. On the web, a note whose files would take you over your storage is not filed: **Not enough storage for this note's files. It was not filed.**

Right after a move, **Undo** in the brain takes the whole move back in one step and puts the quick thought, files and all, back in your inbox. **Redo** files it again.

Notes are filed in whatever format the destination brain uses for its notes, so they read correctly in both standard-Markdown brains and brains using TheBrain's own note format.

How to Delete a Note

1. Select the note.
2. Click the ⋯ (**More actions**) button at the right end of the panel's title row — on a phone it floats in the corner of the sheet — and choose **Delete note**.
3. Confirm at the **Delete this note?** prompt. On desktop, a trash icon also appears when you hover over a row in the list.

On a phone, tablet, or other touch screen you can also swipe a note's row to the left in the inbox list, which reveals a **Delete** button. Tapping that button deletes the note right away, without the **Delete this note?** prompt, because the swipe itself is the confirmation. If you keep swiping until the button stretches into a capsule labeled **Delete**, letting go deletes the note in one move. Tap anywhere else in the list to close the button and keep the note.

Deleting a quick thought cannot be undone. If you want to keep the text, file it into a brain instead.

Working Offline

Quick Thoughts lives in TheBrain Cloud, so the panel needs a connection to fetch your notes. What you see depends on what the app already has:

- If the cloud cannot be reached and nothing is cached, the panel shows **Can't reach TheBrain Cloud** with **Your notes are safe. They'll show up as soon as you're back online.** and a **Retry** button.
- If a list was fetched earlier, it is shown with an **Offline** strip that says when it was last refreshed. Opening a note whose body has not been loaded yet shows **Couldn't load this note. Check your connection and try again.**
- Edits you make while offline are kept and retried. A note you wrote that has never reached the cloud appears in a **Waiting to save** group at the top of the inbox with the message **Couldn't reach the cloud. Retrying.** — click it to keep editing. Changes to an existing note show a **Save pending** chip on the note until they go through; the panel retries whenever it opens, after every successful refresh, and when you click **Retry**.

Notes You Started Elsewhere

The capture tools on your desktop and phone use an explicit **Send** button, so it is possible to type something in one of them and forget to send it. When that happens on the device you are using, the panel shows a strip reading **Unsent note in the capture window** with an **Open** link that brings that capture tool back so you can finish and send. See Quick Thoughts Capture Shortcuts for the tools themselves.

Asking Cerebro

Cerebro, TheBrain's AI assistant, can see your Quick Thoughts inbox. You can ask it what is in your quick thoughts, to find the note about a particular subject, or to file a note under a thought in the current brain. Filing through Cerebro is a write action and asks for your confirmation first, subject to your tool permissions (see Cerebro Tools and Permissions). Cerebro cannot delete quick thoughts. It sees the files attached to each note and can find a note by a file's name; filing moves the files along with the note, and if one is still uploading, Cerebro tells you which and asks whether to wait or to file the note without it.

Settings

- **Settings > Device > General** (desktop app only) — turn on and choose the global capture shortcut, decide whether TheBrain keeps running in the system tray when its windows are closed, and use **Get the browser extension** to find the extension for your browser. See

Quick Thoughts Capture Shortcuts, and Tray Icon, Quitting, and Starting at Login for the tray and startup options.

- **Settings > User > Capture Devices** (web app) — the browser extensions and apps you have connected for capture, with the option to disconnect any of them.

Related Topics

- Creating Thoughts and Links
- Writing and Formatting Notes
- Cerebro Tools and Permissions
- Tray Icon, Quitting, and Starting at Login

2.2 Quick Thoughts Capture Shortcuts

Overview

The **Quick Thoughts** panel inside TheBrain is where notes are sorted, but the point of Quick Thoughts is capturing without opening TheBrain at all. Each platform has its own fast lane: a browser extension, a global keyboard shortcut and tray icon on the desktop, and widgets, tiles, and app shortcuts on phones. Every one of them opens the same small capture card — a title bar reading **Quick thought**, a rich-text editor with a strip for web links and attached files above it, and a **Send** button — and every note they send lands in your account's Quick Thoughts inbox, where you file it later (see Quick Thoughts).

All the capture tools share a few habits:

- **Send is explicit.** Nothing reaches your inbox until you click **Send** (`Ctrl+Enter`, or `⌘Enter` on Mac, in the extension and the desktop window). The status line reads **Not sent yet** while the card holds unsent text, **Sending…** as it goes, and **Sent ✓** when it arrives.
- **Unsent text is never lost.** If you close or dismiss the card mid-thought, the text is still there next time you open it, and the tool's launcher shows a small indicator that a note is waiting. Inside TheBrain, the Quick Thoughts panel shows **Unsent note in the capture window** with an **Open** link.
- **A draft can be thrown away.** While the card holds unsent text, links, or files, a trash button (**Discard this note**) appears beside the status line. Click or tap it once and it changes to

Discard?; click it again within a few seconds to discard the text, the links, and the files. Pressing `Esc`, clicking anywhere else, or waiting cancels. The card stays open, empty and ready for a new note, and in the extension the page you are on is offered as a link again.

- **Links ride along.** Click **Add link** above the editor, paste a web address into the **Paste a link** box, and press `Enter` or click **Add** — the link joins the note as a chip. Each chip can be renamed with its pencil button or removed with its **x**. A note can carry up to 20 links, and a note with links but no text can be sent too. When you file the note, its links become web link attachments on the destination thought.
- **Files ride along too.** Click **Attach file** in the same strip (once the strip holds a chip, the button shows only its paperclip) and choose one or more files; on phones it offers **Photos & videos** or **Files**. In the desktop capture window you can also drag files from your computer onto the card to attach them. An image file dropped onto the note's text goes into the text as a picture instead; drop it on the strip above the text to attach it as a file. A folder cannot be attached: the card says so and asks you to attach the files inside it. Each file starts uploading at once and joins the note as a chip that shows its progress, so you can keep writing. In the browser extension and the iPhone and iPad capture card, **Send** waits for the files: until they have all uploaded, the button shows the progress instead (**Uploading 1 file — 40%**, or **Waiting for connection** while you are offline; on an iPhone, the shorter **Uploading 40%** or **No connection**) and cannot be clicked. In the desktop capture window and the Android capture card, **Send** doesn't wait: the note goes to your inbox right away and its files follow as they finish uploading, even after the window or card has closed (on Android 14 and later a notification shows the progress), while TheBrain on your other devices shows them as **Uploading from** this device. Everywhere, a file that cannot be uploaded turns into a red chip that says why, and the note cannot be sent until you remove that file. A note can carry up to 10 files, and a note with files but no text can be sent too. Attaching files needs the capture tool to be connected to your account. For the size limits, renaming and removing a file, and what happens to the files when you file the note, see Quick Thoughts.
- **Offline is fine. Send** always puts the note in a queue on the device first, so a note that cannot be delivered right away is safe. When the capture tool is connected to your account but TheBrain Cloud cannot be reached, the status reads **Offline — 1 note queued** in the extension and on phones, and **Send failed (502) — 1 queued** in the desktop capture window; the card stays open so you can read it. When the tool is not connected to an account yet, or you are signed out, the status begins **Saved on this device** and tells you to connect or sign in to sync. Queued notes are sent the next time you open the capture card with a connection, and whenever you send another note. On phones they are also sent each time you open the TheBrain app or come back to it.
- **In the desktop and phone apps, the card always sends as the account it was written under.** If a different account is signed in later, the note waits for the original account to

sign back in.

The Browser Extension (Chrome, Firefox, and Safari)

The **TheBrain Quick Thoughts** extension adds a toolbar button that opens the capture card as a popup, on any page, without leaving the tab. It works in Chrome and other Chromium browsers (version 121 or later), in Firefox (version 140 or later), and in Safari on a Mac (version 16.4 or later).

Getting the extension

TheBrain links to the extension from a few places, each labeled **Get the browser extension**: in the desktop app under **Settings > Device > General**, on the tour card the Quick Thoughts panel shows while your inbox is empty (until you have taken the tour), and in the Quick Thoughts tour's browser extension step. Each one opens the Quick Thoughts page on `thebrain.com` in your web browser, which offers the extension from the store for the browser you are using. These links aren't shown on phones and tablets, whose browsers can't install the extension — use the phone capture tools described below instead.

In Safari, the extension comes with TheBrain's desktop app for Mac rather than from a store. To turn it on:

1. Install the desktop app in your **Applications** folder and open it. Safari doesn't list the extension while the app is anywhere else.
2. In Safari, choose **Safari > Settings**, open **Extensions**, and turn on **TheBrain Quick Thoughts**.

The extension is updated along with the desktop app.

Connecting the extension to your account

1. Click the extension's toolbar button. Until it is connected, the popup shows **Not connected to your TheBrain account yet — notes stay on this device.** with a **Connect…** button. You can already write and send notes; they are kept locally until you connect.
2. Click **Connect…**. A tab opens in the TheBrain web app on a page headed **Connect Quick Thoughts**, which says that the extension will be able to save quick thoughts to your account and that it cannot read or change anything else. Sign in if you are not already.

3. Click **Connect** on that page. It reports **Connected!**, and the tab closes on its own. Any notes you sent before connecting are delivered the next time you open the popup.

Safari asks your permission before the extension can use a website. When you click **Connect…**, Safari asks to let the extension use TheBrain's site; allow it so the connection can finish. Safari can ask again when you click **Send**, if you allowed access for one day only or removed it later.

The connection gives the extension a limited credential that can only send quick thoughts to your account — it cannot read or change anything else. You can see and revoke it any time in the web app under **Settings > User > Capture Devices**, or disconnect from the extension's own options page with **Disconnect**. If the connection is revoked, the popup tells you that the device was disconnected and asks you to reconnect.

Capturing

1. Click the toolbar button, or press the extension's shortcut — the default is `Alt+Shift+U` (`⌥⇧U` on Mac). You can change it in your browser's extension shortcut settings.
2. Write the note. The popup's status line shows the account you are sending to.

When you open the popup on a web page with an empty draft, that page is already there as a link chip, titled with the page's title — send it as is, add a few words, or click the chip's **x** to drop it. The chip is only kept with the draft once you start typing or change the links, so opening the popup on page after page doesn't pile up chips. If the draft already has text or links, the page is offered instead as an **Add this page** button in the link strip. Browser pages such as the new-tab page or settings are never offered.

1. Click **Send** or press `Ctrl+Enter` (`⌘Enter` on Mac).

The popup keeps whatever you typed but did not send, and the toolbar icon carries a dot while such a note is waiting. The popup follows your system's light or dark appearance; the button in its header switches between light, dark, and following the system.

The Desktop App (Windows, Mac, Linux)

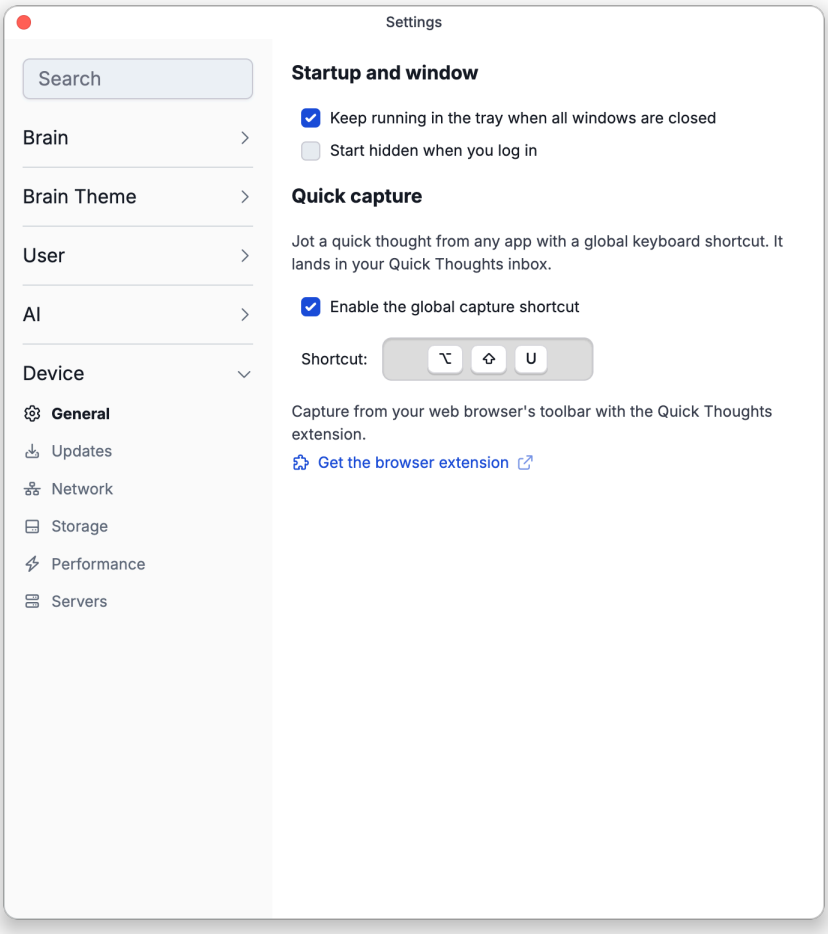
The desktop app can open a capture window from anywhere on your computer. It is a small window that stays out of the way: press `Esc` or close it to hide it (the text stays). It stays above other windows while you work in them, until you turn that off with the pin button in its header. Because the desktop app already knows who you are, there is nothing to connect — notes go

straight to the signed-in account. If you are signed out, the window says **Sign in to TheBrain to sync — notes stay on this device.** and holds the notes until you sign in.

Turning on the global shortcut

The shortcut is off by default, because a global shortcut takes that key combination away from every other program.

1. Open **Settings > Device > General**.
2. Under **Quick capture**, turn on **Enable the global capture shortcut**.
3. The **Shortcut** field shows the default, `Alt+Shift+U` (`⌥⇧U` on Mac). To change it, click the field and press a new combination. It must include a modifier such as `Ctrl` or `Alt` — a plain key, or `Shift` alone, is refused because it would swallow ordinary typing everywhere. **Reset to default** appears whenever the shortcut differs from the default.



If the combination could not be registered — typically because another program already uses it — the page shows a warning, and you can choose another combination. On Linux with a Wayland desktop, global shortcuts generally cannot be registered at all; see *Linux* below.

The shortcut works while TheBrain is running, including when it is running only in the tray. While the desktop app holds `Alt+Shift+U`, it answers that combination even in your browser, ahead of the extension's identical default — same account, same inbox, so either is fine.

The tray icon and Quick Thought menu

With **Keep running in the tray when all windows are closed** turned on in **Settings > Device > General** (it is on by default), closing TheBrain's last window leaves it running as a tray icon (a menu bar icon on Mac) so the capture shortcut keeps working. The icon's menu has **Quick Thought**, which opens the capture window without a shortcut at all, alongside **Open TheBrain** and **Quit TheBrain**.

The tray icon wears a dot, and its tooltip reads **TheBrain (unsent quick thought)**, while the capture window holds text you have not sent.

Start hidden when you log in, on the same settings page (shown where your system supports it), launches TheBrain in the tray at login, so the capture shortcut is ready before you open a window. It is off by default.

These two settings also decide whether TheBrain keeps running after you close its window and whether it starts when you log in. For quitting TheBrain completely and turning the tray icon off, see Tray Icon, Quitting, and Starting at Login.

Linux

Most Linux desktops now run Wayland, which does not let applications register global shortcuts, so the shortcut in Settings usually reports that it could not be registered. Use one of these instead:

- **The launcher action.** Right-click TheBrain's icon in your dock or application launcher and choose **Quick Thought**. This opens the capture window whether TheBrain is running or not.
- **A system shortcut.** Bind any key combination in your desktop's keyboard settings (or your compositor's configuration) to the same command the launcher action runs (with a

Beta or Alpha install, the command begins `thebrain-beta` or `thebrain-alpha` instead):

```
thebrain-stable --quick-thought
```

If TheBrain is already running, the command shows the capture window in that instance; if it is not, it starts TheBrain and then shows the capture window.

Android

TheBrain for Android offers three ways to open the capture card without opening the app:

- **Quick Settings tile** — Edit your Quick Settings panel and add the **Quick Thought** tile from TheBrain. Tap it to open the capture card from anywhere, even over another app.
- **Home screen widget** — Add the 1x1 **Quick Thought** widget (described as *Jot a note into TheBrain instantly.*) to your home screen or lock screen. Tapping it opens the card.
- **App shortcut** — Touch and hold TheBrain's app icon and choose **Quick Thought**.

The card uses the account signed in to the TheBrain app, so there is nothing to connect. If you have not signed in, it tells you to sign in to sync and keeps notes on the device until you do. Text you typed but did not send is restored next time; while it waits, the widget's label and the tile's subtitle change to **Unsent thought** and the widget shows a dot. The card also opens when you share something from another app and choose **Quick Thought** (see Sharing to Quick Thoughts).

iOS and iPadOS

TheBrain for iOS offers the capture card through the system's widget and control surfaces:

- **Home Screen widget** — Add the small **Quick Thought** widget from TheBrain (described as *Jot a note into TheBrain instantly.*), or **Quick Thought (Blue)**, the same button on TheBrain blue. Tapping it opens the capture card.
- **Lock Screen widgets** — The same **Quick Thought** widget is available in the round and rectangular Lock Screen sizes.
- **Control Center** (iOS 18 and later) — Add the **TheBrain Quick Thought** control to Control Center. It can also be assigned to the Action button on iPhones that have one. It is not

supported in the two Lock Screen corner-button slots; use the Lock Screen widget there instead.

- **App shortcut** — Touch and hold TheBrain's app icon and choose **Quick Thought**.
- **Share** — In another app, tap **Share** and choose **TheBrain**: a small **Quick Thought** sheet sends what you shared without opening TheBrain (see Sharing to Quick Thoughts).

As on Android, the card sends as the account signed in to the app, holds notes offline, and restores unsent text; on iOS the reminder about an unsent note is shown inside the app's Quick Thoughts panel.

Quick Thought Lite

Quick Thought Lite is the fastest way to jot plain text on an iPhone or iPad: iOS shows a small **Quick Thought** text box over whatever app you are using, and TheBrain never opens. Type or dictate your thought, tap **Done**, and the box closes; the note goes to the Quick Thoughts inbox of the account signed in to the TheBrain app. There is no confirmation message, by design, so you are straight back where you were.

Quick Thought Lite is a Shortcuts action, so you can start it from anywhere iOS runs shortcuts:

- **Action button** — On iPhones with an Action button, set the button to **Shortcut** in the Settings app and choose **Quick Thought Lite**.
- **Siri** — Say "Quick Thought in TheBrain" or "Add a Quick Thought in TheBrain".
- **Spotlight** — Search for **Quick Thought Lite**.
- **Shortcuts app** — Find it under TheBrain's shortcuts. From there you can also add it to your Home Screen as its own icon, or use it as a step in a shortcut of your own.
- **Back Tap** — In **Settings > Accessibility > Touch > Back Tap**, choose a double or triple tap and pick **Quick Thought Lite**.
- **Control Center** — Apple's own **Shortcut** control can run it. (TheBrain's **TheBrain Quick Thought** control and the widgets open the full capture card instead, because iOS does not let widgets and controls show a text box.)

Quick Thought Lite takes plain text only, with no pictures, files, or link chips; use the capture card or the Share menu for those. Markdown you type, such as a `#` heading or `–` list items, becomes formatting in the note, and the heading's text, without the `#`, becomes the note's title. If you are offline, the note is saved on the device and sent the next time you open TheBrain. If

you are not signed in to the app, it is saved on the device and goes to the account that signs in next. A note over 5 MB is not saved, and iOS shows **This Quick Thought is too long to send.**

Using Quick Thought Lite in your own shortcuts

Because Quick Thought Lite is a Shortcuts action, you can build your own shortcuts that prepare some text and then send it to your inbox. In Quick Thought Lite's step, set **Thought** to the result of the step before it (tap the field and choose that result); if you leave it empty, the typing box appears instead. Apple's action names can differ slightly between iOS versions.

For example, this shortcut saves a readable copy of a Safari article, with its title and address, from Safari's Share menu:

1. In the Shortcuts app, create a new shortcut, for example **Clip to TheBrain**. In its details, turn on **Show in Share Sheet** and let it receive **Safari web pages** and **URLs**.
2. Add **Get Article using Safari Reader**, with **Shortcut Input** as its input.
3. Add **Get Details of Article** and choose **Title**.
4. Add **Get Details of Article** again and choose **Body**, with the article from step 2 as its input.
5. Add **Make Markdown from Rich Text**, with the body as its input.
6. Add a **Text** action containing a `#` and the title, a blank line, the **Shortcut Input**, another blank line, and the Markdown from step 5.
7. Add **Quick Thought Lite**, with **Thought** set to that text.

To use it, open an article in Safari, tap **Share**, and choose **Clip to TheBrain**. The title line becomes the note's title, the address sits under it, and the article's formatting arrives intact. Pictures in the article come through as links to the website's images rather than as copies.

Managing Connected Capture Devices

In the web app, **Settings > User > Capture Devices** lists every extension or app that holds a capture credential for your account, with its name, its **Access** (**Send only** or **Send and read**), when it was **Paired**, and when it was **Last Used**. Click the **x** on a row and confirm **Disconnect** to revoke it. Notes that device already sent are kept, and you can connect the device again at any time. Disconnecting never touches your brains or your data.

- The capture card takes text, formatting, web links, tables, pictures, and attached files. In the extension popup and the desktop capture window you can paste a screenshot or a copied picture straight into the note. The card's toolbar also has an **Insert** menu with **Insert Table** and **Insert Image**. In the extension popup and the desktop capture window, toolbar buttons that do not fit in the row are moved into the **More** (…) menu at its end, and at the capture window's default size **Insert** is one of them. **Insert Image** opens a small panel with **Choose image file…** and a box for pasting an image address. A note that holds only a picture can be sent. Markdown you paste (headings, lists, quotes, code, tables) turns into formatting as it goes in, as it does in thought notes; in the browser extension that needs a connection, so offline it pastes as plain text. Large pictures are scaled down and re-compressed as they go in. A note over 5 MB is not sent: the status reads **This note is too large to send (5 MB limit)** and the note stays in the card, so you can remove some images or split it into two notes. Attached files upload separately and are not part of that limit.
- To send a web page, link, text, photo, or file from another app, use its **Share** button (on Windows, **Send to**; see Sharing to Quick Thoughts). BrainBox keeps its own share entries, which send to BrainBox instead (see BrainBox).
- The capture card's toolbar is a compact version of the notes toolbar; on phones it is a floating pill with a button to hide the keyboard.
- Only the extension offers the page you are on. The desktop capture window and the phone capture tools open blank, ready for typing; add links to them with **Add link**.

Related Topics

- Keyboard Shortcuts

2.3 Sharing to Quick Thoughts

Overview

You can send things to your Quick Thoughts inbox straight from other apps: a web page you are reading, a quote from it, a photo, a document, a handful of files. On iPhone, iPad, Android, and Mac you use the other app's **Share** button and choose TheBrain's **Quick Thought**; on Windows you right-click files and use **Send to > Quick Thought**; on Linux a file manager action or the command line does the same. Each share becomes a quick thought you can add a few

words to before sending, and it lands in the same inbox as everything else you capture (see Quick Thoughts).

What you share turns into the parts of a note:

- **Text** becomes the note's text, which you can edit before sending.
- **A web link** becomes a link chip above the note. Text that is only a web address becomes a link chip too, and when an app sends some words together with a link (a post title and its address, a quote and a link to it), the words go into the note and the address becomes the chip. A link shared on its own is named with the page's title when the app sends one, as browsers do; a link that arrives with other text shows its address until you rename it. On iPhone and iPad, TheBrain looks up the page's title for a link that arrives without one.
- **Photos, videos, and files** become the note's attached files, uploaded as they are: TheBrain never converts or shrinks them. A note can carry up to 10 files of up to 100 MB each; extra files are left out, and the card tells you so. The note's text is limited to 5 MB, as for any quick thought.

You don't have to wait for files to upload. When you send, the note goes to your inbox right away and its files follow on their own as they finish uploading, even after the share screen has closed and without opening TheBrain. Until they arrive, TheBrain on your other devices shows each file as **Uploading from** the device it is coming from. The files on your device are never changed, moved, or deleted.

You need to be signed in to TheBrain on the device to share files. Shared text and links are kept on the device while you are signed out and are sent once you sign in.

How to Share on iPhone and iPad

1. In the other app (Safari, Photos, Files, Notes, and so on), tap **Share**.
2. Tap **TheBrain** in the row of apps. A **Quick Thought** sheet opens over the app.
3. Check what came through: links and files appear as chips at the top, and any shared text is already in the note box. Type in **Add a note** to add your own words.
4. Tap **Send**. The sheet closes and you are back in the other app. Tap **Cancel** instead to send nothing.

Files start uploading while the sheet is open, so a file that is too large, one too many, or a full inbox shows on its chip right away; the other files still send. After you tap **Send**, iOS finishes the uploads in the background. If you are offline when you share, the note is saved and sent

later, but files cannot be uploaded: share them again once you are online. If nothing in the share can be added, the sheet says so, and you can still write a note.

BrainBox has its own entry: to send something to BrainBox instead, choose **Send to BrainBox** from the list of actions below the row of apps (see BrainBox).

Sharing from Safari

What arrives depends on how you share:

How you share	Note text	Link chip
Select text, then tap **Share** in the menu over the selection	the selected text	none
Tap the page's **Share** button while text is selected	the selected text	the page, named with its title
Tap the page's **Share** button with nothing selected	empty	the page, named with its title

To keep the page's link together with a quote, select the text first, then share the page with the page's own **Share** button rather than the one in the menu over the selection.

How to Share on Android

1. In the other app, tap **Share**.
2. Choose **Quick Thought** from TheBrain. Android lists it under TheBrain's icon: it may appear as **TheBrain** with **Quick Thought** beneath it, or inside a small menu when you tap TheBrain's icon. The entry labeled **BrainBox** sends to BrainBox instead (see BrainBox).
3. The capture card opens over the app with what you shared. If the card already holds a note you haven't sent, the shared items are added after it rather than replacing it.
4. Add any words you like and tap **Send**.

Send doesn't wait for files on Android, whether you shared them or attached them in the card yourself: the note goes right away and the card closes. The files keep uploading in the background, and on Android 14 and later a notification shows **Uploading 2 files to Quick Thoughts** with the progress, or **Waiting for a connection to upload to Quick Thoughts** while you are offline. The first time you add files, the card asks whether TheBrain may show notifications; if you don't allow it, uploads still finish, just without the notification. If you force-

stop TheBrain or your phone restarts before the files are up, they continue the next time you open the capture card.

Sharing from Chrome

- **Sharing a page** (Chrome's menu > **Share**) adds the page as a link chip named with the page's title.
- **Sharing selected text** (select text, then **Share**) puts the quote in the note and adds a link chip that jumps to the highlighted passage. That chip shows the page's address rather than its title; rename it with its pencil button if you like.

How to Share on a Mac

The Mac desktop app adds **Quick Thought** to the Share menu of Finder, Safari, Notes, Preview, and other apps.

1. Turn it on once: open **System Settings**, go to **Login Items & Extensions**, and under **Sharing** turn on **Quick Thought** for TheBrain.
2. In any app, choose **Share > Quick Thought** (in Finder, select files first; in Safari, use the **Share** button or **File > Share**).
3. TheBrain's capture window opens with what you shared. If TheBrain isn't running, it starts. Add any words and click **Send**.

Folders can't be shared: the window says so and asks you to share the files inside instead. When you share a page from Safari with text selected, the selection comes along as the note's text.

How to Send Files on Windows

The desktop app adds **Quick Thought** to File Explorer's **Send to** menu, beside **BrainBox**.

1. Select one or more files in File Explorer and right-click them. On Windows 11, choose **Show more options** to see the full menu.
2. Choose **Send to > Quick Thought**.
3. TheBrain's capture window opens with the files attached. Add any words and click **Send**.

Folders are refused, as on the Mac. The **Send to** entry is added whenever the desktop app runs, so it reappears if you delete it.

How to Send Files on Linux

The desktop app takes files on its command line (with a Beta or Alpha install, use `thebrain-beta` or `thebrain-alpha` in place of `thebrain-stable`, here and in the steps below):

```
thebrain-stable --quick-thought <files>
```

TheBrain's capture window opens with the files attached. Most file managers can run this from their right-click menu.

Nautilus (Files on GNOME)

1. Create the folder `~/.local/share/nautilus/scripts` if it doesn't exist.
2. In it, create a file named `Quick Thought` containing:

```
#!/bin/sh
exec thebrain-stable --quick-thought "$@"
```

1. Make it executable: `chmod +x ~/.local/share/nautilus/scripts/"Quick Thought"`.
2. Select files, right-click, and choose **Scripts > Quick Thought**.

Dolphin (KDE Plasma)

1. Create the folder `~/.local/share/kio/servicemenus` if it doesn't exist.
2. In it, create a file named `thebrain-quick-thought.desktop` containing:

```
[Desktop Entry]
Type=Service
MimeType=all/allfiles;
Actions=quickThought

[Desktop Action quickThought]
```

```
Name=Send to Quick Thought
Exec=thebrain-stable --quick-thought %F
```

1. Make it executable: `chmod +x ~/.local/share/kio/servicemenus/thebrain-quick-thought.desktop`.
2. Select files, right-click, and choose **Send to Quick Thought**.

When a File Is Still Uploading

A note that was sent before its files finished uploading is already in your inbox, so you can open and file it right away. If a file is still on its way when you click **Move to brain**, the panel says so and offers **Move without it**: the note is filed now, and the file arrives later as a quick thought of its own (see Quick Thoughts). A file shared from an iPhone or iPad is the exception: if its note is filed or deleted before it arrives, it is not added.

- The browser extension, the desktop shortcut, the phone widgets, and Quick Thought Lite are other ways to capture without opening TheBrain (see Quick Thoughts Capture Shortcuts).

2.4 BrainBox

Overview

BrainBox is a quick-capture inbox that sits outside any one brain. When you have something to save — a note, a link, a file — but don't want to stop and decide exactly where it belongs, you send it to your BrainBox. Later, you open BrainBox and **triage** each item into the right brain, attaching it to a thought or turning it into a new one. It's the "capture now, organize later" half of TheBrain, and it needs a signed-in account.

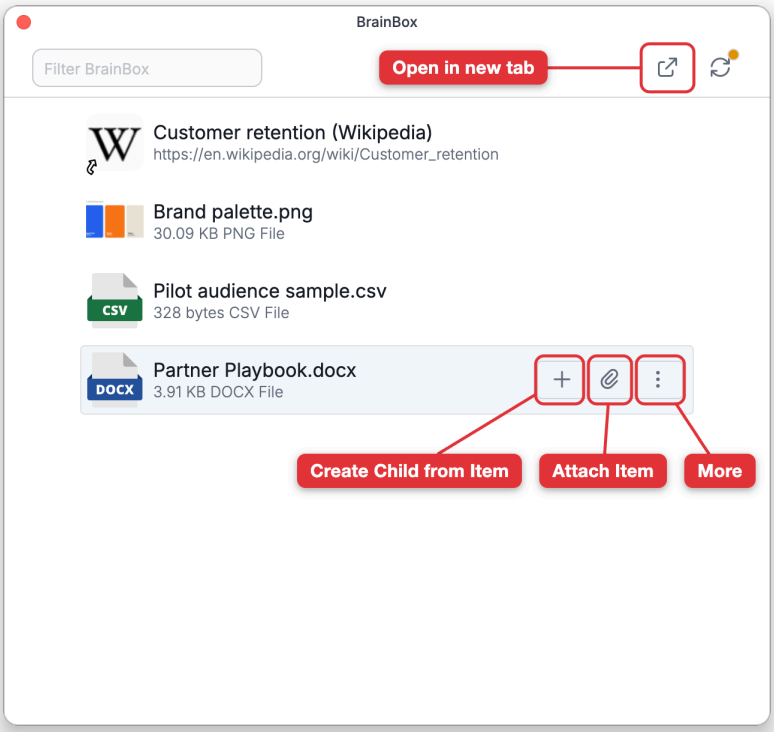
Opening BrainBox

Open it from the **BrainBox** button (a box icon) in the top toolbar. Where it opens depends on where you are:

- **Inside a brain** — BrainBox opens over the brain you have open, so you can file its items onto that brain's active thought. In the mobile app it opens as a panel, and on the desktop app in a window of its own (see below).
- **From the brains list** — BrainBox opens as a full page of its own (the `/brainbox` page). The **Open in new tab** button at the top of the BrainBox that is open over a brain takes you to the same page. This page has no brain behind it, so it has no filing commands; use it to look through, open, rename, or delete items (in the web app you can also download files).

When there's nothing waiting, it shows an empty state ("Your BrainBox is empty.").

On the desktop app, BrainBox opens in a window of its own beside the brain window, and you can keep working in the brain while it is open. It belongs to the tab you opened it from — items are filed to that tab's active thought — and it closes when you close that tab or switch to another tab. Viewing an item shows it in the brain window and closes BrainBox; filing, copying, renaming, and deleting items leave it open.



Getting Items Into BrainBox

- **From the web (BrainBox Ultra)** — The web capture form and its browser extension let you send a note, link, or page to your BrainBox with the **Send to BrainBox** option — or file it

straight into a brain as a child of, or appended to, a chosen thought. See BrainBox Ultra Web Capture.

- **From another app on your phone or tablet** — With the mobile app installed, tap **Share** in the other app and choose TheBrain. The steps, and what each shared item becomes, are under Sharing to BrainBox from Another App on Your Phone below.
- **From File Explorer on Windows** — The desktop app adds a **BrainBox** entry to File Explorer's **Send to** menu: right-click one or more files and choose **Send to > BrainBox**. Folders are skipped, and a notice titled **"Added to BrainBox"** confirms. If you are signed out, the files are held and added when you sign in, as long as you don't quit the app in between.
- **By dragging, in the desktop app** — Drag files, folders, or web links onto the open BrainBox.

Files you add from your computer are copied into BrainBox, so the original stays where it was. The newest item is listed first. Dropping a link that is already in BrainBox, or capturing it again from the browser, moves it to the top instead of adding a second copy.

Sharing to BrainBox from Another App on Your Phone

To save a web page, a link, some text, a photo, or a file to TheBrain from another app on your phone or tablet:

1. In the other app — a browser such as Safari or Chrome, your photos, your files — tap **Share**.
2. Choose BrainBox in the share sheet. On iPhone and iPad it is **Send to BrainBox**, in the list of actions below the row of apps (tapping **TheBrain** in the row of apps sends to Quick Thoughts instead). On Android it is listed under TheBrain's icon as **BrainBox** (the **Quick Thought** entry beside it sends to Quick Thoughts instead; see Sharing to Quick Thoughts).

Each item you share is added to your BrainBox:

- A **web page** becomes a web link named after the page's title.
- A **link that points at a file**, such as a PDF, is downloaded and stored as a file.
- **Text** that isn't a web address is saved as a small text file.
- **Files and images** are stored as files.

On iPhone and iPad you can share several items at once. On Android, share one item at a time.

You need to be signed in. Anything you share while signed out — or, on iPhone and iPad, while TheBrain isn't running — waits on the device and is added once you sign in or open TheBrain. BrainBox then syncs.

Triaging Items Into a Brain

You file items from the BrainBox that is open over a brain, onto the thought you currently have active in that brain:

1. Open the brain and activate the thought you want to file onto.
2. Click the **BrainBox** button.
3. Point at an item and click its plus button (**Create Child from Item**) or its paperclip button (**Attach Item**). The same commands are at the top of the item's right-click menu. In the mobile app, tap an item to open that menu.

The two commands do this:

- **Attach Item** — Add the item as an attachment on the active thought.
- **Create Child from Item** — Turn the item into a new child thought under the active thought. The new thought is named after the item — a file's name without its extension, or a link's name — and the item becomes its attachment.

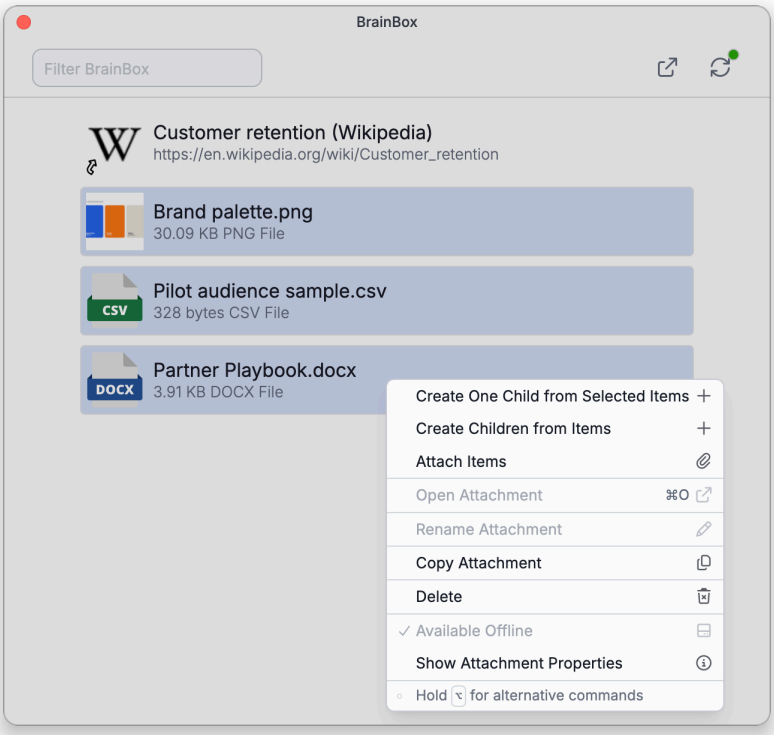
If you opened BrainBox and there is no **Attach Item** or **Create Child from Item**, you are most likely on the full BrainBox page, which has no brain to file into: open a brain first and click the **BrainBox** button there. The filing commands also need a brain you can edit.

Filing Several Items at Once

In the BrainBox that is open over a brain, a click selects an item. `Shift`-click (`⇧`-click on Mac) another item to select the whole range between them; on Windows and Linux, `Ctrl`-click adds or removes a single item. Press `Esc` to clear the selection. With several items selected, the commands act on all of them:

- **Attach Items** — Attaches every selected item to the active thought.

- **Create One Child from Selected Items** — Creates a single new child thought, named after the item you used the command on, and attaches all the selected items to it.
- **Create Children from Items** — Creates one child thought for each selected item. This one is in the right-click menu.



The items are filed oldest first. If the active thought is a thought type, the new thoughts are created with that type.

If you undo the change that filed an item (**Main Menu > Edit > Undo** in the brain), the item goes back into BrainBox, as long as nothing else has changed in BrainBox since; redo files it again.

Each BrainBox item also behaves much like any attachment — you can open or view it, rename it, or **delete** it (in the web app you can also download a file) — so you can clear out items once you've dealt with them. On the desktop app you can also copy a file item or show its properties; **Cut** isn't offered for BrainBox items, so file them instead. Deleting a BrainBox item asks you to confirm first, because the deletion can't be undone.

- Once you file a file from BrainBox into a brain, it is an ordinary attachment of that brain.

Related Topics

- Creating Thoughts and Links
- Cloud Capacity

2.5 BrainBox Ultra Web Capture

Overview

BrainBox Ultra is the name for TheBrain's lightweight web capture form (its page is titled **Add to TheBrain**). Paired with the **BrainBox** browser extension, it lets you capture a page, a link, or a quick note and send it to your **BrainBox** inbox — or, if you want, straight into a brain as a new thought. It's the fast lane from "I found something" to "it's in TheBrain." "Ultra" is branding for this capture feature, not a separate paid tier.

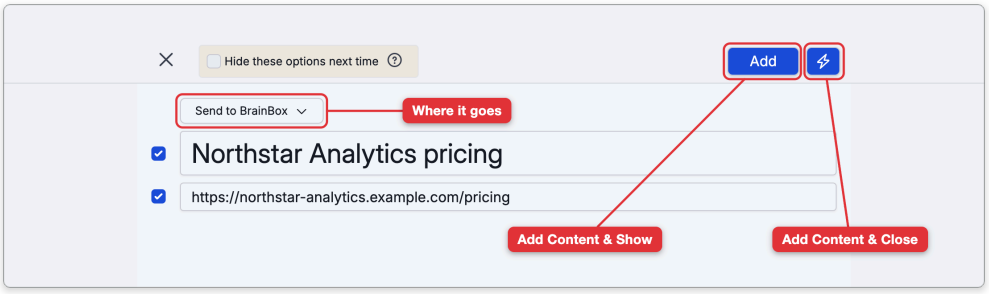
What You Can Capture

The form lets you fill in a **Name**, a **Label**, a **URL**, and a rich-text **Note**, then choose where it goes:

- **Send to BrainBox** — drop it into your BrainBox inbox to triage later (see BrainBox).
- **Create Child of** a thought — make it a new child of a thought you pick.
- **Append to** a thought — add it to an existing thought's note.

(In pure **Send to BrainBox** mode the form keeps it simple — just Name and URL; the Label and Note fields appear once you choose to file into a brain.)

When you choose to file into a brain, you search for and pick a writeable thought in any of your cloud brains as the target. Filing into a brain, and the advanced options such as capturing full web pages and adding notes, need a brain synced to the cloud; without one, capture falls back to sending to your BrainBox. Finish with the main button — its text reads **Add**, **Append**, or **Create** depending on where the item is going, and it opens the result — or use the adjacent **lightning-bolt** button to add the content and close without opening it.



- The browser extension is the main way in. Content you share to BrainBox from another app on your phone or tablet (**Send to BrainBox** on iPhone and iPad, **BrainBox** on Android) does not go through this form: it is added straight to your BrainBox — see BrainBox.

Related Topics

- Creating Thoughts and Links

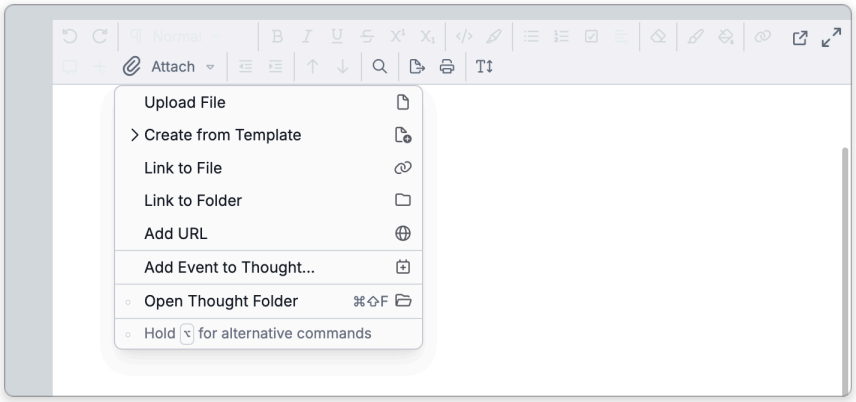
2.6 Adding Attachments

Overview

Any thought can carry **attachments** — files and web links kept alongside its note. This is how you keep a document, a PDF, an image, or a reference URL with the idea it belongs to, so everything about a topic lives in one place. You add attachments from the **Add Attachment** menu, which opens from the paperclip (**Attach**) button on the notes toolbar.

Adding an Attachment

Open the **Add Attachment** menu and choose:



- **Upload File** — Add a file from your device into the brain. In the mobile app, on phones and tablets, the upload dialog also has **Upload Photo**, to pick a picture from your photo library, and **Take Photo**.
- **Add URL** — Attach a web link as a reference.

The menu also holds **Add Event to Thought...** (see Events).

Desktop-Only Options

On the desktop app, the same menu adds:

- **Link to File** — Reference a file on your computer without copying it into the brain. You can pick several files at once.
- **Link to Folder** — Reference a folder on your computer.
- **Create from Template** — Start a new file from a template: the built-in **Text Document** and **Markdown Document**, or a template of your own. See *Creating a File from a Template* below.
- **Open Thought Folder** (**Open Link Folder** for a link) — Open the folder on your computer where this thought's attachments are stored. The default shortcut is `Ctrl+Shift+F` (`⇧⌘F` on Mac). While the menu is open, hold `Shift` (`⌥` on Mac) to get **Copy Folder Path** in its place, which copies that folder's path.

Dragging Files and Links In

On both the desktop app and the web app, you can drag files and folders from your computer and drop them on TheBrain. Where you drop decides what happens:

- **On the content area** — they are attached to the thought shown there.
- **On a thought in the plex** — they are attached to that thought.
- **On the parent, child, or jump drop zone around the active thought** — each file or folder becomes a new thought, named after it, with the item attached.

In the **web app**, dropped files and folders are uploaded into the brain, and one drop can hold at most 10,000 items.

You can also drag a **web address** — a link on a web page, or the address from your browser's address bar. Dropped on the content area or on a thought, it is attached as a web link. Dropped on a parent, child, or jump zone, it creates a new thought for that page, which is named with the page's title once TheBrain has fetched it.

On the **desktop app**, a file drop **copies** the file into the brain unless you've changed **On File/Folder Drop** under **Settings > User > General**. To choose for a single drop, hold a modifier key as you drop (on Linux the modifier keys have no effect while dragging):

- **Link** to the file where it is — hold `Alt` (`^` on Mac).
- **Copy** it into the brain — hold `Ctrl` (`⌥` on Mac).
- **Move** it into the brain — hold `Shift` (`⇧` on Mac).

See Linking to External Files and Folders for every way to create a link and what a link means for storage.

Pasting from the Clipboard

A file, an image, or a web address on the clipboard can be attached with the **Paste** command. It is the first item in the **Add Attachment** menu, and the first item in the menu you get by right-clicking a thought. The command is named for what the clipboard holds — **Paste File**, **Paste Files**, **Paste Folder**, **Paste Image**, or **Paste URL** — and it appears only when the clipboard holds one of those. On iPhone and iPad it always reads **Paste on Thought/Link**.

- **Files and folders** — Copy them in Finder or File Explorer, then paste. Each one is copied into the brain, and the original stays where it was.
- **Images and screenshots** — An image or screenshot on the clipboard is attached as a file named `Pasted Image.png`.
- **Web addresses** — A copied address is attached as a web link.

Files, folders, and images can be pasted in the desktop app. In the web app, only a copied web address can be pasted this way. A pasted file or image never replaces one the thought already has: if the name is taken, it is added under a numbered name such as `name (1).ext`.

Choosing the paste command after right-clicking the plex background, instead of a thought, creates a new thought for each pasted file, image, or address.

Copying an Attachment to Another Thought

On the desktop app, right-click the attachment and choose **Copy Attachment**, then use the paste command on the other thought. The paste adds a copy, and the original attachment stays on the first thought — this is true after **Cut Attachment** too — so to move an attachment, paste it and then delete the original.

Files Left Out of a Folder

When you add a folder, the files and subfolders inside it are attached with it, except for hidden files and the temporary and lock files that other apps keep while a document is open. TheBrain recognizes these by name, and leaves out every file or folder inside the folder whose name:

- **Starts with a dot (`.`)** — hidden files and folders such as `.DS_Store` and `.git`, and the temporary files of LibreOffice, Vim, and other editors.
- **Starts with a tilde (`~`)** — such as the `~$Report.docx` files that Word, Excel, and PowerPoint keep beside a document while it is open.
- **Starts with a dollar sign (`$`)**.
- **Ends with `~lock~`** — the lock files of Affinity Designer.
- **Ends with `.Ignore`** — TheBrain's own temporary files and old note backups.

A folder whose name matches is left out together with everything in it. A left-out file isn't listed when you open the folder, isn't found by search, and isn't synced to your other devices. Rename it, for example by removing the leading `~` or `$`, if you want it attached.

What happens to left-out files depends on how the folder comes in:

- **Copied in** — when you drop or paste a folder, or upload one in the web app, they aren't copied, and the originals stay where they are.

- **Moved in** — when a drop on the desktop app moves the folder (with `Shift` held, or with **On File/Folder Drop** set to **Move**), they move into the brain along with the rest of the folder and stay unlisted, so nothing is lost when the original folder is removed.
- **Copy Folder into Brain** or **Move Folder into Brain** — they come along with the folder and stay unlisted (see Managing Attachments).

The same names are skipped in a thought's folder on your computer: a file with one of these names that you put there in Finder or File Explorer isn't picked up as an attachment. A file or folder that you attach yourself is kept up to date whatever its name — for example a `$Budget.xlsx` you drop on its own — though a change you make to it outside TheBrain can take a few minutes to show.

Links

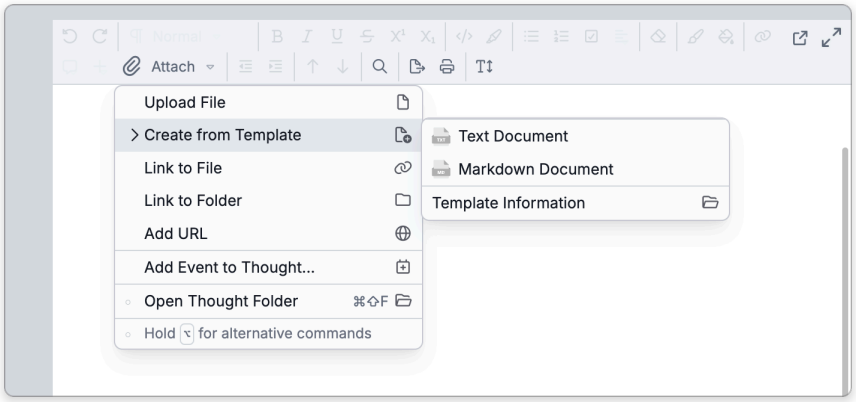
The desktop app doesn't add symbolic links — files or folders that point to another file or folder. When something you drop, paste, copy into the brain, or move into the brain is a link, or a folder you add contains one, nothing is added, and a **Can't Add a Link** message names the link it found. A link that would be left out anyway doesn't count, such as one inside a `.venv` or `.git` folder or one whose name starts with `~`. To add such a folder, remove its links or add a `.zip` copy of it instead. **Link to File** and **Link to Folder** still work with links, because nothing is copied into the brain. A link that you put in a thought's folder in Finder or File Explorer isn't picked up as an attachment.

Creating a File from a Template

On the desktop app, **Add Attachment > Create from Template** starts a new file from a template and attaches it to the thought. Two templates are built in, **Text Document** and **Markdown Document**, and your own templates are listed above them.

To create a file from a template:

1. Open the **Add Attachment** menu and choose **Create from Template**, then pick a template.
2. Enter a name for the new file. The thought's name is suggested, and the file extension is added for you.



The new file is attached to the thought as a file stored in the brain. With one of your own templates it starts as a copy of the template; the built-in templates start empty.

To add your own template:

1. Open the **Add Attachment** menu and choose **Create from Template > Template Information**.
2. In the **Templates Folder** prompt, click **Open** to open the Templates folder on your computer.
3. Put a file in that folder — for example a Word or Excel document already set up the way you like. Each file in the folder is a template, listed under its file name the next time you open the menu.

To have the suggested file name include the name of your own template (as *Thought name, Template name*), turn on **Include template name in file name when creating from template** under **Settings > User > Options**. It is off to begin with. The Templates folder is kept on that computer, so your own templates aren't synced to your other devices.

If a File with That Name Is Already Attached

When you add a file whose name matches a file the thought already has, TheBrain asks before doing anything, with an **Attach File** prompt reading *File with the name "…" already exists.* Choose:

- **Replace** — Swap the existing file for the new one.
- **Keep Both** — Attach the new file alongside the old one under a numbered name, `name (1).ext` (then `name (2).ext`, and so on).
- **Stop** — Leave the existing file as it is and don't attach the new one.

The same `name (1).ext` naming is used when two devices each attach a different file under one name to the same thought before they sync — see Working Offline and Sync Recovery.

- To move a file into the brain or out of it later, see Managing Attachments.
- Linked (external) files and folders don't count toward your cloud storage, because only the link is kept in the brain — see Linking to External Files and Folders.
- For pictures you want to appear inline within the note text rather than as a separate attachment, see Images in Notes.

Related Topics

- Working Offline and Sync Recovery

2.7 Importing Brains

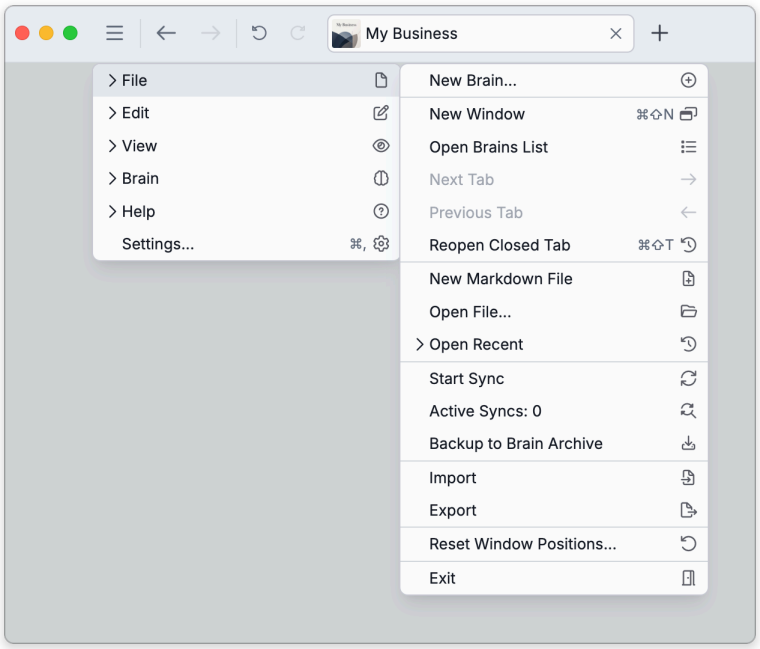
Overview

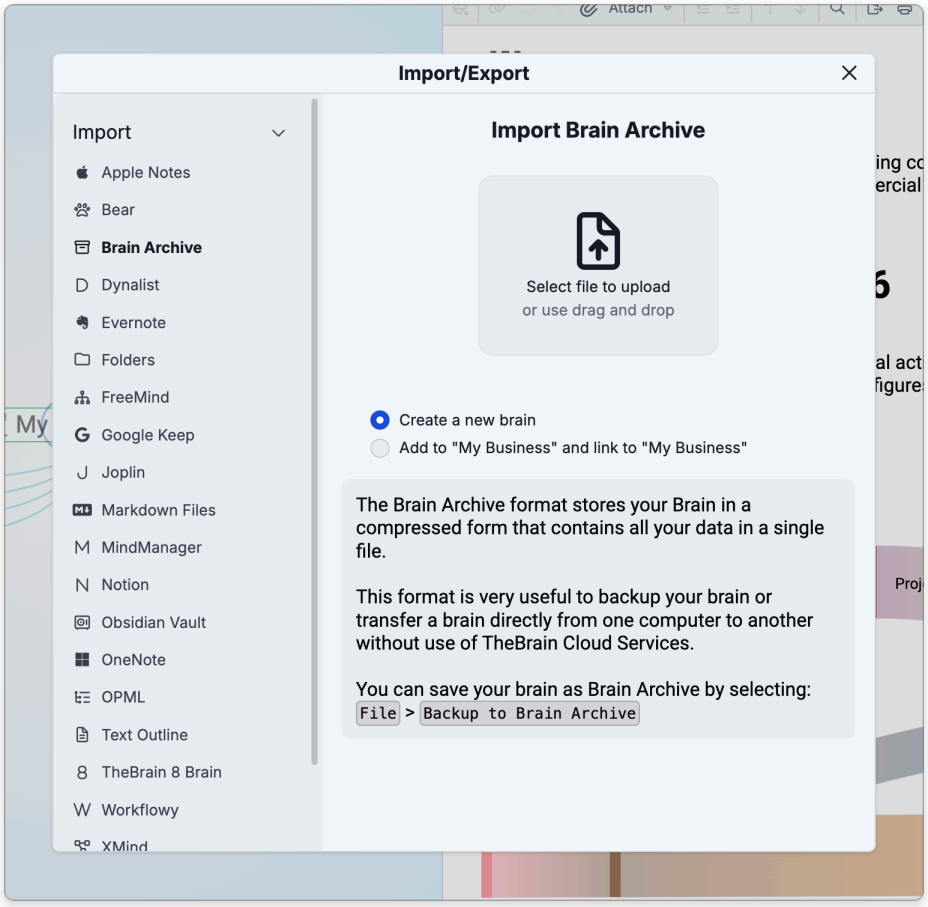
You don't have to start from scratch — TheBrain can **import** content from a brain archive and from many other apps and formats. Importing can create a brand-new brain or add the imported content into a brain you already have.

How to Import

1. Open **Main Menu > File > Import** (this opens the **Import/Export** dialog on the Import side). In the Mac menu bar the command is the **File > Import Brain** submenu, which has an item for most formats; OneNote, Apple Notes, Workflowy and Dynalist are chosen inside the dialog only.
2. Choose the source format from the list on the left of the dialog. The dialog remembers your last-used format; the first time, it opens on **Brain Archive**.
3. Choose where the content goes: **Create a new brain**, or **Add to "..." and link to "..."** to add it to the brain you have open (see *Adding to the Brain You Have Open*). Check which of the two is selected before you go on.

4. Set the options the format offers (see *Options* in this topic). They are read at the moment the import starts.
5. Last, choose the file or folder: click the box that reads **Select file to upload** (**Select files to upload** on the **Evernote** and **Apple Notes** tabs, **Select folder to upload** for the folder formats), or, on a computer, drag the file or folder onto that box.





The import starts as soon as the file or folder is chosen. There is no separate **Import** button to click afterwards, so make the choices in steps 3 and 4 first. (A brain archive that you open from outside TheBrain is the exception, described below.) When you're creating a new brain, nothing more is asked: the dialog closes, an **Import processing** notification shows the progress, and it ends with **Import complete** and an **Open imported brain** link — or with **Import failed** and the reason.

Adding to the Brain You Have Open

In the desktop and mobile apps, **Add to "..." and link to "..."** brings the content into the brain you have open instead of a new brain. The option names that brain and its active thought. With no brain open — for example when the dialog is opened from the brains list — it reads **Add to the current open brain** and is grayed out.

- **Where the content lands** — The top thought of the imported content is linked as a child of the active thought. When the import has no single top thought, every imported thought that has no parent is linked under the active thought instead. So activate the thought you want the content under before you open the dialog.

- **Confirmation** — Because this adds to an existing brain, TheBrain asks first: *Import "…" into "…"? This process might not be undoable.* Choose **Import** to go ahead, or **Cancel**.
- **Brain archives** — Adding a brain archive to a different brain brings in its thoughts, links, notes, attachments, and events as copies with new identities. The archive's own brain settings are not applied.

Opening a Brain Archive From Your Computer

On the desktop app for Mac, Windows, and Linux, `.brz` brain archives are associated with TheBrain, so you can double-click one in your file manager (or open it with TheBrain). The **Import/Export** dialog opens on **Brain Archive** with that file already chosen. Nothing is imported until you confirm: choose **Create a new brain** (selected to start with) or add it to the brain you have open, then click **Import** — or **Cancel** to leave it. If the app isn't running, it starts first; if you're signed out, the dialog appears once you've signed in.

Supported Formats

The Import dialog lists its formats alphabetically; newer importers carry a **Beta** pill next to the panel title. Each tab also shows a description of the format, and for several other apps it gives the steps for getting your data out of that app. The steps below are the ones the tabs give.

- **Apple Notes** (beta) — one or more `.enex` files produced by the *Apple Notes Exporter* tool, which the tab links to. Selecting several files imports them into one brain.
  - In the desktop app, keep the `(Attachments)` folder the exporter writes next to each `.enex` file where it is. TheBrain brings in the files your notes link to from that folder, placing images in the note and attaching other files to the thought. If some linked files can't be found there, the import-complete notification tells you how many.
  - Checklists come in as note checkboxes. A file holding a single note becomes a single thought, without an extra thought named after the file.
  - A note that was locked in Apple Notes comes in with its title only, and its note explains that the content wasn't exported because the note was locked. To bring the content over, remove the lock in Apple Notes, export the note again, and import it again.
- **Bear** (beta) — a `.bear2bk` backup file. Create it in Bear with **File > Backup Notes** on a Mac, or **Settings > Import & Export > Backup Notes** on iPhone and iPad.

    - Every note becomes a thought under a **Bear Import** thought. `#tags` become tag thoughts (nested tags become a tag hierarchy), `[[Note Title]]` links become jump links, and images appear in the note.
    - Notes in Bear's trash are skipped. Locked notes are not imported, so unlock them in Bear before creating the backup.
- **Brain Archive** — a complete TheBrain archive (`.brz`).
- **Dynalist** (beta) — an `.opml` export.
- **Evernote** — one or more `.enex` files; selecting several imports them into one brain. Export them from Evernote with **File > Export Note** or **Export Notebook**.
    - Each `.enex` file becomes a thought named after the file, with its notes as child thoughts. With several files, those thoughts sit under one top thought.
    - Tags become tag thoughts, images appear in the note, and other attached files become attachments of the note's thought.
    - Links between notes become thought links in the note and jump links between the thoughts. They're matched by note ID when the export includes IDs, and otherwise by note title where a match is found.
- **Folders** — a folder tree. Each folder becomes a thought, subfolders become its child thoughts, and the files inside a folder become attachments of that folder's thought — not a thought per file.
    - Tick **Create a thought for each file** to give every file its own child thought instead, named after the file without its extension, with the file attached to it.
    - Files are copied into the brain, and the originals are left where they are. Files and folders whose names start with a dot are skipped.
    - The folder you choose gives the new brain its name and becomes its home thought.
- **FreeMind** — a `.mm` mind map.
- **Google Keep** (beta) — the `.zip` from takeout.google.com. There, deselect everything, select only **Keep**, and export.
    - Every note becomes a thought under a **Google Keep Import** thought. Archived notes are grouped under an **Archive** thought, and notes in the trash are skipped.
    - Labels become tag thoughts, checklists become checkboxes in the note, images appear in the note, and other files are attached to the thought. Saved web links become web link attachments, and note colors carry over as thought colors.
- **Joplin** (beta) — a `.jex` export. Create it in Joplin with **File > Export all > JEX - Joplin Export File**.

    - Each notebook becomes a thought, with its sub-notebooks and notes as child thoughts. Tags become tag thoughts, images appear in the note, and other files are attached to the note's thought. Links between notes become thought links in the note and jump links between the thoughts.
    - Encrypted items are skipped, so disable end-to-end encryption in Joplin (or decrypt your notes) before exporting.
- **Markdown Files** — a folder of Markdown files, with wikilinks and front-matter handled. A note's front-matter `aliases:` (or `alias:`) list becomes the thought's aliases, and wikilinks written with an alias resolve to that thought (see Thought Aliases). What becomes of folders, tags, links, and images is described under *What a Markdown or Obsidian Import Creates* in this topic.
- **MindManager** — a `.mmap` mind map.
- **Notion** (beta) — the `.zip` of a Notion "Markdown & CSV" export. To make it, open **Settings** in Notion's sidebar, select **General** under Workspace, choose **Export all workspace content** (or **Export** in a single page's ••• menu), and pick the **Markdown & CSV** format.
    - Each page becomes a thought with the page's content as its note, and database rows become thoughts under the database's thought.
    - Links between pages become thought links in the note and jump links between the thoughts. Notion's internal page IDs are removed from names and links.
- **Obsidian Vault** — an Obsidian vault folder. Front-matter aliases are imported the same way as for Markdown Files, and the rest is described under *What a Markdown or Obsidian Import Creates* in this topic.
- **OneNote** (beta) — a notebook folder produced by the *OneNote Md Exporter* tool (in its Joplin Raw Directory format), which the tab links to.
- **OPML** — an `.opml` outline.
- **Text Outline** — an indented `.txt` outline (tabs for hierarchy, `-` for notes, `+` for URLs). The full syntax is under *Text Outline Format* in this topic.
- **TheBrain 8 Brain** — a legacy `.brainzip` archive.
- **Workflowy** (beta) — an `.opml` export.
- **XMind** — an `.xmind` mind map.

What a Markdown or Obsidian Import Creates

Markdown Files and **Obsidian Vault** read a folder in the same way, with two differences that are pointed out here.

- **Folders and notes** — The folder you choose becomes the home thought. Each subfolder becomes a thought under its parent folder, and each `.md` file becomes a thought under its folder, with the file's text as its note. A `# Heading` on the very first line of a file is left out of the note when it is the thought's name, so that the note doesn't repeat the name: a **Markdown Files** import names the thought from that heading, and in an **Obsidian Vault** import the heading is left out when it says the same as the file's name. A first-line heading that says something else stays in the note. That is also true of a file merged into its folder's thought, which keeps the folder's name.
- **Thought names** — **Obsidian Vault** names each thought after its file. **Markdown Files** uses a `# Heading` on the first line of the file when there is one, and the file name otherwise (so a file that begins with front matter is named after the file).
- **Tags** — `#tags` in the text and `tags:` in the front matter become tag thoughts, assigned to the note's thought. A nested tag such as `#work/urgent` becomes a tag hierarchy, with **urgent** under **work**.
- **Links between notes** — Wikilinks such as `[[Note Name]]` and Markdown links to `.md` files become thought links inside the note. Between the thoughts themselves they become child links, jump links, or no link at all, according to **Create plex links from note links as**. Each of the two tabs has its own setting: **Markdown Files** starts on **Children** and **Obsidian Vault** starts on **Jumps**. A link to a note that isn't in the folder creates an empty placeholder thought with that name.
- **Images** — An image that a note shows, written as `![[photo.png]]` or `![](photo.png)`, is brought in and shown in the note, as long as the image file is in the folder.
- **Other files** — A file that no note shows or embeds becomes a thought of its own under its folder, with the file attached. A file that a note embeds without being an image, written as `![[report.pdf]]`, is attached to that note's thought. In an **Obsidian Vault** import, a file that a note shows or embeds also becomes a thought of its own, linked under each note that uses it.
- **Skipped** — Files and folders whose names start with a dot, such as `.obsidian`, `.trash`, and `.git`, are left out.
- **Merge folder and same-named .md file into a single thought** — With this on, a folder that contains a note with the folder's own name (`Projects/Projects.md`) becomes one thought that holds that note, instead of a folder thought with a same-named child.

Text Outline Format

A text outline is a plain `.txt` file in which each line is a thought.

- **Hierarchy** comes from tab characters at the start of a line, one tab per level. Spaces don't count as indentation. The first line must not be indented, and a line can be at most one tab deeper than the line above it.
- A line that starts with `–` is a line of the note for the thought above it. Several such lines in a row make one note.
- A line that starts with `+` adds a web link to the thought above it.
- `Name | Label` gives the thought a label.
- A line that starts with `#` refers to a thought named elsewhere in the outline. That one thought then appears under both parents, instead of a second thought with the same name being created. The **Text Outline** export writes a thought that has several parents the same way.

Because of those markers, a thought name can't begin with `–`, `+`, or `#`. Blank lines are ignored.

```
Projects
     Website | due in May
          – First line of the note
          – Second line of the note
          + https://example.com
     Newsletter
People
     Ana
          # Newsletter
```

If the indentation breaks these rules, the import ends with **Import failed** and the general message *An error occurred. Details have been logged.*

Pasting an Outline

In the desktop app you can paste an outline without making a file. Copy two or more lines of text in this format, right-click empty space in the Plex, and choose **Paste Text Outline as Thoughts**. The thoughts are created under the active thought. That menu item is the Plex's paste command, which takes this name when the clipboard holds two or more lines of plain text rather than copied thoughts, files, or an image.

Options

The available options depend on the format:

- **Folders** — **Create a thought for each file** (off to start with).
- **Markdown Files** and **Obsidian Vault** — **Create plex links from note links as** (**None**, **Children**, or **Jumps**), and **Merge folder and same-named .md file into a single thought** (on by default).
- **Name untitled notes using the first line of their content** — offered for Evernote, Apple Notes, Joplin, OneNote, Notion, and Google Keep imports (on by default), so notes without titles get meaningful thought names.



- If some items couldn't be imported — for example encrypted Joplin notes — the import-complete notification says so and explains what to do.
- Attachment names longer than 150 characters are shortened when they're imported (keeping the file extension), so the brain can still sync.
- Imported brains save their notes in **standard Markdown** (see Standard Markdown Notes); a Brain Archive import keeps the archived brain's own format, and a brain created by the **TheBrain 8 Brain** import starts out on TheBrain's dialect. A newly imported brain may therefore require a current version of TheBrain on your other devices. When you add to an existing brain instead, notes converted from other apps and formats are saved in the note format that brain uses.
- Markdown files are often hard-wrapped, with each paragraph broken into lines of about the same width. **Markdown Files**, **Obsidian Vault**, **Bear**, **Notion** and **Joplin** imports join such paragraphs once, as the notes are imported, according to **Wrapped lines** in **Settings > User > Markdown Files** (see Markdown Files Settings). The imported notes then keep their lines like any other note.
- Import works on the web as well as the installed apps; on the web you choose the file or folder through your browser's upload.
- To go the other way and get content *out* of TheBrain, see Exporting Brains.

Related Topics

- Backup to Brain Archive
- Creating a Brain

- Thought Aliases
- Markdown Files Settings

3 Exploring and Finding

3.1 The Plex and Its Layouts

3.1.1 The Plex

Overview

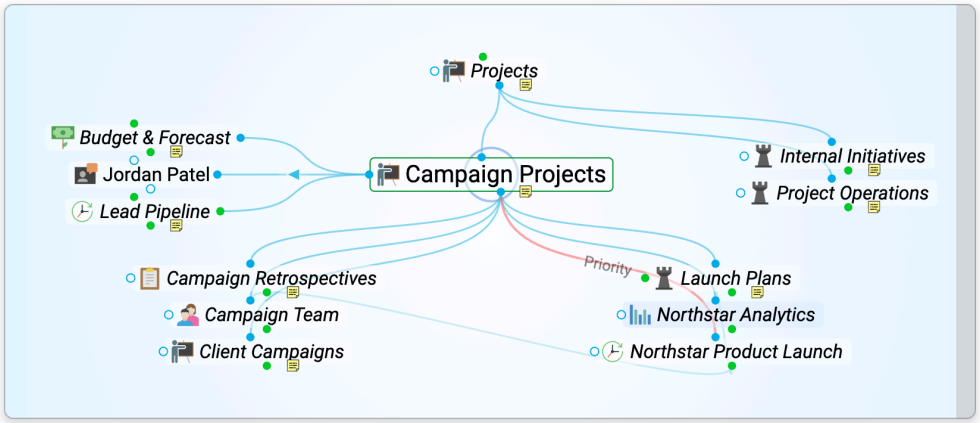
The Plex is the visual map at the heart of TheBrain — the network you see when you open a brain. Whatever thought you are currently looking at sits in the center as the **active thought**, and the thoughts linked to it are arranged around it. The moment you activate a different thought, the Plex re-centers on it and animates the connections into place, so you are always looking at the neighborhood of wherever you are.

This is what makes a brain feel like a map rather than a folder tree: you navigate by following links from thought to thought, and the Plex always shows you where you are and what is one step away.

How to Read the Plex

The Plex arranges related thoughts around the active thought by the *direction* of their link. In the Normal layout:

- **Parents** appear above the active thought. A parent is something the active thought belongs to.
- **Children** appear below. Children are grouped together under their parent.
- **Jumps** appear to the left. A jump is a lateral relationship — a connection that doesn't form a parent/child group.
- **Siblings** appear to the right. Siblings are the other children of the active thought's parents — the thoughts that share a parent with it. They are not its jumps, which sit on the left.



Siblings are shown only in the Normal layout; the Outline and Mind Map layouts leave them out. They are also left out when the active thought has more than 50 parents. To hide them yourself, turn off **Show siblings in normal view and mapped links** under **Thought Behavior** in **Settings > User > General** (it is on by default).

Each direction has a **gate** — the area where related thoughts in that direction live and where you add new ones. To learn how to create and link thoughts through these gates, see Creating Thoughts and Links.

How to Navigate

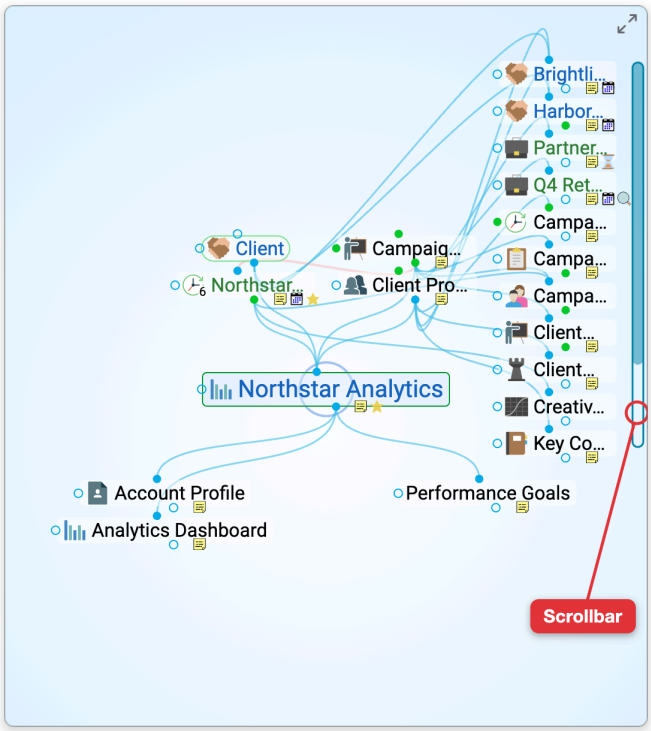
- **Activate a thought** — In the Normal layout, click any thought surrounding the active one. It moves to the center and the Plex re-centers around it. The Outline and Mind Map layouts need a second click, as described below.
- **Follow links** — Keep clicking outward to travel across the brain along its connections.
- **Search to jump anywhere** — Use the search box in the brain toolbar to activate any thought directly, no matter how far away it is (see Finding and Creating Thoughts).

Clicking in the Outline and Mind Map Layouts

In the **Outline** and **Mind Map** layouts, the first click on a thought only focuses it. The content area shows that thought's notes and attachments, but it does not become the active thought and the map stays where it is, so you can look at a thought's content without moving the map. To activate the thought, click it a second time or press `Enter`. To put the focus back on the active thought without navigating, click the active thought itself.

How to See Thoughts That Don't Fit

A thought can have more parents, children, jumps or siblings than there is room to show. In the **Normal** layout, each of those groups gets its own scrollbar when it holds more thoughts than fit:



- **Scroll one group** — Turn the mouse wheel while pointing at the group, or drag its scrollbar.
- **Scroll with the keyboard** — Keep pressing an arrow key past the edge of the group; the group scrolls to bring in the next thoughts.
- **Give a group more room** — Drag empty background up or down (with two fingers on a touch screen). The active thought moves up or down with it, leaving more space for the children or for the parents.

In the **Outline** and **Mind Map** layouts the whole map moves instead: drag empty background (one finger on a touch screen), or turn the mouse wheel, to pan it.

How to Navigate with the Keyboard

You can move around the Plex without the mouse. Whenever you are not typing in a note or another text field, and no dialog or search results are open, the arrow keys move a ring from thought to thought:

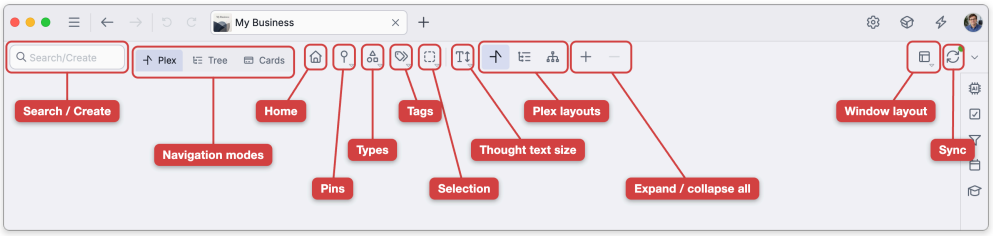
- **In the Normal layout** — `↑` goes to the parents, `↓` to the children, `←` to the jumps, and `→` to the siblings. Once the ring is in a group, the arrows move among its thoughts, and stepping back toward the center returns to the active thought.
- **In the Outline and Mind Map layouts** — An arrow moves the ring to the nearest thought in that direction.
- `Enter` activates the thought the ring is on.
- The `Menu` key, or `Ctrl+Enter` (`⌘Enter` on Mac), opens the right-click menu of the thought the ring is on.
- `Space` expands or collapses that thought in the Outline and Mind Map layouts (see Expand and Collapse).
- `Esc` removes the ring and puts the keyboard back on the active thought.

To move the keyboard between the Plex and your notes, use the **Focus Plex/Search** and **Focus Notes** commands. The default shortcut for **Focus Plex/Search** is `Ctrl+S` (`⌘S` on Mac), and for **Focus Notes** it is `Ctrl+N` (`⌘N` on Mac). In the Mac desktop app they are also in the menu bar under **Go**, as **Focus Plex** and **Focus Notes**.

Layouts

The Plex can arrange thoughts in several layouts. Switch between them from the brain toolbar or the **View** menu. The default keyboard shortcuts are:

Layout	What it looks like	Default shortcut
Normal	The standard map: parents above the active thought, children below, jumps to the left and siblings to the right	`Alt+1` (`⌥1` on Mac)
Outline	An expandable indented outline of the hierarchy	`Alt+2` (`⌥2` on Mac)
Mind Map	A mind map with the active thought in the middle and its branches spreading out to both sides	`Alt+3` (`⌥3` on Mac)



The Plex is one of several **navigation modes** (Plex, Cards, Tree). See Navigation Modes for how they differ and how to switch.

Expanding, Collapsing, and Sizing

- **Expand All** reveals more of the surrounding network at once; **Collapse All** brings it back to just the immediate neighbors. The defaults are `Ctrl+0` (`⌘0` on Mac) to expand all and `Ctrl+9` (`⌘9` on Mac) to collapse all.
- **Nav Text Scale** in the brain toolbar opens a slider that makes the thought text in the Plex (and Tree) bigger or smaller, shown as a percentage. In the Mac desktop app, the menu bar's **View > Text Size** menu sets it to one of five sizes, from **Extra Small** to **Extra Large**.
- **Pinch to resize the text** — Pinch with two fingers on a touch screen or a trackpad, or hold `Ctrl` (`^` on Mac) and scroll a mouse wheel, to change that same text scale straight from the Plex. Two rings show the size you are heading for, and the new size is applied when you finish. This works in every Plex layout. The text scale is also the **Nav text scale** slider in **Settings > Brain > Personal Settings**; in a shared brain, changing it affects only your own view.
- **Label size** — When you hover a thought with the mouse, its label (if it has one) appears in a small chip just beneath the thought. The **Label size** slider in **Settings > Brain > Plex Settings**, under **Display**, scales that chip from 75% to 150% (100% by default) on top of the text scale, and is saved with the brain.
- **Plex size** — how much of the space the navigation pane takes when split with the content area — can be set to **Small Plex**, **Medium Plex**, or **Large Plex** with keyboard shortcuts, or by dragging the bar between the two panes. The default shortcuts are `Ctrl+Shift+A`, `Ctrl+Shift+S` and `Ctrl+Shift+D` (`⇧⌘A`, `⇧⌘S` and `⇧⌘D` on Mac). See Split and Window Layout.

Focus Modes

- **Presentation Mode** (desktop and web) hides the surrounding chrome for a clean, full-screen view of the Plex. The default shortcut is `Ctrl+Alt+F` (`⌥⌘F` on Mac).

- **Wander** automatically drifts from thought to thought on its own — a relaxed way to rediscover a brain. Start it from the **View** menu or by right-clicking empty space in the Plex.

- The Plex is the default view, but a brain's content (notes and attachments) appears alongside it in the **content area**. You can split the screen between navigation and content, or maximize either one — see Split and Window Layout.
- **On a phone** the Plex fills the screen and the content area slides up over it. Tap the notes button (a notepad icon) on the action bar at the bottom of the screen to open the active thought's notes and attachments, and tap it again to return to the Plex. See Using TheBrain on a Phone.
- The row of thoughts along the bottom of the Plex is the **past thoughts list**, the thoughts you visited or created most recently — see Past Thoughts List.
- All keyboard shortcuts above are the shipped defaults and can be changed in **Settings > User > Keyboard** (the Keyboard tab isn't offered in the mobile app).

Related Topics

- Navigation Modes
- Past Thoughts List
- General and Appearance

3.1.2 Plex Layouts

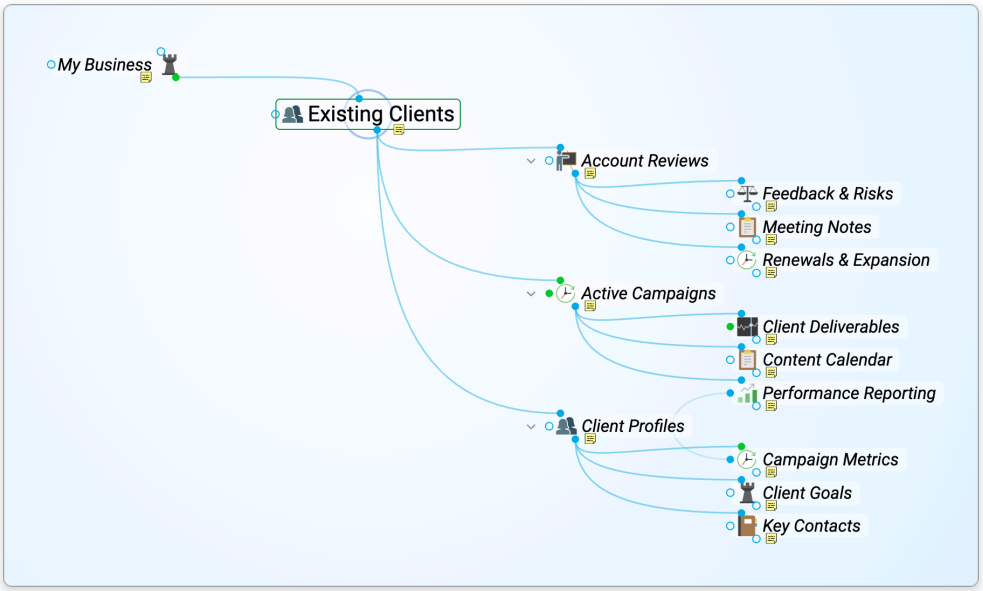
Overview

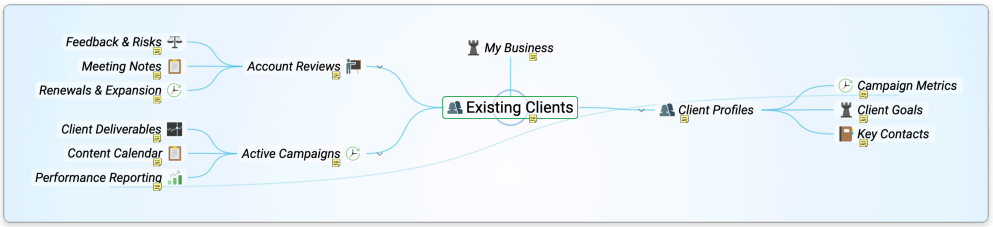
When you're in the Plex (TheBrain's visual map; see The Plex), you can choose how it arranges the thoughts around the active thought. The **layout** changes the shape of the map without changing the brain — the same parents, children, and jumps, drawn differently to suit how you think.

The Layouts

The default keyboard shortcuts are:

Layout	What it looks like	Default shortcut
Normal	The standard map: parents above the active thought, children below, jumps to the left and siblings to the right	`Alt+1` (`⌥1` on Mac)
Outline	An expandable indented outline of the hierarchy	`Alt+2` (`⌥2` on Mac)
Mind Map	A mind map with the active thought in the middle and its branches spreading out to both sides	`Alt+3` (`⌥3` on Mac)





How to Switch Layouts

- **From the brain toolbar** — Pick a layout from the layout controls.
- **From the menu** — Open **Main Menu > View > Layout** and choose one.
- **From the Plex** — Right-click empty space in the Plex and choose a layout.

- **On a phone** — Tap the navigation mode button on the action bar along the bottom of the screen; while you are in the Plex, its **Nav Mode** menu lists **Normal**, **Outline**, and **Mind Map**. See Using TheBrain on a Phone.



- **Clicking works differently in Outline and Mind Map.** In the Normal layout one click activates a thought. In the Outline and Mind Map layouts the first click only focuses the thought — the content area shows its notes and attachments while the active thought stays put — and a second click on it, or `Enter`, activates it. See The Plex.
- Layout is separate from **navigation mode**. Layouts (Normal, Outline, Mind Map) re-shape the *Plex*; navigation modes (Plex, Cards, Tree) switch to a different view entirely. See Navigation Modes.
- The layout is remembered for each brain. In a shared brain it's your own choice and doesn't change what other people see; you can also set it with **Plex layout** in **Settings > Brain > Personal Settings**.
- How much of the surrounding network is shown is controlled separately by expand/collapse — see Expand and Collapse.

Related Topics

- Navigation Modes
- Personal Settings
- Using TheBrain on a Phone

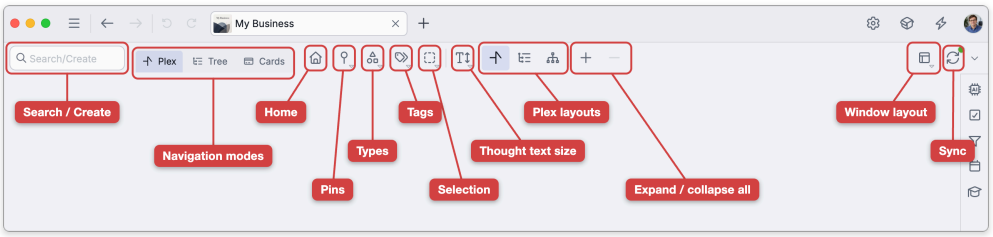
3.1.3 Expand and Collapse

Overview

By default the Plex shows the active thought and the thoughts one step away from it. **Expanding** reveals more of the surrounding network at once, so you can see several layers of connections together; **collapsing** brings it back to just the immediate neighbors. This lets you zoom between a focused, uncluttered view and a wider overview of how an area of the brain hangs together.

Expand and Collapse

- **Expand All** — The default shortcut is `Ctrl+0` (`⌘0` on Mac).
- **Collapse All** — The default shortcut is `Ctrl+9` (`⌘9` on Mac).



You'll also find these in the brain toolbar, the Plex right-click menu, and **Main Menu > View**.

How far Expand All goes depends on the current layout. In the **Normal** layout it reveals one extra ring of connections. In the **Outline** and **Mind Map** layouts, each use expands every thought currently shown by one more level; use Expand All again to go another level deeper. Thoughts you expanded earlier and never collapsed open again as soon as they come into view, which is why more than one new level can appear at once.

What Stays Expanded

In the **Outline** and **Mind Map** layouts, the Plex remembers which thoughts you expanded:

- Expanded thoughts stay expanded as you navigate, and each thought you activate is kept expanded too.
- Collapsing a thought closes it again, and **Collapse All** clears every expanded thought at once.
- The expanded thoughts are saved on the device you are using (in a browser, in that browser) and are not synced to your other devices. A tab that is restored when you restart the app gets its expanded thoughts back, and a newly opened tab of a brain starts with the ones left by the tab of that brain you closed most recently.

Only the active thought's own jumps are drawn. Expanding another thought shows more of its hierarchy, never its jumps.

How to Expand or Collapse One Thought

In the **Outline** and **Mind Map** layouts you can open or close a single thought's branch without changing the rest of the view:

1. Point at the thought, or move to it with the arrow keys (a ring marks the thought the keyboard is on).
2. Press `Space` — the default shortcut. Pressing it again collapses the thought.

You can also right-click the thought and choose **Expand/Collapse**. If you're pointing at one thought while the keyboard ring is on another, `Space` acts on the one you're pointing at. `Space` acts on the thought under the pointer only while the search box is empty, so typing a space in a search never expands anything. In the Keyboard settings (**Settings > User > Keyboard**) the command is listed as **Expand/Collapse Current Thought**, where you can give it another shortcut too.

- Expand/collapse changes only what's *shown* in the Plex — it never changes the brain's thoughts or links.
- How thoughts are arranged when expanded depends on the current layout — see Plex Layouts.
- If you customize the brain toolbar, a single **Toggle Expand All** button is also available; it flips the Normal layout between its collapsed and expanded state. Clicking empty space in the Normal layout with the middle mouse button does the same.

Related Topics

- Navigation Modes

3.1.4 Sorting and Arranging Thoughts

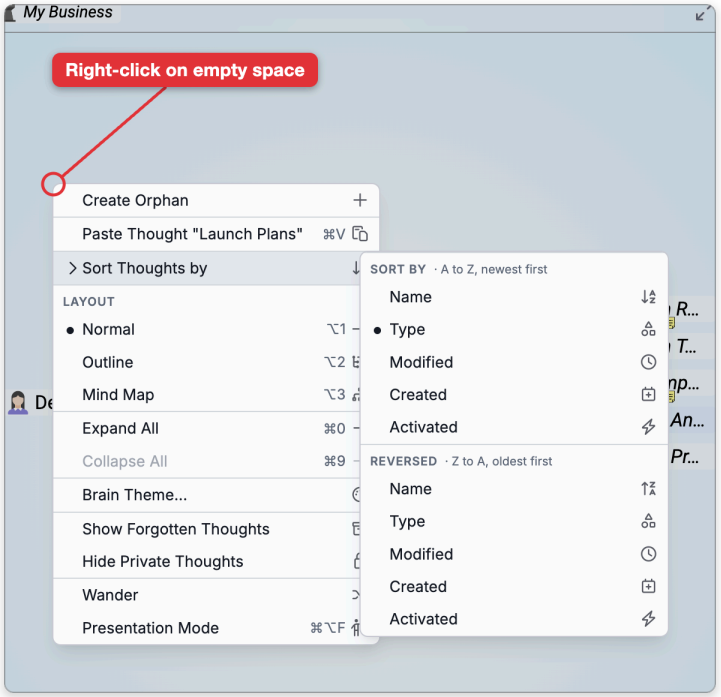
Overview

When a thought has several children (or several thoughts in any gate), TheBrain decides what order to show them in. **Sorting** lets you choose that order — alphabetically, by type, or by date

— and you can also arrange thoughts by hand into a **custom order** when no automatic rule captures what you want. The automatic sort is a single choice for the whole brain (thoughts sort by **Type** until you change it); custom orders are remembered per thought. In a shared brain, the automatic sort you choose is your own and doesn't change the order other people see.

Sorting Thoughts

Right-click empty space in the Plex and open **Sort Thoughts by**. The menu lists the sort orders twice: under **Sort by · A to Z, newest first**, and again under **Reversed · Z to A, oldest first** for the opposite direction. The options are:



Sort by	Orders thoughts by
Name	Alphabetical order
Type	Their thought type
Created	When they were created
Modified	When they were last changed
Activated	When they were last visited

You can also set the sort with **Sort by** in **Settings > Brain > Personal Settings** (see Personal Settings), where the reversed ones are named **Name (Descending)**, **Modified (Oldest)** and so

on. In the desktop app on a Mac, the menu bar's **View > Sort Thoughts By** menu has the same choices, with the dates named **Date Modified**, **Date Created** and **Date Activated** and the reversed ones **Name (Reverse)**, **Date Modified (Reverse)** and so on, and it always lists **Custom** and **Clear Custom Order**.

Custom Order

As soon as you drag a thought's children into a particular arrangement, that thought keeps your **custom order**. While the active thought has one, **Sort Thoughts by** starts with a **Custom order** group: **Custom**, which is checked, then a **Then Sort by** label and **Clear Custom Order**. The automatic sort you choose further down orders whatever your hand arrangement doesn't cover.

- **Custom** — Uncheck it to show the thought's children in the automatic sort instead. Your arrangement isn't deleted, and checking **Custom** again brings it back.
- **Clear Custom Order** — Removes the custom order and returns to a fully automatic sort. The default shortcut is `Ctrl+Shift+0` (`⇧⌘0` on Mac). When it would affect five or more thoughts, TheBrain asks you to confirm first.



- Sorting affects only how thoughts are displayed, not their links or content.
- Clearing a custom order requires write access to the brain, and changes the order for everyone who uses it.
- To change a thought's actual relationships (move it between parent, child, and jump) or reorder a single sibling, see Moving and Reordering Thoughts.

Related Topics

- Personal Settings

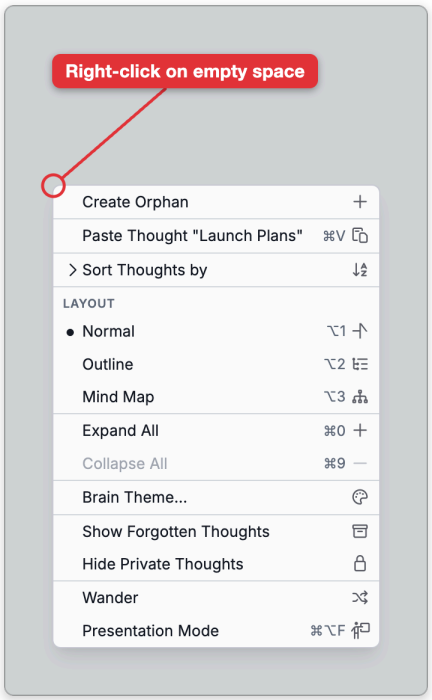
3.1.5 Presentation Mode

Overview

Presentation Mode strips away the toolbars and panels for a clean, full-screen view of your brain. It's meant for showing a brain to other people — on a projector or a shared screen — and it works just as well for distraction-free focus when you want only your thoughts in front of you. Presentation Mode is in the desktop and web apps; the mobile app doesn't offer it.

How to Turn It On and Off

Presentation Mode is a toggle. The default shortcut is `Ctrl+Alt+F` (`⌥⌘F` on Mac). You can also turn it on from **Main Menu > View** or by right-clicking empty space in the Plex or Cards view. Use the same shortcut or menu item again to exit — or just press `Esc`.



While it's on, you still navigate normally — click thoughts to activate them and move through the brain — just without the surrounding interface.

What Presentation Mode Hides

Presentation Mode puts the window in full screen and hides:

- The brain toolbar, including the search box.
- The tools sidebar and its toolbar.

- The Timeline Bar along the bottom of the brain page.
- In the desktop app, the window's title bar and tabs.

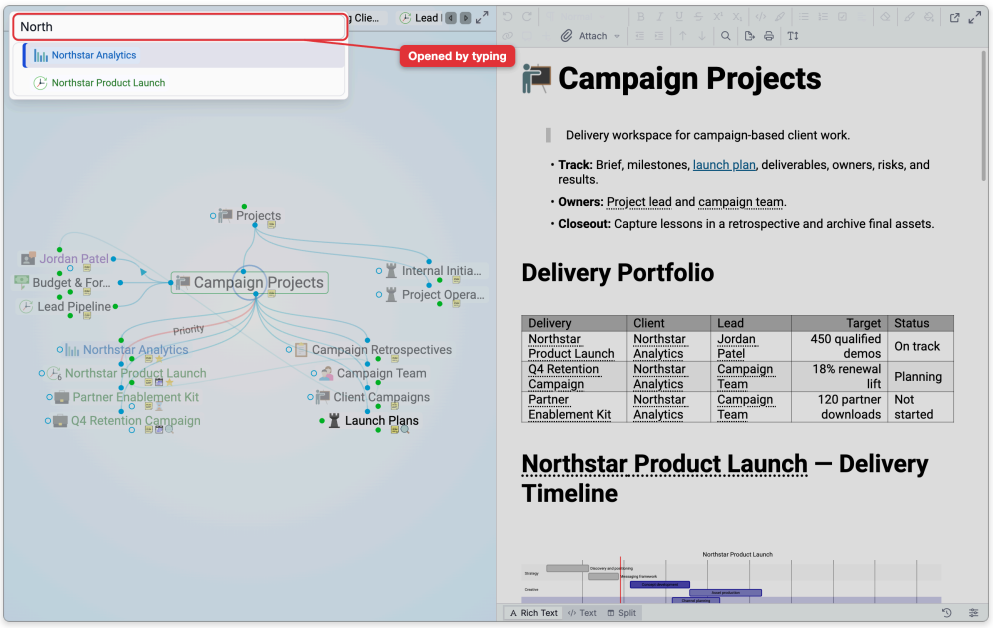
The navigation and content sides keep the layout you had, so your notes are still shown if the window was split. To show only the Plex, choose **Maximize Navigation** before you start, or click the button at the top-right corner of the navigation side, which is still there in Presentation Mode — see Split and Window Layout.

Presentation Mode and full screen go together. If you leave full screen another way — with the browser's own full-screen exit on the web, or the window's full-screen control in the desktop app — Presentation Mode switches off too.

How to Find a Thought While Presenting

The search box is hidden along with the toolbar, but you can still jump to another thought: just start typing.

1. Type the first character of what you're looking for — any letter, number or punctuation mark. A small search box opens at the top left of the screen with that character already in it. (This works when you aren't editing a note or typing in another text field.)
2. Keep typing, then choose a result to activate that thought.



To close the box without choosing anything, click outside it. This search covers the current brain only and can't create a new thought.

- Pair it with **Wander** for a hands-off, screensaver-like tour of a brain — see Wander Mode.

Related Topics

- Split and Window Layout

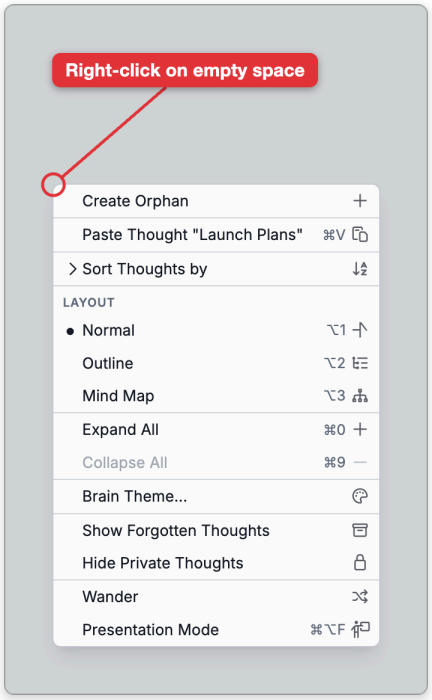
3.1.6 Wander Mode

Overview

Wander sets the brain in motion on its own, drifting from one thought to a related one every couple of seconds. It's a relaxed, hands-off way to rediscover what's in a brain — old ideas resurface, and connections you'd forgotten drift back into view. It also makes a nice ambient display, a clean, full-screen automatic tour, when paired with Presentation Mode (see Presentation Mode).

How to Start and Stop Wandering

Wander is a toggle. Start it from **Main Menu > View > Wander**, or by right-clicking empty space in the Plex and choosing **Wander**. To stop, choose **Wander** again — or simply click or right-click anywhere on the Plex or the notes. Wander has no default keyboard shortcut; you can give it one in **Settings > User > Keyboard** (see Keyboard Shortcuts).



While wandering, TheBrain follows the brain's own structure — moving to a parent, child, jump, or occasionally a sibling of the current thought. It favors well-connected thoughts and avoids ones it has just visited, so it tends to roam broadly rather than circle in place.

While Wander Is Running

Wander is for watching. While it runs, the Plex and the notes in the brain window don't respond to the mouse or to touch in the usual way:

- **A click, tap or right-click only stops Wander.** It doesn't activate the thought or follow the link you clicked on; it ends the wander and leaves you on the current thought. That is why Wander stops when you click on a note.
- **The notes don't scroll.** The mouse wheel and swiping do nothing there while Wander runs, so you can read whatever part of each note is in view, but to scroll or edit a note, stop Wander first.
- **Backlinks and Unlinked Mentions are hidden.** These two sections under a note disappear while Wander runs and come back when it stops.

Wander only follows the current thought's own connections. On a thought with no parents, children or jumps it has nowhere to go, so it stays where it is.

Adjusting the Pace

How long Wander pauses on each thought is set by the **Wander delay** slider in **Settings > Brain > Personal Settings**, from a twentieth of a second up to four seconds per thought. The default is one second. It's set for each brain, and in a shared brain it's your own setting.

Wander is slower than the Wander delay alone, because each move also takes the time of the Plex animation. That time is set by **Speed**, in the same **Animation** section (about 0.8 seconds by default), and the wait before each move is the two added together. So with the defaults Wander moves on a little under every two seconds, plus the time the next thought takes to load. To make Wander faster, lower **Speed** as well as **Wander delay**; both are shown in seconds.



- Wandering only changes which thought is active as it moves; it never edits the brain. Each stop does count as a visit, though: it's added to the past thoughts list and to your Back/Forward history, and the thought's **Activated** time is updated, which affects sorting by **Activated**.

Related Topics

- Keyboard Shortcuts
- Back and Forward Navigation
- Past Thoughts List

3.1.7 Plex Settings

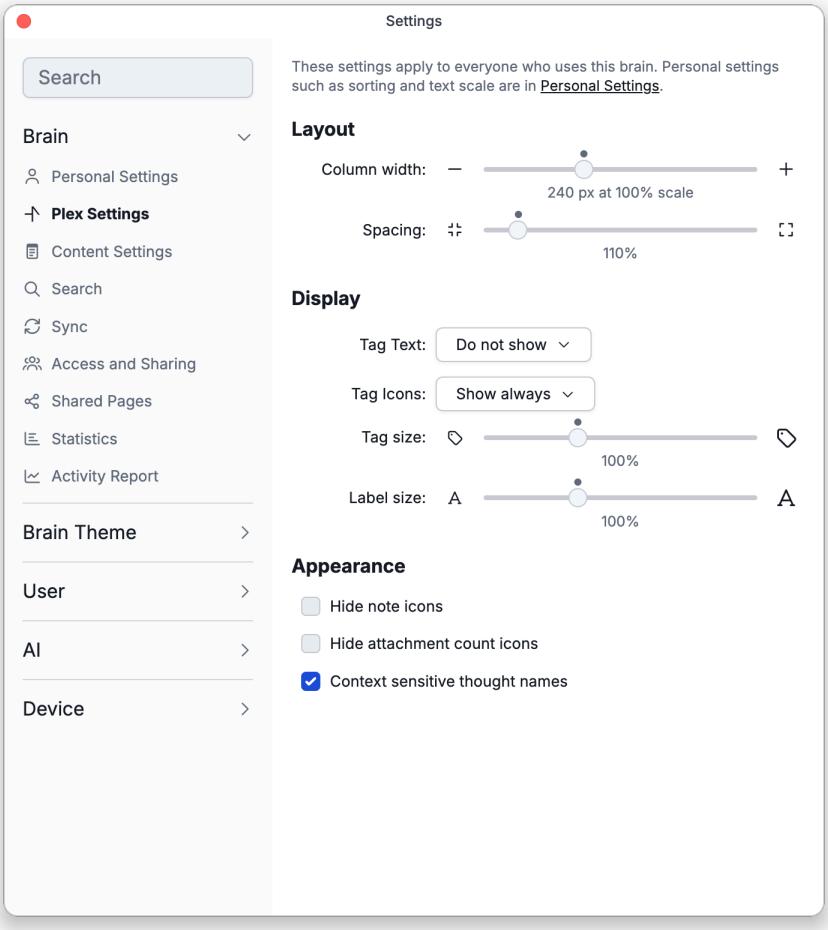
Overview

Plex Settings (under **Settings > Brain**) controls how thoughts are drawn in a brain's Plex: how wide the columns of thoughts are and how far apart the rows sit, whether a thought's tags show as names or icons, and which small icons a thought carries. The page is available whenever a brain is open.

These settings are saved with the brain, so a change applies to everyone who uses it. In a shared brain, a note at the top of the page says so and links to **Personal Settings**, which holds the settings that are yours alone: text size, sorting, the Plex layout and animation speed are there, not on this page (see Personal Settings).

How to Open Plex Settings

1. Open the brain you want to change.
2. Open **Settings** (the default shortcut is `Ctrl+,`, `⌘,` on Mac).
3. Choose **Brain > Plex Settings**.



Layout

- **Column width** — The minimum width of a column of thoughts, from 40 to 600 (240 by default). Raise it to give each thought more room for its name; fewer columns then fit across the Plex. In the Mind Map layout, it sets the least width kept for the active thought. The number under the slider is in pixels at 100% text scale, and the width grows and shrinks with the **Nav text scale**.
- **Spacing** — The vertical space between rows of thoughts, from 100% to 200% (110% by default).

A dot above each slider marks its default value.

Display

- **Tag Text** — Whether the names of a thought's tags show in the Plex: **Do not show** (the default), **Show on hover**, or **Show always**.
- **Tag Icons** — Whether the icons of a thought's tags show in the Plex: **Do not show**, **Show on hover**, or **Show always** (the default).
- **Tag size** — Scales the tag names and tag icons, from 75% to 150% (100% by default).
- **Label size** — Scales the label that appears beneath a thought when you point at it with the mouse, from 75% to 150% (100% by default). See The Plex.

With **Show on hover**, a thought's tags appear when you point at the thought with the mouse.

Appearance

- **Hide note icons** — Hides the small icon that marks a thought that has a note. Off by default.
- **Hide attachment count icons** — Hides the number that shows how many attachments a thought has. Off by default.
- **Context sensitive thought names** — On by default. When a thought's name is made of parts separated by commas, the Plex leaves out a part that repeats the name of the linked thought one step nearer the active thought. With "2024" active, its child "Budget, 2024" shows as "Budget", and a thought named "Smith, John" shows as just "John" under "Smith". Only what the Plex shows changes; the thought's real name stays the same. Turn the option off to always show full names. See Context-Sensitive Thought Names.

To change the Plex's colors, fonts and wallpaper, see Plex Theme and Wallpaper.

Related Topics

- Settings Overview

3.2 Views and Windows

3.2.1 Navigation Modes

Overview

The same brain can be viewed in more than one way. A **navigation mode** changes how thoughts are laid out and browsed without changing anything in the brain itself — you're looking at the same thoughts and links through a different lens. TheBrain's main modes are the **Plex**, **Cards**, and **Tree**.

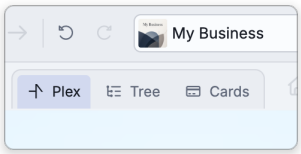
The Modes

- **Plex** — TheBrain's signature visual map: the active thought sits at the center with its parents, children, and jumps around it. This is the default. See The Plex.
- **Cards** — A scrollable list of thoughts shown as cards, grouped and ordered by date (modified, created, or accessed) or by your current selection. Good for "what have I been working on" review. See Cards View.
- **Tree** — A classic expandable outline of parents and children, useful for working through a hierarchy top-down. See Tree View.

How to Switch Modes

- **From the brain toolbar** — Click **Plex**, **Tree**, or **Cards** in the navigation mode buttons.

- **From the menu** — Open **Main Menu > View > Navigation Mode** and choose **Plex**, **Tree**, or **Cards**.
- **On a phone** — Tap the navigation mode button on the action bar along the bottom of the screen. Its icon shows the mode you are in, and it opens a menu titled **Nav Mode**: choose **Plex**, **Cards**, or **Tree**. While you are in the Plex, the same menu also offers the **Normal**, **Outline**, and **Mind Map** layouts and **Expand All** and **Collapse All**, which is how you change the layout without a right-click. The button is on the action bar to begin with; if you have removed it, tap **More Actions** (the **…** button) and choose **Nav Mode**. See Using TheBrain on a Phone.



Switching mode keeps you on the same active thought, so you don't lose your place — you just see it differently.

- The navigation mode is remembered for each brain. In a shared brain it's your own choice and doesn't change the mode other people see; you can also set it with **Navigation mode** in **Settings > Brain > Personal Settings**.
- Cards and Tree each have a small toolbar of their own with options for that mode (card detail levels, tree expand and collapse, and so on), while the Plex's layout and expand buttons are in the brain toolbar — see the per-mode topics.

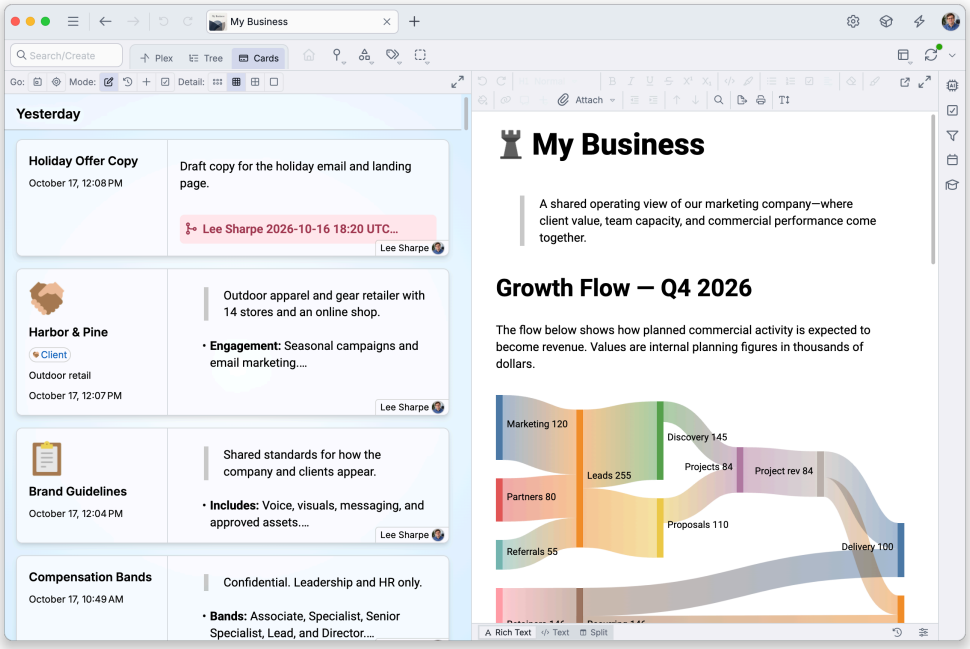
Related Topics

- The Plex
- Plex Layouts

3.2.2 Cards View

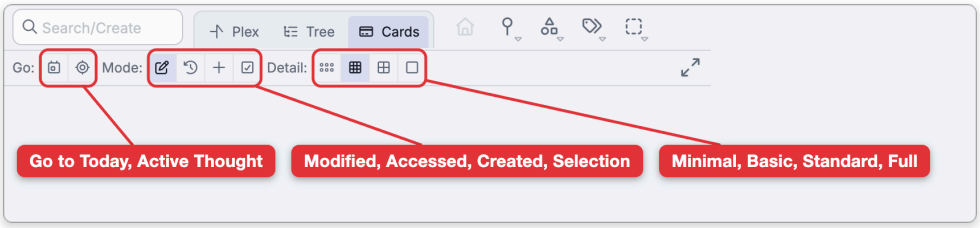
Overview

Cards View presents your thoughts as a scrollable grid of cards grouped by date — a timeline of your brain rather than a map. It's the fastest way to answer "what have I been working on lately?", because it orders thoughts by when they were last modified, created, or visited and groups them under date headings: **Today**, **Yesterday**, the weekday name for each of the days before that in the past week, **Previous 30 Days**, **Earlier in** a given month, and then one heading for each earlier month.



Switching to Cards

Click **Cards** among the navigation mode buttons in the brain toolbar, or choose **Main Menu > View > Navigation Mode > Cards**. The **Cards toolbar** then gives you the options below, in sections labeled **Go**, **Mode**, and **Detail**. See Navigation Modes.



Choosing What to Show (Mode)

The **Mode** controls which date a card is grouped and ordered by:

- **Modified** — when the thought was last changed.
- **Accessed** — when you last visited it.
- **Created** — when it was made.
- **Selection** — show only the thoughts in your current selection (see Selecting Multiple Thoughts).

Card Detail Level

The **Detail** setting controls how much each card shows, from least to most:

Detail	What each card shows
Minimal	The thought's icon, name, label, type, and tags, and a count of its attachments
Basic	Adds the date, a few attachments, and the start of the note
Standard	More attachments and more of the note
Full	The thought's icon as a large image across the top of the card (when the icon is a big enough image), every attachment, and more of the note

Pick a higher level to read more of each thought's content inline, or a lower level to fit more cards on screen.

Cards load a batch at a time, and the batches are smaller at the higher detail levels.

Moving Around (Go)

- **Go to Today** jumps to today's cards (not available in **Selection** mode, which has no date).
- **Active Thought** scrolls the list to your currently active thought. In **Selection** mode, it adds the active thought to your selection when it isn't there yet.
- **Load Newer** (at the top of the timeline) and **Load Older** (at the bottom) bring in the next batch of cards beyond what's loaded.



- Cards View shows the same thoughts as the Plex — only the presentation differs. Activating a thought here works the same as anywhere else.

- Your **Mode** and **Detail** choices are not saved as settings. A newly opened tab, and the app after you restart it, start at **Modified** and **Basic**.

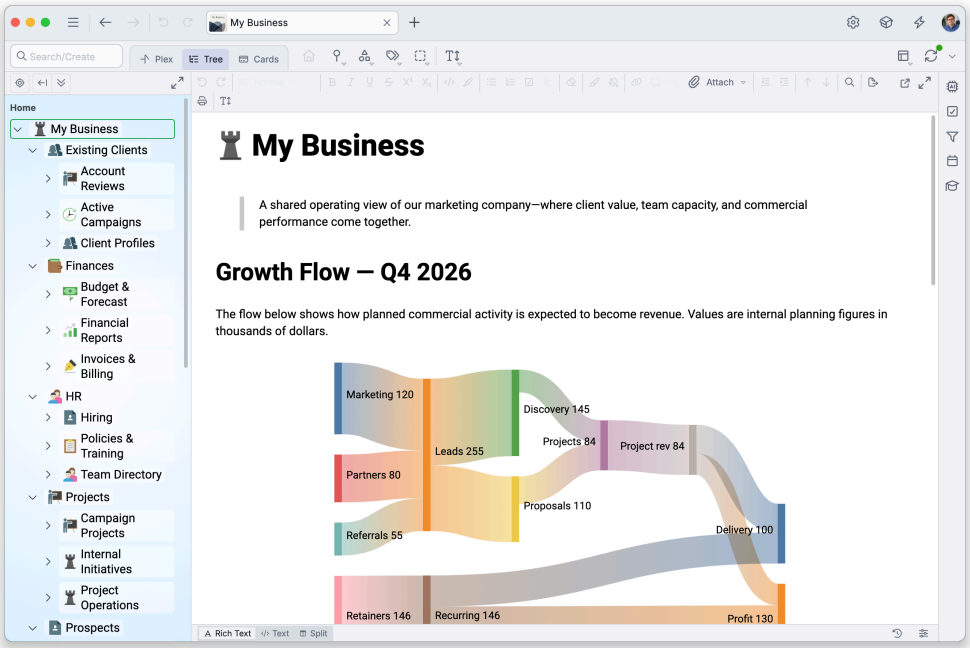
Related Topics

- The Plex

3.2.3 Tree View

Overview

Tree View displays the brain as a familiar expandable outline — parents containing children, which you open and close like folders in a file tree. When you want to work top-down through a hierarchy, or see a branch's full depth in one place, the tree is often clearer than the radial Plex.



Switching to the Tree

Click **Tree** among the navigation mode buttons in the brain toolbar, or choose **Main Menu > View > Navigation Mode > Tree**. The **Tree toolbar** then provides the actions below. See

Navigation Modes.

What the Tree Shows

The tree starts with a few sections, each under its own heading:

- **Home** — The brain's home thought.
- **Pins** — Your other pinned thoughts. This section appears when you have pins besides the home thought.
- **Types and Tags** — A **Types** row and a **Tags** row; open one to list the brain's thought types or tags. The heading reads **Types** or **Tags** when the brain has only one of the two, and the section is left out when it has neither.
- **Current Context** — Added at the top when the thought you activate can't be reached from anything already showing in the tree, so that the active thought still has a place in it.

Open a thought to list its children. Under the children come rows such as **2 Parents** and **3 Jumps**: open one to browse upward to the thought's parents or sideways to its jumps. A single parent isn't listed when it is the thought you opened this one from, since it is already showing just above.

Click a thought to activate it. The tree also follows the active thought by itself: when you activate a thought some other way, the tree opens the branch that leads to it and highlights it.

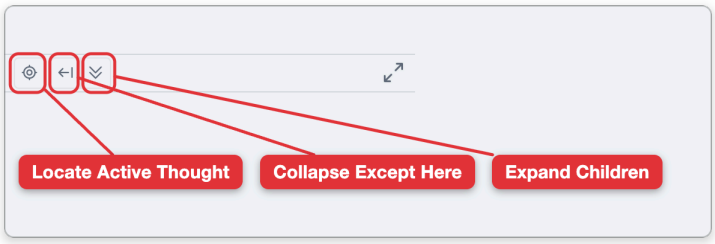
Reordering Thoughts in the Tree

Drag a thought up or down within its group to reorder it. A group is one thought's children, the thoughts under one **Parents** or **Jumps** row, or the **Pins** section. On a touch screen, press and hold the thought first and then drag. Press `Esc` to cancel a drag.

Reordering this way sets a custom order, just as dragging thoughts in the Plex does. Thoughts that have no custom order are listed in the order of your **Sort by** setting — see Sorting and Arranging Thoughts.

Expanding and Collapsing

- **Expand Children** opens the children of the current thought. Very large branches expand the first 100 nodes and let you know if there were more.
- **Collapse Except Here** collapses other branches so you can focus on the current one.
- Click the expand/collapse handle next to any thought to open or close just that branch.



Finding Your Place

Locate Active Thought scrolls the tree to your currently active thought and highlights it — handy after you've scrolled away or navigated from another view.

- The tree shows the same thoughts and links as every other view; expanding a branch doesn't change the brain, only what's visible.
- Because a thought can have multiple parents, the same thought can appear under more than one branch in the tree.

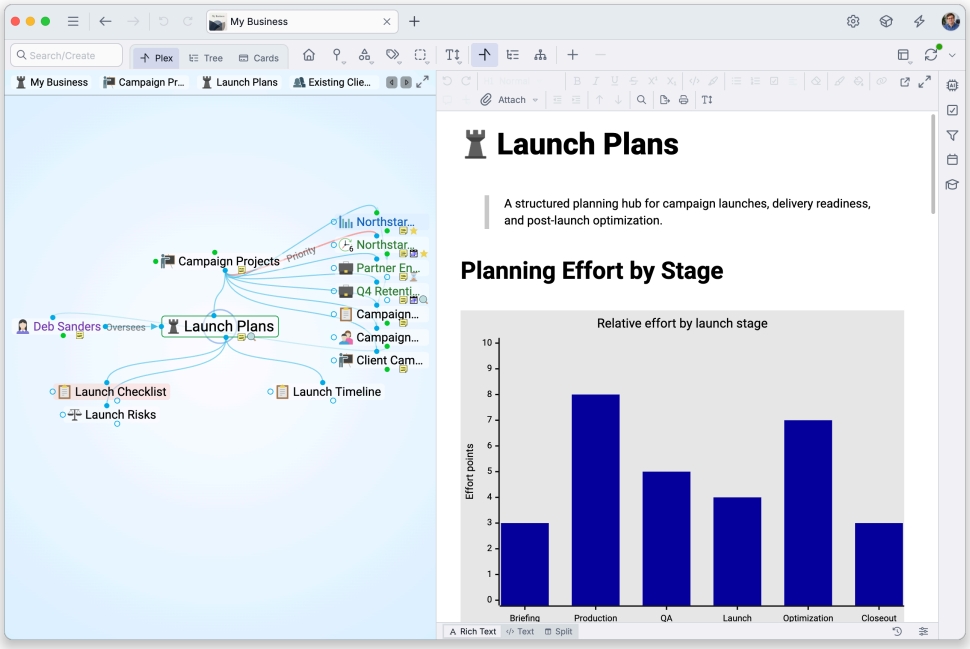
Related Topics

- The Plex
- Sorting and Arranging Thoughts
- Home Thought

3.2.4 Split and Window Layout

Overview

A brain window has two halves: the **navigation** side (the Plex, Cards, or Tree) and the **content** side (the open thought's notes and attachments). The **window layout** controls how the screen is divided between them — you can split it, give all the room to one side, or swap which side is where. This lets you focus on browsing, focus on reading and writing, or keep both in view.

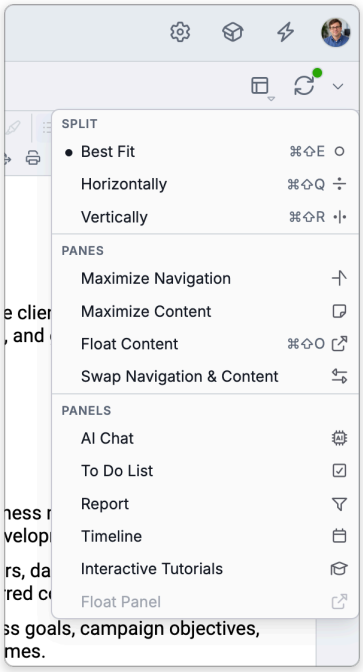


Splitting the Window

From the **Window Layout** menu (in the brain toolbar) or **Main Menu > View > Set View Mode**, choose how to split. The default shortcuts are:

Action	What it does	Default shortcut
Split Best Fit	Split automatically based on the window's shape	`Ctrl+Shift+E` (`⇧⌘E` on Mac)
Split Horizontally	Stack navigation and content top/bottom	`Ctrl+Shift+Q` (`⇧⌘Q` on Mac)
Split Vertically	Place navigation and content side by side	`Ctrl+Shift+R` (`⇧⌘R` on Mac)

In the in-app menus these three are grouped under **Split** and labeled **Best Fit**, **Horizontally** and **Vertically**; the Mac desktop app's menu bar uses the full names above.



Best Fit places the two sides next to each other when the area they share is wider than it is tall, and stacks them when it is taller. In a narrow window, **Split Vertically** is shown stacked as well.

Resizing the Two Sides

To make the notes area bigger or smaller, **drag the bar** between the navigation side and the content side. Each side stops at a minimum size. If you keep dragging almost to the edge, that side closes and the other side is maximized.

Three presets set the navigation side to a fixed share of the space the two sides divide: **Small Plex** (35%), **Medium Plex** (55%) and **Large Plex** (70%). Their default shortcuts are `Ctrl+Shift+A`, `Ctrl+Shift+S` and `Ctrl+Shift+D` (`⇧⌘A`, `⇧⌘S` and `⇧⌘D` on Mac).

Maximizing One Side

- **Maximize Navigation** gives the whole window to the Plex/Cards/Tree and hides the notes.
- **Maximize Content** gives the whole window to the open thought's notes and attachments and hides the Plex.

Both are in the **Window Layout** menu and in **Main Menu > View > Set View Mode**, under **Panes**. Choosing the same option again returns you to the split view. Each side also has a small button in its top-right corner that does the same thing: **Maximize Navigation** on the navigation side and **Maximize Content** on the content side. While a side is maximized, its button reads **Restore Navigation** or **Restore Content** and brings back the split.

You can also **double-click the empty background** of either half to toggle it between maximized and split — controlled by the "**Maximize the navigation/content area when double-clicking on their backgrounds**" setting.

Swapping Sides

Swap Navigation & Content (in the same menus, under **Panes**) flips which side each half occupies — for example, moving the notes to the left and the map to the right — so you can match your preferred reading direction.

Double-clicking the bar between the two sides does the same swap. The swap is remembered, so if the sides seem to have traded places on their own, an accidental double-click on the bar can be the reason; double-click it again to swap them back.

The Layout Is Remembered for Each Navigation Mode

The Plex, Cards and Tree each keep their own layout: how the window is split, how much room navigation gets, which side is maximized, and whether the sides are swapped. That is why the layout can change when you switch navigation modes. To begin with, the Plex and Cards use **Best Fit** with the space divided evenly, and the Tree sits beside the content as a narrow column on the left.

Where the layout is saved depends on the brain:

- **In a brain only you use**, the layout is saved with the brain, so it syncs with the brain to your other devices. A tab that is already open keeps its own layout, so the saved layout is what a tab you open afterwards starts with.
- **In a shared brain, or one you can only read**, the layout is saved only on the device you're using. It isn't synced and doesn't change anyone else's layout. **Reset Layout on This Device** in **Settings > Brain > Personal Settings** puts it back to the brain's layout.

Keeping the Window on Top

In the desktop app, **Always on Top** keeps a brain window above the windows of your other apps. Choose **Main Menu > View > Always on Top** (on a Mac, it's also in the menu bar's **Window** menu). The default shortcut is `Ctrl+Alt+P` (`⌥⌘P` on Mac). It's a toggle, shown with a check mark while it's on, and it applies only to the brain window you're in; your other brain windows aren't affected. The window is still on top the next time you start TheBrain, until you turn the option off. The web app and the mobile apps don't have this command.

A content window you open with **Open in New Content Window** from a brain window that is always on top starts out kept above other windows too. Content windows have their own **Keep above other windows** pin — see Floating the Content Area and Content Windows.

- These layout choices affect how the window is divided, not the brain's content.
- Window layout is a desktop/web feature. On a phone the Plex fills the screen and the content area slides up over it — see Using TheBrain on a Phone.
- In the desktop app, the same menus offer **Float Content**, which moves the content side into a window of its own (default shortcut `Ctrl+Shift+O`, `⇧⌘O` on Mac). While the content floats, the split, maximize, and swap commands are unavailable, and docking the content brings your layout back. See Floating the Content Area.

Related Topics

- The Plex
- Writing and Formatting Notes
- Personal Settings
- Presentation Mode

3.2.5 Floating the Content Area

Overview

Floating the content area is available only in the desktop app, not on the web or on phones and tablets.

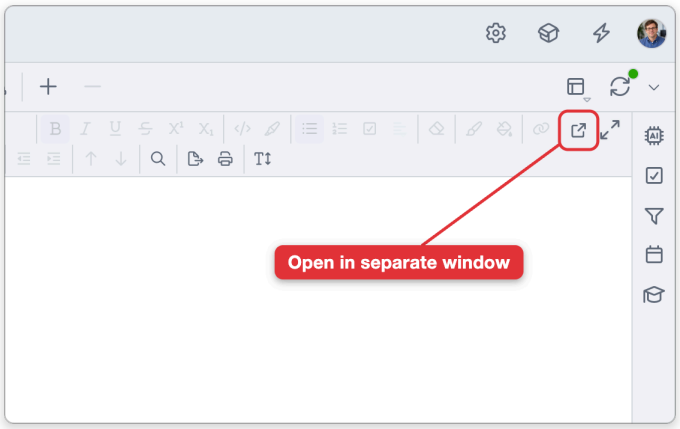
The brain window normally shows the Plex on one side and the **content area** — the active thought's properties, attachments and notes — on the other. **Float Content** moves the content area out of the brain window into a window of its own. The Plex then fills the whole brain window, and you can put the content window wherever suits you: beside the brain window, on a second display, maximized, or full screen.

The content window keeps working just as the docked content area does. It shows whichever thought you activate in the Plex, hover and keyboard previews appear in it, and clicking a thought link in a note activates that thought in the Plex. When you want the content back beside the Plex, **dock** it.

How to Float the Content Area

Do any of the following:

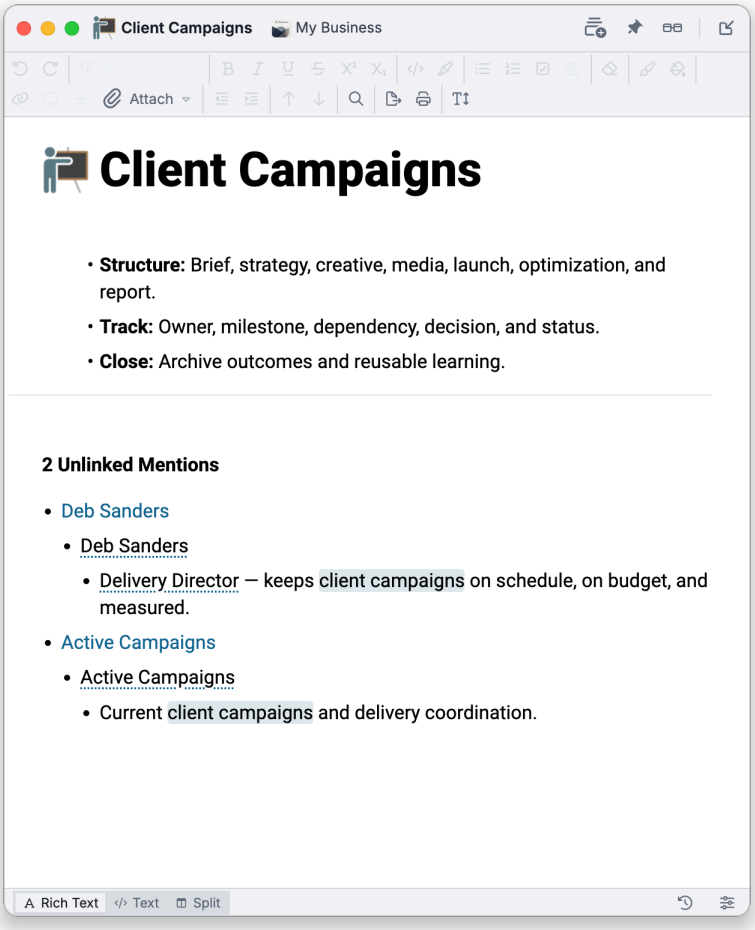
1. Click the **Open in separate window** button in the top-right corner of the content pane.
2. Choose **Float Content** from **Main Menu > View > Set View Mode**, or from the brain toolbar's **Window Layout** menu.
3. Use the default shortcut `Ctrl+Shift+O` (`⇧⌘O` on Mac).



The first time, the window opens where the content pane was, slightly offset so you can see it leave the brain window. After that it opens wherever you last left it.

The Content Window

The top row of the content window is its title bar. It shows the active thought's icon and name, with the brain's icon and name beside it, and has these buttons:



- **Open in new content window** — Opens the selected link, or otherwise the active thought, in a content window of its own that stays on it while this window goes on following the Plex — see Content Windows.
- **Keep above other windows** (the pin) — Keeps the content window in front of every other window, including other apps'. Click it again (**Stop keeping above other windows**) to make it an ordinary window again. The window remembers whether it is pinned.
- **Go to brain window** — Brings the brain window that holds the Plex to the front, restoring it if it's minimized. If you have switched to another tab in the brain window, it switches back to the content window's tab. Clicking the brain's icon and name in the title row does the same.

- **Dock in brain window** — Puts the content area back in the brain window and closes the content window.

The rest of the window is the content area as you know it: the notes toolbar, the properties, attachments and notes, and the status bar. The window also has your system's usual window buttons, so you can minimize, maximize, resize, or make it full screen.

Unless it's pinned, the content window is an ordinary window: whichever of the brain window and content window you clicked last is in front, and it appears in your system's window lists (such as the Windows taskbar, or the Window menu and Mission Control on Mac).

Moving Between the Two Windows

- **Show content window** — While the content floats, the button in the Plex's top-right corner brings the content window to the front (restoring it if it's minimized). The same command is in **Main Menu > View > Set View Mode** and the **Window Layout** menu as **Show Content Window**, and its default shortcut is `Ctrl+Shift+K` (`⇧⌘K` on Mac).
- **Back and forth with one shortcut** — Pressing `Ctrl+Shift+K` (`⇧⌘K` on Mac) while the content window is in front brings the brain window forward instead, so the one shortcut switches between the two.
- **See which window belongs to which** — Hover over **Show content window** or **Go to brain window**, and after a moment the other window is outlined in your accent color.

App shortcuts you press in the content window act on the brain, just as they would in the brain window, while typing and editing shortcuts go to the note you're editing. The menus and app shortcuts act on the content window's own tab even when another tab is showing in the brain window.

Closing and Docking

- **Closing the content window** (its window close button) closes only the window. The content stays floating, so the brain window doesn't take it back; use **Show content window** to open it again where it was.
- **Docking** — Click **Dock in brain window**, or choose **Dock Content** (the same menu item and shortcut as **Float Content**, which changes its name while the content floats). The content returns to the brain window in the layout it had before you floated it.

- While the content floats, the window layout commands (split, maximize, and swap navigation and content) are unavailable.
- Each brain remembers on this device whether its content floats and where the window was, including whether it was maximized or full screen. These settings aren't synced to your other devices. When you open the brain again, its content opens floating, where it was.
- If a brain is open in more than one tab, each tab keeps its own content window. A content window stays shown when you switch to another tab in the brain window, so you can have several open at once, and it keeps its own brain's theme while another brain's tab is in front. It closes when you close its tab or open a different brain in that tab.
- To dock the content and forget where its window was, use **Reset Window Positions...** — see Floating Tools Panels.

Related Topics

- The Plex
- Writing and Formatting Notes
- Opening a Brain

3.2.6 Content Windows

Overview

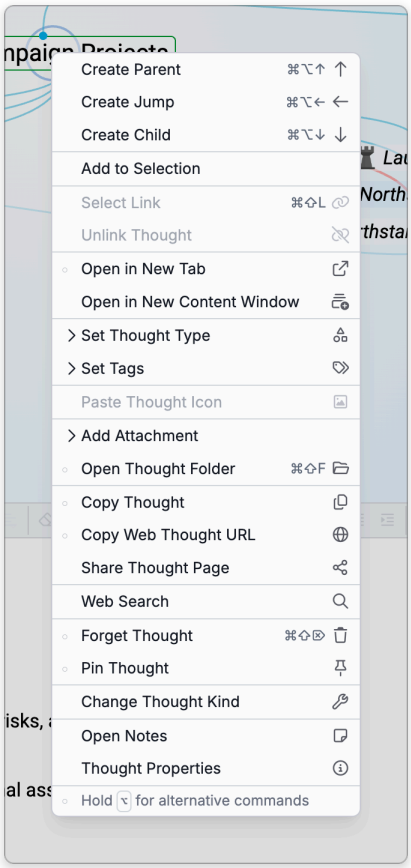
Content windows are available only in the desktop app, on Mac, Windows and Linux, not on the web or on phones and tablets.

You can open any thought — or any link — in a **content window** of its own. The window shows that item's properties, attachments and notes, just like the content area beside the Plex, but without a Plex or a brain tab. It stays on that item while you keep activating other thoughts in the brain window, so you can keep a note open for reference while you work elsewhere.

You can open as many content windows as you like, from one brain or from several, and arrange them however suits you.

How to Open a Content Window

Do any of the following:



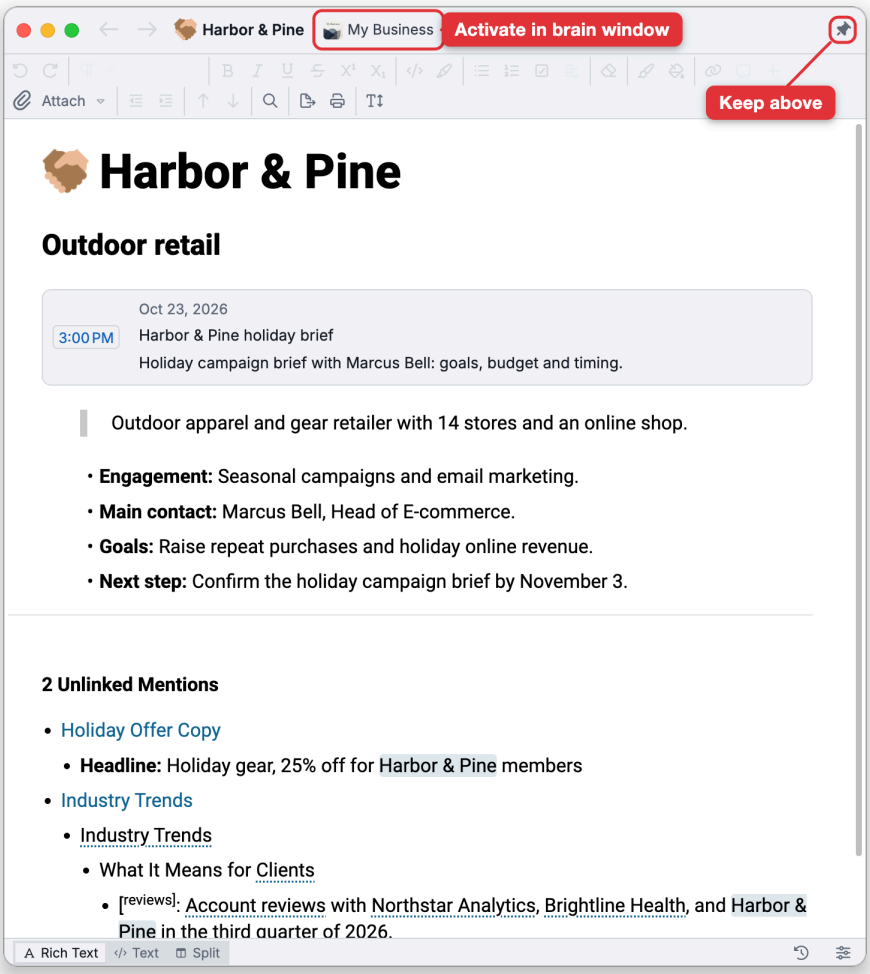
1. Right-click a thought and choose **Open in New Content Window**. In the Mac desktop app, the same command is in the menu bar's **Thought** menu.
2. Right-click a link and choose **Open in New Content Window** to show the link itself — its properties and notes.
3. In a note, right-click a thought link (or open its tooltip menu) and choose **Open in New Content Window**. You can also `Ctrl+Shift`-click the thought link (`⇧⌘`-click on Mac). This works while you're editing, too, and leaves your cursor where it was.
4. In the floating content window, click **Open in new content window** in its title row. It opens the selected link, or otherwise the active thought, in a content window of its own, while the floating window goes on following the Plex.

If a content window already shows that thought or link, it comes to the front instead of opening a second one. A new window opens a little below and to the right of where you opened it, and each further window is offset a little more so they don't stack exactly on top of each other.

The Content Window

The top row of the window shows:

- **Back** and **Forward** — Return to what the window showed before, or go forward again.
- The thought's icon (or a link icon) and its name.
- The brain's icon and name — click them to **Activate in brain window**: the thought becomes active in a brain window, in a tab already showing that brain, or else in a new tab. For a link, its first thought is activated. The content window itself stays as it was.
- **Keep above other windows** (the pin) — Keeps the window in front of every other window. Click it again to make it an ordinary window.



The rest of the window is the content area you already know: edit the note, work with attachments, and change the properties. Commands for notes, attachments, thoughts and links act on what the window shows. Commands that belong to the Plex do nothing in a content window.

New Window — the default shortcut is `Ctrl+Shift+N` (`⇧⌘N` on Mac) — opens a brain window on the brains list. When no brain window is open, it brings back the brain windows and tabs you had open last.

Moving to Another Thought

A content window only moves when you act inside it. Clicking a thought link in its note, a backlink, an unlinked mention, a tag or the type, or one of a link's two thoughts shows that thought in the same window. Activating a thought in a brain window never changes a content window.

A link to a thought in another brain shows that thought in the window. If that brain can't be opened on this device, the thought opens in a brain window instead and the content window stays where it was.

Each content window keeps its own history of the places it showed. Besides the **Back** and **Forward** buttons, you can use the **Navigate Backward** and **Navigate Forward** commands and your mouse's back and forward buttons, and on a Mac **Back** and **Forward** in the menu bar's **Go** menu and a trackpad swipe.

Closing

Close a content window with its window close button or `Ctrl+W` (`⌘W` on Mac). Pressing `Esc` doesn't close it.

- A content window uses its brain's content theme and your own view settings for that brain, and follows changes to them.
- Content windows stay open when you close the brain's tabs or every brain window. The app quits when its last window of any kind closes, unless it keeps running in the system tray. On a Mac, clicking TheBrain's Dock icon while only content windows are open brings back the content window you used last, without opening a brain window; use **New Window** to get your brain windows back.
- When you relaunch the app, the content windows that were open come back with what each showed, where it was, and whether it was pinned. Their Back and Forward history starts fresh. A window you closed doesn't come back.
- If the thought a window shows is deleted (or forgotten while forgotten thoughts are hidden), the window goes back to what it showed before, or closes if there's nowhere to go back to.
- Signing out closes all content windows. Markdown file windows stay open (see Markdown File Windows). Deleting a brain closes that brain's content windows.
- **Reset Window Positions...** doesn't move content windows.
- A content window is different from the **floating content area** (**Float Content**, default shortcut `Ctrl+Shift+O`, `⇧⌘O` on Mac): the floating content area belongs to a brain tab and follows whatever you activate in its Plex, while a content window stays on its own thought — see Floating the Content Area.

Related Topics

- Opening a Brain

3.2.7 Markdown File Windows

Overview

In the desktop app, on Mac, Windows and Linux, TheBrain can open a Markdown file that lives anywhere on your computer — a README, a document you also edit in Obsidian or VS Code, notes you keep in a folder — and edit it in the same editor your notes use. The file opens in a window of its own and stays an ordinary file: it isn't added to a brain, and saving writes it back where it is. The web app and phones and tablets don't open files from your computer this way.

A Markdown file window doesn't need a brain or an account. It works in guest mode and while no one is signed in, and it stays open when you sign out.

How to Open a Markdown File

Do any of the following:

1. Choose **Main Menu > File > Open File...** and pick a `.md` or `.markdown` file. It opens one file at a time. On a Mac, **Open File...** is also in the menu bar's **File** menu.
2. Choose **Main Menu > File > Open Recent** and pick a file you opened before. The submenu shows once you have opened a file, and **Clear Menu** at its bottom empties it. On a Mac, **Open Recent** is also in the menu bar's **File** menu.
3. Choose **Main Menu > File > New Markdown File** to start an empty, untitled document.
4. Drag one or more Markdown files from your file manager and drop them on a brain window's title bar, on a content window's top row, or anywhere on a Markdown file window. Each file opens in a window of its own. A drop elsewhere in a brain window, or one that includes other kinds of files, does what it always did, such as attaching the files to a thought.
5. In your file manager, open the file with TheBrain using **Open With**. On a Mac you can also drop the file on TheBrain's icon in the Dock. To have TheBrain open Markdown files when

you double-click them, use **Set TheBrain as the default app for Markdown files** (see Markdown Files Settings).

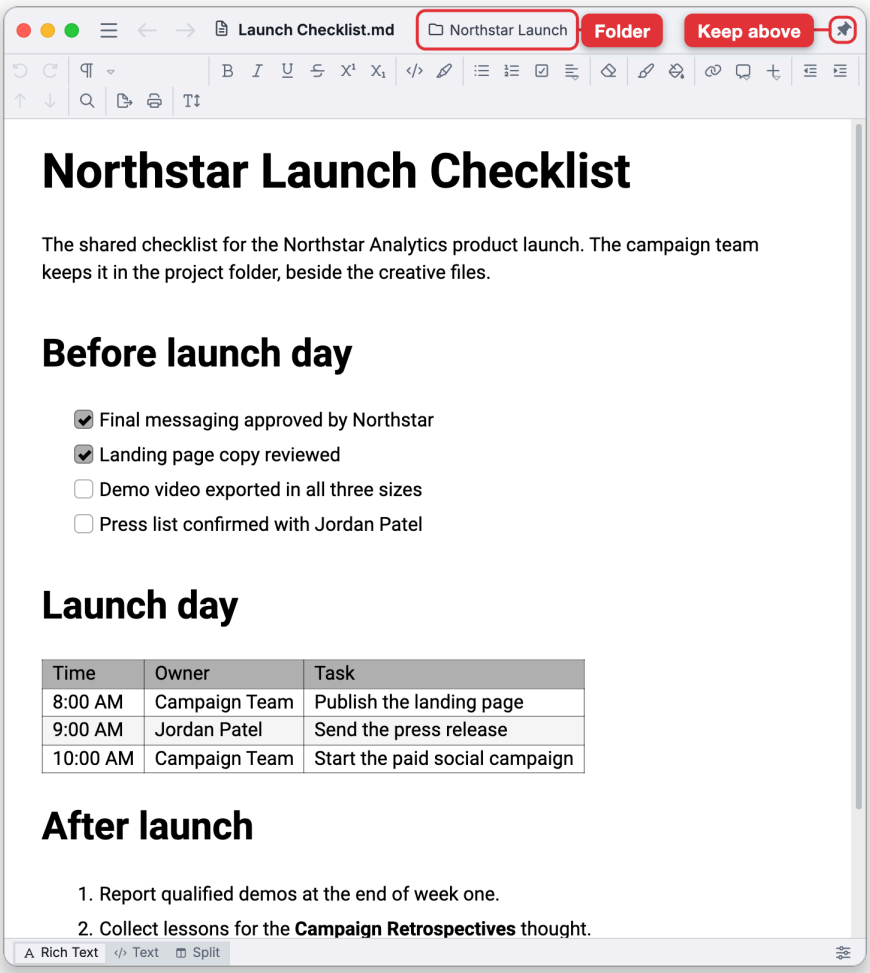
6. In a Markdown file window, click a link to another Markdown file (see *Links*).

If the file is already open in a window, that window comes to the front. When you open a file from your file manager while TheBrain isn't running, TheBrain starts without a brain window: it shows the file, along with the content windows and Markdown file windows you had open when you last quit. Files you open are added to your computer's list of recent documents, which a Mac shows in the Dock menu and Windows in the taskbar's jump list.

The Window

The top row of the window shows:

- **Main Menu** (≡) — The window's own menu (see *The Main Menu*).
- **Back** and **Forward** — Return to the file or thought the window showed before you followed a link, or go forward again.
- The file's name, with a dot (•) while it has unsaved changes. A new document is named **Untitled** (then **Untitled 2**, and so on) until you save it. Click the name for the file menu described below. Drag the icon beside the name to drag the file itself (see *Dragging the File*).
- The name of the folder the file is in, after a folder icon. Point at it to see the full path. Click it for a menu of that folder and every folder above it; choose one to show it in Finder or File Explorer, with the file, or the next folder down, selected.
- **Keep above other windows** (the pin) — Keeps the window in front of every other window. Click it again to make it an ordinary window. A file window you open from a pinned window starts out pinned.



Below the top row is the notes editor, with its toolbar and status bar. The window always opens in **Rich Text**. Switch to **Text** (the document's Markdown) or **Split** (both side by side) with the status bar's view buttons or **Main Menu > View**.

Text and **Split** show the document as TheBrain will write it when you save, not the file's original text. For example, a list the file wrote with `*` already shows its bullets as `-` (see *What Saving Does to a File* in Markdown Files Settings). The file's properties at the top (frontmatter) don't show in any view; they are kept as they were when you save.

The Main Menu

- **File** — **New Markdown File**, **Open File...**, **Open Recent**, **Save**, **Save As...**, **Revert to Saved**, **New Window** (which opens a brain window), **Close Window** and **Exit**.
- **Edit** — **Undo**, **Redo**, **Cut**, **Copy** (with **Copy as Plain Text**, **Copy as Markdown** and **Copy as HTML Source**), **Paste**, **Paste Without Formatting**, **Select All**, and **Find and Replace**.

- **View** — **Rich Text**, **Text** and **Split**; the headings sidebar; the status bar and its word and character counts; where the toolbar goes; **Join Wrapped Lines** (see *Wrapped Lines* in Markdown Files Settings); **Content Theme...**, which opens **Settings > User > Markdown Files**; and **Notes Settings...**.
- **Help** — **TheBrain Help**, video tutorials, feedback, release notes, **About TheBrain**, and the log folder.
- **Settings...** — Opens Settings over the window.

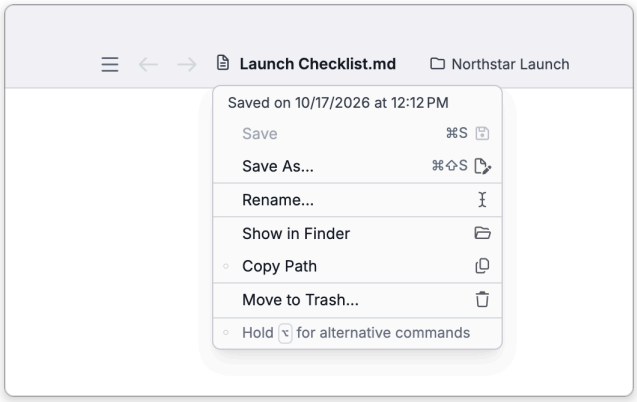
On a Mac, while a Markdown file window is in front, the menu bar's **File** menu has **New Markdown File**, **Open File...**, **Open Recent**, **Save**, **Save As...**, **Revert to Saved** and **Rename...**, and the **Window** menu lists each file window by its file and folder name. In a file window, `Ctrl+T` (`⌘T` on Mac) is **Go to Heading...**.

The File Menu

Click the file's name for these commands:

- At the top, the file's state: **Edited**, **Saved at** a time (**Saved on** a date and time when that was before today), **Changed by another app**, **Deleted from disk**, or **Not saved**.
- **Save** and **Save As...**
- **Revert to Saved** — Shown while the file has unsaved changes. Discards your changes since the last save, after asking.
- **Rename...** — Renames the file in its folder. If you leave out the extension, the old one is kept. TheBrain tells you when it can't use the name, for example when the folder already has a file with that name or another app is using the file.
- **Show in Finder** (**Show in Explorer** on Windows, **Show in Folder** on Linux).
- **Copy Path** — Copies the file's full path. Hold `Shift` (`⌥` on Mac) while the menu is open and it becomes **Copy Folder Path**.
- **Move to Trash...** (**Delete...** on Windows) — After you confirm, the file goes to the Trash (the Recycle Bin on Windows), where you can restore it, and the window goes back to what it showed before, or closes. If the file can't go to the Trash, it stays where it was; TheBrain never deletes it permanently. The file's `images` folder and any backup copies stay where they are.

A new document that hasn't been saved yet offers only **Save** and **Save As...**.



Dragging the File

The document icon beside the file's name stands for the file itself. Drag it anywhere you could drop the file from your file manager:

- **Onto a thought** — Drop it on a thought in the Plex, on the content area, or on a note, and the file is attached to that thought.
- **Onto a drop zone around the active thought** — Drop it on the parent, child or jump drop zone, and it becomes a new thought named after the file, with the file attached.
- **Into another app or a folder** — Drop it into a Finder or File Explorer window, an email, or any app that takes files.

In a brain, the file is copied in unless you've changed **On File/Folder Drop** in **Settings > User > General**, and you can hold a modifier key as you drop to link to it or move it instead (see *Dragging Files and Links In* in Adding Attachments). A linked file stays where it is, so the thought's attachment and the window show the same file. A file you move into the brain leaves its folder, so the window then shows it as deleted.

What you drag is the file as it was last saved, so save first if you want your latest changes to go with it. A new document can't be dragged until you save it, and neither can a file that has been deleted.

Images

- **Pasting or dropping images** — Paste an image, or drop a PNG, JPEG, GIF or WebP file on the text, and it goes into the document. When you save, it is written to an `images` folder

beside the file, as `image.png`, `image-2.png` and so on; pasting the same image again reuses its file. In a new document, images stay in the document until its first save.

- **Insert > Insert Image** — Choose an image file (up to 10 MB), which is saved to the `images` folder the same way, or enter a web address, which stays a link to the web image.
- **Images the file already has** — Images show whether the file gives a path relative to its own folder (including one in a folder above it), a full path, or a web address, and they keep that path when you save. An image that can't be found shows as missing and keeps its path.

Other kinds of files dropped on a Markdown file window aren't added to it.

Links

- **Another Markdown file** — The window moves to that file, whether the link gives a path relative to the file's folder, a full path, or a `file://` address. **Back** returns to the file you came from. `Ctrl+Shift`-click the link (`⇧⌘`-click on Mac) to open the file in a new window instead.
- **A heading in the same file** (`#heading`) — In **Rich Text**, the window scrolls to the heading.
- **A thought** (`brain://`) — The window moves to the thought and shows it as a content window does, and **Back** returns to the file. If the thought's brain can't be opened on this device, the thought opens in a brain window instead. `Ctrl+Shift`-click (`⇧⌘`-click on Mac) opens the thought in a new content window.
- **A web page** — Opens in your own browser, never in the embedded browser that web links in notes can use.

When the file has unsaved changes, following a link to another file or a thought, or going **Back** or **Forward**, asks first, as closing the window does: **Save** saves and moves on, **Don't Save** moves on and discards the changes, and **Cancel** stays on the file. A link you open in a new window leaves this one as it is and asks nothing.

What's Different from a Note

The editor works as it does for notes, with a few differences, because a file isn't part of a brain:

- **Insert Link** asks only for an address and the text to show. Links to thoughts, backlinks, mentions, mapped links, embedded thought notes, and **Extract Child Thought** aren't

available.

- **Footnotes** and **diagrams** can always be inserted.
- There are no note versions and no **Print**. The backup copies TheBrain can make before saving take the place of versions (see Markdown Files Settings).

Saving

TheBrain writes to the file only when you save it. Use **Save** — the default shortcut is `Ctrl+S` (`⌘S` on Mac) — or **Save As...**, whose default shortcut is `Ctrl+Shift+S` (`⇧⌘S` on Mac). These shortcuts save only in Markdown file windows; in a brain window the same keys keep their usual commands.

- **Save As...** starts in the file's folder. The window then shows the new file, and the original keeps its last saved version.
- The first time you save a new document, TheBrain asks where to put it. It suggests a name taken from the document's first line, and starts in the folder you last saved to, or your Documents folder.
- If you undo back to the saved text, the dot goes away and closing doesn't ask.
- Closing a window with unsaved changes asks whether to save them: **Save**, **Don't Save** or **Cancel**. An untitled window with nothing in it closes without asking. Moving the window to another file or a thought asks the same question (see *Links*).
- Quitting TheBrain doesn't ask. Your unsaved edits are kept, and the window comes back the next time you start TheBrain with the edits still unsaved. If another app changed the file meanwhile, the window says so when it comes back.
- If the file can't be written, for example because it is read-only, TheBrain says **The file couldn't be saved** and why. Your edits stay in the window.

Saving from **Rich Text** writes the whole file again in standard Markdown. What you see is kept, but some formatting may be written differently, for example list bullets become `–`. The frontmatter, the file's encoding, its line endings and its byte order mark are kept as they were. Saving from **Text** view writes exactly what the text editor holds. A file with content the editor can't keep as written, such as HTML, shows a warning when it opens, and the warning goes away after the first save. TheBrain can make a backup copy before saving; see Markdown Files Settings for the details and the backup choices.

The File's Encoding

TheBrain reads a file in the encoding it was saved in and saves it the same way. Most Markdown files are UTF-8; TheBrain also reads UTF-16 and UTF-32 files, and older files in an encoding such as Windows-1252, so their accented letters and symbols show correctly. If you add a character the file's encoding can't hold, such as an emoji in a Windows-1252 file, TheBrain saves the file as UTF-8 instead, with the marker that tells other apps so, and says **Saved as UTF-8, because the file's encoding can't hold some of its characters.**

When the File Changes on Disk

- **Another app saves the file.** If you have no unsaved changes, the window shows the new version. If you do, a bar says **This file was changed by another app.**: **Reload** shows the other app's version at once and discards your changes, and **Keep My Changes** keeps yours. While the bar is up, the file menu offers **Reload from Disk**, which asks first, and **Keep My Changes** in place of **Revert to Saved**. Saving before you choose asks whether to replace the other app's version, with **Replace** or **Cancel**; after **Keep My Changes**, saving replaces it without asking.
- **Another app renames the file in its folder.** The window follows the file.
- **The file is deleted or moved to another folder.** The window shows **(deleted)** after the name and counts as unsaved. **Save** writes the file again where it was.

When a File Can't Be Opened

- **This file couldn't be opened.** shows, with the reason, when the file exists but TheBrain can't read it — for example because you don't have permission, or the file is in a folder that macOS protects until you allow access. **Save** and **Save As...** do nothing then.
- **The file couldn't be read again** shows when **Reload** or **Revert to Saved** can't read the file.



- A Markdown file attached to a thought doesn't open in a file window; it opens in the thought's content area (see Viewing Attachments).
- When you relaunch TheBrain, Markdown file windows come back where they were, with their size and pin. Each opens in **Rich Text** at the top of the file, and its Back and Forward history starts fresh. Collapsed sections are remembered for each file on this device, even after you close its window and open the file again. A file deleted while

TheBrain was closed comes back marked **(deleted)** only if it had unsaved edits; otherwise its window doesn't return.

- While a Markdown file window is open, TheBrain keeps running, and on a Mac clicking TheBrain's Dock icon brings it back.
- A new window opens a little below and to the right of the window you opened it from.

Related Topics

- Viewing Attachments
- Writing and Formatting Notes
- The Text Editor (Text and Split Views)
- Adding Attachments
- Linking to External Files and Folders

3.2.8 Floating Tools Panels

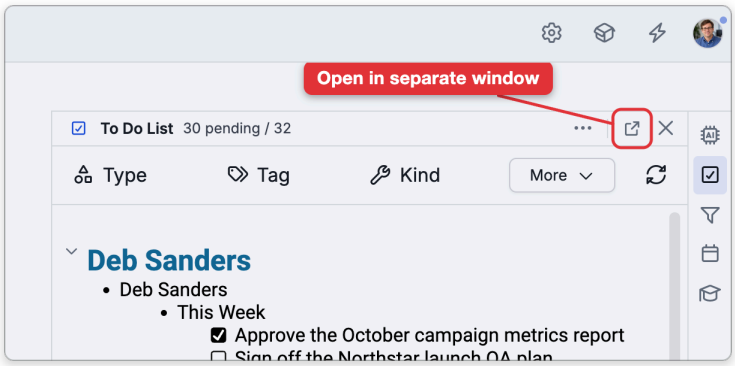
Overview

The brain page's tools sidebar holds five tools: **AI Chat**, **To Do List**, **Report**, **Timeline**, and **Interactive Tutorials**. Normally one of them shows in the sidebar at a time. Any of them can instead **float**, so you can keep several open at once and put each one where you want it.

In the desktop app, each floating tool opens in a window of its own, which you can move outside the brain window or onto another display. On the web, a floating tool floats over the page: drag it by the empty part of its header and resize it from its edges and corners. Tools don't float on phones.

How to Float a Tool

1. Open the tool from the sidebar's toolbar (or from **Main Menu > View**).
2. Click **Open in separate window** near the right end of the tool's header, just before its **Close** button.



You can also choose **Float Panel** from **Main Menu > View** (on a Mac, also in the menu bar under **View > Panels**). It floats the tool shown in the sidebar.

The tool leaves the sidebar, and the sidebar closes. While a tool floats, its button in the sidebar's toolbar shows a dot; clicking the button brings the floating tool to the front, or closes it if it's already in front.

How to Dock a Tool

Click **Dock to sidebar** in the floating tool's header (in the same place as the float button). The tool goes back into the sidebar, in place of whichever tool was showing there. **Main Menu > View > Dock Panel** (the same menu item as **Float Panel**, renamed when it will dock) does the same for the floating tool you're working in, or, when the sidebar shows no tool, for the floating tool in front.

Closing a Floating Tool

Closing a floating tool — with its **Close** button on the web, or its window's close button in the desktop app — hides it but doesn't dock it. The next time you open that tool, it opens floating again, where it was. To return it to the sidebar, dock it instead.

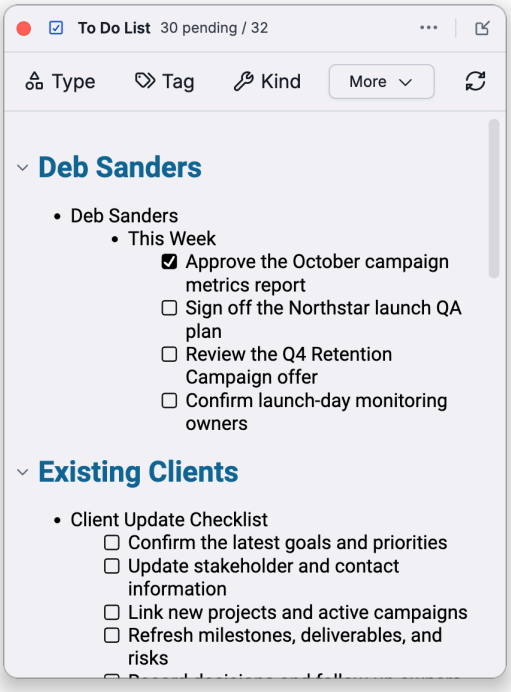
The Timeline Floats as One Tool

The Timeline floats as a single tool that shows either the **Day Navigator** or the **Timeline Bar**. Switching between them with **Switch to Timeline Bar** or **Switch to Day Navigator** keeps it floating. The Timeline Bar, when docked along the bottom of the brain page, has its own **Open**

in separate window button; when it floats, its buttons move into the window's header, and docking it returns it to the bottom of the page.

Floating Tool Windows in the Desktop App

In the desktop app, a floating tool's window can be moved and resized, and it stays in front of its brain window. Its only window button is the close button: it can't be minimized, maximized or made full screen, and `Esc` doesn't close it.



The window belongs to its brain tab, so it shows only while that brain is in front:

- **It hides** when you switch to another tab, bring another brain window to the front, or minimize its brain window. It comes back, where it was, when you return to that brain. That is why a floating tool seems to disappear when you click another brain window.
- **It stays showing when you switch to another app**, so you can keep AI Chat beside a browser. It isn't kept above the other app's windows, though, so they can cover it.
- **It closes** when you close the tab.

Reset Window Positions

Reset Window Positions... in **Main Menu > File** (on a Mac, in the menu bar's **Window** menu) closes floating windows and forgets where they were. It asks whether to reset **For this brain** (offered when a brain is open in the current tab) or **For all brains**. For the brains you choose, every open tab closes its floating tools, docks its floating content area, and forgets their window positions, so the next time you float something it opens in its default place. Your brain windows themselves stay where they are.

- Which tools float, which are open, and where they are is remembered for each brain on each device, and isn't synced. If a brain is open in more than one tab, each tab keeps its own arrangement.
- In the desktop app, the notes and attachments of the active thought can float too — see Floating the Content Area.
- A tool you can't open (for example AI Chat when AI is turned off) can't float either.

Related Topics

- Reports
- Tutorials

3.2.9 Notifications

Overview

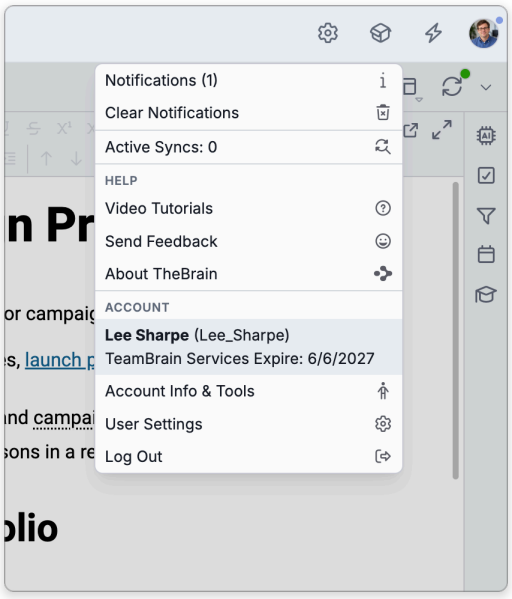
TheBrain uses **notifications** to tell you what just happened or what's going on in the background: the *Undid Create Thought* confirmation after an undo, *Attachments added*, a copied-link confirmation, the notice with an **Undo** button after you change a theme, an import that has finished, or an error that needs your attention. Some are brief confirmations that fade on their own after a few seconds; others stay until you deal with them.

On Desktop and Tablets

Notifications appear as cards at the **top right** of the window as they arrive, except low-priority ones, which wait in the Notifications dialog instead. Each card has an icon, a title, and a

description. When a notification carries a link — for example to open a brain that just finished importing — the description is the link. A card that stays until you deal with it has two controls, and they do different things. The small circle (**Mark Read**) marks the notification read and puts the card away, but keeps the notification in the Notifications dialog. The **X** (**Delete**) removes the notification altogether. Following a card's link also marks it read and puts the card away. A notification for a running background process also offers **Cancel**. Brief confirmations have only the **X**, and they remove themselves after a few seconds; you don't need to touch them.

Your account button at the top right of the toolbar (your avatar or initials) shows a badge with the number of unread notifications, or a small dot when only low-priority ones are waiting. Open the account menu and choose **Notifications** — the item shows the count, for example **Notifications (3)** — to open the Notifications dialog. The item only appears while there is at least one notification.



On Phones

There's no room for cards on a phone, so brief confirmations show as a compact **strip just under the top toolbar** — a line or two with the message and an **X** to dismiss it — and leave on their own when their time is up. Up to three can stack; when more arrive, the oldest goes first.

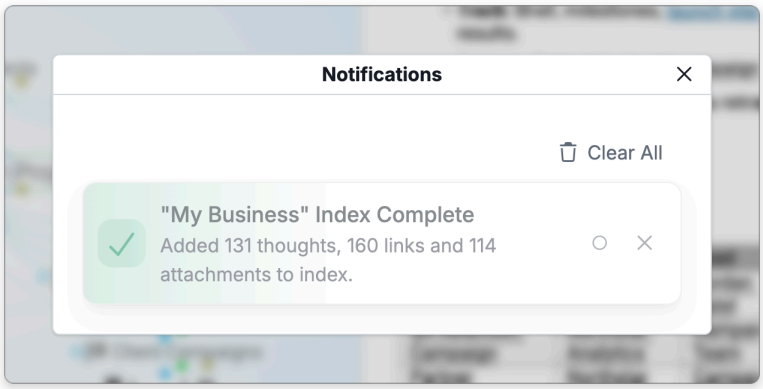
- **Hold** a finger on the strip to pause its timer while you read it; letting go resumes the countdown, with at least a moment left to act.
- **Swipe** it sideways to dismiss it right away, or tap the **X**.

- **Tap** the strip to follow its link if it has one; a strip with no link is dismissed by the tap. Buttons inside a strip, such as the **Undo** on a theme-change notice, work as usual.

These brief strips don't count toward the unread badge and aren't kept in the list afterwards. Notifications that persist are reached through the **settings** button at the right end of the toolbar (a gear icon): it shows the unread badge, and tapping it opens a menu whose **Notifications** item opens the Notifications dialog.

The Notifications Dialog

The **Notifications** dialog lists every notification that's still around. When some are from earlier days, they're grouped under date headings (for example *Yesterday*), newest group first. Each entry has the same circle and **Delete** button as the cards, and its link still opens. In the dialog the circle only switches the entry between read and unread (**Mark Read** / **Mark Unread**) and leaves it in the list; **Delete** removes it. A filled circle marks an unread notification. Read notifications are shown faded, and so are low-priority ones, such as a search index that finished rebuilding; a low-priority notification that has been read is fainter still. **Clear All** at the top removes them all at once — if any notification belongs to a still-running background process, TheBrain asks first whether to cancel those processes too. When nothing is left, the dialog reads **No notifications**.



- Opening the dialog also closes any notification cards that are currently showing.
- Some notices belong to a particular tab and only appear in that tab; general ones appear in every tab.
- The list of notifications is kept separately on each device or browser you use, so marking one read or deleting it in one place doesn't change another.
- In the desktop and mobile apps, notifications you haven't deleted are still listed in the Notifications dialog after you restart the app, but they don't pop up as cards again.

Brief confirmations that fade on their own aren't kept, and neither is the progress notification of a background process that was running.

- Signing out clears your notifications.

Related Topics

- Undo and Redo
- Settings Overview
- Importing Brains
- Brain Themes Overview
- Copy Thought Links

3.2.10 Using TheBrain on a Phone

Overview

A phone screen has no room to show the Plex and a thought's content side by side, so TheBrain lays a brain out differently there. The Plex (or Cards or Tree) fills the screen. The **content area** — the thought's name, attachments and notes — slides up over it when you ask for it. An **action bar** along the bottom of the screen holds the buttons you use most, and the menu, Settings and your account are behind two buttons on the top toolbar.

You get this layout in the mobile app on a phone, and also when you open TheBrain in a phone's web browser.

How to Open a Thought's Notes and Get Back to the Plex

1. Activate the thought you want.
2. Tap the notes button on the action bar at the bottom of the screen. Its icon is a notepad. The content area slides up over the Plex, showing the thought's name, attachments and notes.

3. To go back to the Plex, tap the notes button again, or swipe down on the content. Swiping down closes the content once it is scrolled to its top; before that, the swipe scrolls it.

Two more ways to open the content:

- **Tap the active thought.** Tapping the thought that is already active opens its content, with the name ready to edit when you can edit the brain.
- **Swipe up on the Plex.** This works when the Plex is in its **Normal** layout. In the same layout, swiping down on the Plex opens search. These two swipes are not available in the Outline and Mind Map layouts, where dragging pans the map, or in Cards and Tree; use the notes button there.

The Action Bar

The action bar is the rounded strip of buttons along the bottom of the screen. Its buttons show icons only. It starts out with these, from left to right:

Button	What it does
More Actions (the **…** button)	Lists the buttons that are not on the bar, so you can still use them
Home (a house)	Activates the home thought
Pins (a pin)	Opens your pinned thoughts
AI Chat	Opens the AI Chat with Cerebro. It is on the bar only when AI is available and turned on
Nav Mode	Switches between **Plex**, **Cards** and **Tree**. While you are in the Plex it also offers the **Normal**, **Outline** and **Mind Map** layouts and **Expand All** and **Collapse All**. Its icon shows the mode you are in
Search (a magnifying glass)	Opens search
Sync	Syncs the brain. It is on the bar in the mobile app only, not in a phone's browser
The notes button (a notepad)	Opens and closes the content area

More Actions lists the buttons that are not on the bar, which to begin with are **BrainBox**, **Quick Thoughts**, **To Do**, **Report**, **Share** and **Timeline**. Some of them are listed only when the feature is available to you.

How to Customize the Action Bar

1. Press and hold any button on the bar for about half a second, until the buttons start to wiggle. Or tap **More Actions** and then the pencil button beside its title, which also opens the **Add Button** list.
2. Drag a button left or right to move it.
3. Tap the **×** on a button to remove it. **More Actions** and the notes button can't be removed.
4. To add a button, tap the **+** button — it takes the place of **More Actions** while you are editing — and tap a button in the **Add Button** list. It is added at the end of the bar. **Reset toolbar**, at the bottom of that list, puts the bar back to the buttons it started with.
5. Close the **Add Button** list if it is open, and then tap anywhere outside the bar to finish.

A button you remove is not lost: it moves to **More Actions**, where you can still tap it. The arrangement is saved with your user settings.

Where the Menu, Settings and Your Account Are

With the phone held upright, the toolbar across the top of a brain holds, from left to right: the menu button (≡), the **Back** and **Forward** arrows (in the mobile app; in a phone's browser, use the browser's own Back and Forward instead — see Back and Forward Navigation), the **Search/Create** box, **Undo** and **Redo**, and a gear button.

The Menu Button: Brain Commands, Types, Tags and More

Tap the menu button (≡) at the left end of the top toolbar to open a panel from the left side of the screen. At the top of the panel are a **<** arrow, which returns to the brains list, and the brain's icon and name. Below them is a row of tabs that show icons only:

Tab	What it holds
Actions (three lines)	Commands for the brain, such as sync, **Find in Brain...** and **Replace in Brain...**, backup, export, **Brain Access and Sharing...** and **More Actions**
Types (shapes)	The brain's thought types. Tap one to activate it
Tags (a tag)	The brain's tags. Tap one to activate it
Selection (a dashed square)	The selection commands and the thoughts you have selected
Timeline (a calendar)	The Timeline

The Gear Button: Settings, Support and Your Account

Tap the gear button at the right end of the top toolbar to open a panel from the right side of the screen. It holds:

- **Settings...** — Opens the Settings dialog.
- **A text scale slider** — Shown while a brain is open.
- **Notifications** — Shown, with a count, when you have any notifications; it opens the Notifications dialog. See Notifications.
- **Support** — Opens to items such as **Video Tutorials** and **Send Feedback**, and, in the mobile app, **Email Log File**.
- **About TheBrain**.
- **Your account**, at the bottom of the panel — Your account details, with **Account Info & Tools** and **Log Out** beneath them.



- The pins list and the past thoughts list that sit along the edges of the Plex on a larger screen are not shown on a phone held upright. Use the **Pins** button on the action bar to reach your pins.
- The **Toolbars** page in Settings, which customizes the toolbars on a computer, isn't offered on phones. The action bar is the part you customize on a phone, as described above.

Related Topics

- Plex Layouts

- Back and Forward Navigation
- Undo and Redo
- The Brains List
- Quick Thoughts
- Settings Overview

3.3 Getting Around

3.3.1 Back and Forward Navigation

Overview

As you move around a brain — activating one thought, then another — TheBrain remembers your path, so you can step **back** to a thought you were just looking at and **forward** again, much like a web browser.

In the Installed Apps

The desktop and mobile apps show **Back** and **Forward** arrows in the main toolbar; on a phone they sit at the left end of the top toolbar, right next to the menu button. **Back** returns you to the previously active thought; **Forward** re-advances after you've gone back. The arrows are enabled only when there's somewhere to go, and they have no default keyboard shortcut. In the desktop app, your mouse's back and forward buttons do the same, and on a Mac so do a trackpad swipe and **Back** and **Forward** in the menu bar's **Go** menu.



Your history is kept **per tab** — each open tab has its own back/forward trail, so going back follows the path you took within that tab.

Swiping on Mobile

On the mobile apps you can also swipe from the edge of the screen: swipe in from the **left edge** to go back, and in from the **right edge** to go forward. Each swipe moves one step, the same as tapping the arrow.

The Android Back Gesture

On Android, the system **back gesture** (or back button) does what the app's **Back** arrow does: it returns you to the previous thought rather than leaving the app. When the next step back would take you out of the brain you're in — to the brains list or into another brain — or when there's no earlier thought left to return to, TheBrain first shows **Go back again to leave this brain**; go back once more within a couple of seconds to continue. On the brains list, with nowhere further to go, it shows **Go back again to exit**, and a second back leaves the app. Because Android reserves the left edge for its own back gesture, the app's forward swipe is recognized along the middle of the right edge; a left-edge swipe goes back all the same.

On the Web

The web app doesn't show its own Back/Forward arrows, and it doesn't need to: activating a thought updates the page's web address, so your **browser's own Back and Forward buttons** move you between the thoughts you've visited. Use them just as you would on any website.

- Back and Forward retrace the thoughts you've **activated**; to jump straight to a fixed anchor instead, set and use your **Home Thought** — see Home Thought.
- To return to a thought you visited a while ago without stepping back one thought at a time, click it in the **past thoughts list**, the row of recently visited or created thoughts along the bottom of the Plex — see Past Thoughts List.
- This is about where you've *navigated*, not what you've *changed* — to reverse an edit, see Undo and Redo.

Related Topics

- The Plex

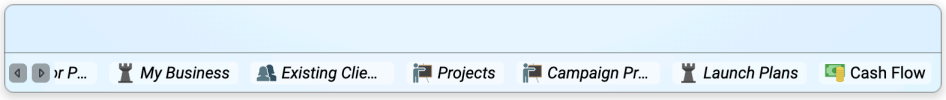
- Finding and Creating Thoughts
- Undo and Redo
- Using TheBrain on a Phone

3.3.2 Past Thoughts List

Overview

The **past thoughts list** is the row of thoughts along the bottom of the Plex. It holds the thoughts you activated most recently in this brain, along with thoughts you have just created, so it works as a visible history: instead of stepping back one thought at a time, you can see where you have been and click straight to the thought you want.

The newest thought is at the right-hand end, and the list runs back in time toward the left. The thought you are on now is the first entry. Each thought appears once: when you visit a thought again, it moves to the newest end instead of being listed twice. The list shows up to 100 thoughts, and it is saved, so it is still there the next time you open the brain.



How to Go Back to a Thought You Visited

1. Look along the bottom of the Plex for the thought you want. The most recent thoughts are at the right.
2. If it isn't in view, scroll the list: click one of the two small arrow buttons at the left end of the list (hold the button down to keep scrolling), or turn the mouse wheel while pointing at the list.
3. Click the thought. It becomes the active thought.

How to Show, Hide, or Resize the List

The list is shown by default. Its settings are in **Settings > Brain > Personal Settings**, under **Pinned/Past Thoughts Lists**:

- **Show past thoughts list** — Turn the list on or off.
- **Width (Past)** — The widest a single entry can be, from 40 to 300 pixels (120 by default). Longer thought names are cut short to fit.
- **Text scale** — The size of the text in both the past thoughts list and the pins list.

In a shared brain these are your own choices and don't change what other people see. See Personal Settings.

- The list appears only in the **Plex** navigation mode, in any Plex layout. It isn't shown in Cards or Tree.
- The list is hidden when the window is too narrow for it, as on a phone held upright, and its settings aren't offered on phones.
- The list is separate from **Back** and **Forward**, which step through the thoughts you visited in the current tab one at a time — see Back and Forward Navigation.
- For thoughts you want to keep within reach no matter where you go, pin them instead — see Pins.

Related Topics

- The Plex

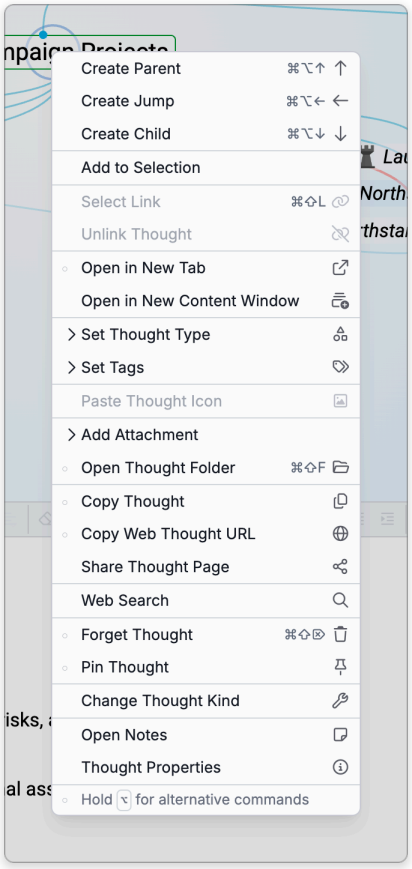
3.3.3 Pins

Overview

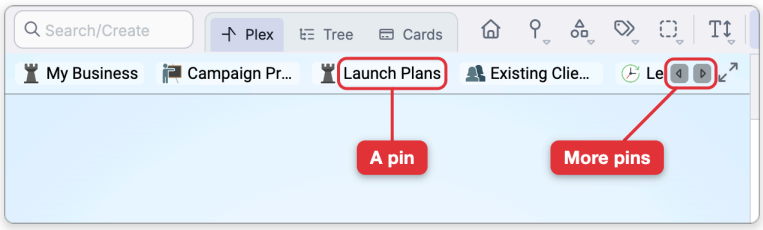
Pins are quick-access bookmarks for thoughts you come back to often. When you pin a thought, it joins your **pins bar**, so the thoughts that matter most are always one click away no matter where you've navigated to in the brain. Pins are per-brain, so each brain keeps its own set.

How to Pin a Thought

1. Right-click the thought.
2. Choose **Pin Thought**.



The thought appears in the pins bar, which runs along the top of the Plex. To remove it, right-click it again and choose **Pin Thought** to toggle it off (unpin). You can reorder pins by dragging them within the bar.



Activating a Pin by Number

The first eight pins can be activated straight from the keyboard. The default shortcuts are `Ctrl+1` through `Ctrl+8` (`⌘1` through `⌘8` on Mac), where `Ctrl+1` activates the first pin, `Ctrl+2` the second, and so on.

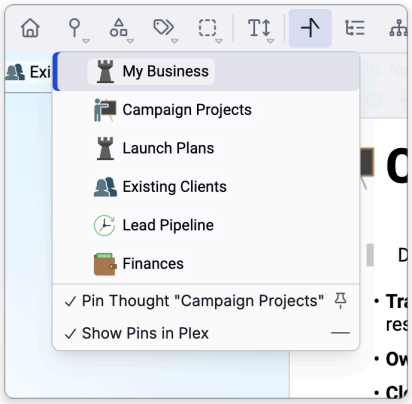
Showing and Arranging Pins

- **Show Pins in Plex** — Shows or hides the pins bar (it's the same setting as "Show pins list"). It is at the bottom of the menu that the **Pins** button on the brain toolbar opens. In the desktop app on a Mac, it is also in the **View** menu of the menu bar.
- **Filter Pins** — On a phone, the pins panel has a **Filter Pins** box that narrows a long list of pins as you type.
- **Pins bar settings** — In **Settings > Brain > Personal Settings**, the **Pinned/Past Thoughts Lists** options let you show or hide the pins list, set its text size and maximum width, and choose how truncated thought names expand. The same area controls the past thoughts list, the row of recently visited thoughts along the bottom of the Plex — see Past Thoughts List.

Where Your Pins Are When the Pins Bar Isn't Showing

The pins bar is shown only in the Plex navigation mode, on screens wider than a phone, and while **Show Pins in Plex** is on. When it isn't showing, your pins are still close at hand:

- **The Pins button** — On the brain toolbar, **Pins** opens a list of every pin; click one to go to it. Below the list are a **Pin Thought** item that pins or unpins the current thought, and **Show Pins in Plex**.
- **Tree View** — The tree lists your pins in a **Pins** section.
- **On a phone** — The **Pins** button on the bar at the bottom of the screen opens a panel that lists your pins.



Syncing, Sharing, and Limits

Pins are saved in the brain itself, not on one device:

- **They sync** — Pins sync with the brain, so your other devices show the same pins in the same order.
- **They are shared** — In a shared brain, the other people who use it see the pins you add. Pinning, unpinning, and reordering all change the brain, so each needs write access to it, and each can be reversed with **Undo**.
- **New pins go last** — A new pin goes to the end of the list, and only the first eight have keyboard shortcuts.

What is personal is whether the pins bar is shown. In a shared brain, turning **Show Pins in Plex** (**Show pins list**) on or off changes only your own view — see Personal Settings.



- Pinning never changes a thought's place in the brain — it's purely a shortcut. Unpinning a thought leaves the thought itself untouched.
- For the single thought you can always jump back to, see Home Thought; pins are for the several thoughts you want at hand.

Related Topics

- The Plex
- Navigation Modes

3.3.4 Home Thought

Overview

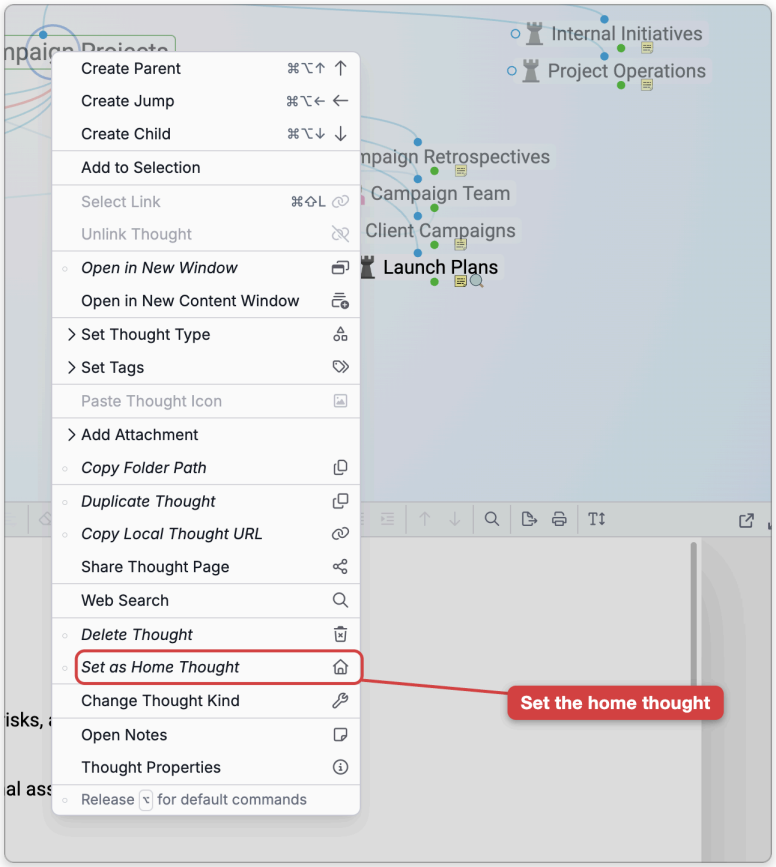
Every brain has a **home thought** — the natural "front door" of the brain. It's usually a top-level overview thought that links out to your major areas, so it gives you somewhere meaningful to start and a fixed point to return to whenever you've wandered deep into the network. A brain

doesn't open on its home thought every time, though: once you've used a brain, opening it takes you back to the thought you were last on — see *Which Thought a Brain Opens On* below.

How to Set the Home Thought

Set as Home Thought is an *alternate command*: it stays hidden until you hold a modifier key, the same way **Delete Thought** is revealed.

1. Right-click the thought you want as your home, or open the **More Actions** (⋯) menu in its properties header.
2. Hold `Shift` (`⌥` on Mac) — **Set as Home Thought** appears in the menu. The modifier is needed in both menus. On a device with no keyboard, tap the *"Tap for alternative commands"* notice at the bottom of the menu instead.
3. Choose **Set as Home Thought**.



In the Mac desktop app, **Set as Home Thought** is also in the menu bar's **Thought** menu, where no modifier is needed.

That thought is now the brain's home. Setting a new home thought simply replaces the old one — the previous home thought stays in the brain, just no longer marked as home.

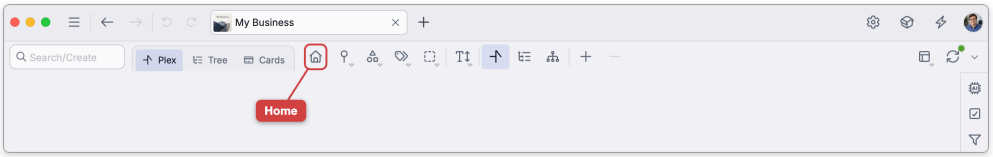
A thought can become the home thought only if it's a **normal**, **public**, non-forgotten thought — a type, tag, private, or forgotten thought can't be the home. For those thoughts the command is unavailable, as it is for the thought that is already the home and in a brain you can't edit.

Which Thought a Brain Opens On

- **Opening from the brains list** — Selecting a brain, or choosing **Open Brain** from its right-click menu, returns you to the thought that was active the last time you used that brain. The home thought is used only when there is no last thought to return to, such as the first time you open the brain. A brain that is in Cards view opens on its most recently modified thought instead.
- **Starting on the home thought** — Right-click the brain in the brains list, hold `Shift` (`⌥` on Mac), and choose **Open Brain to Home Thought**. In the desktop app, picking a brain from the brain switcher — the **+** button beside the tabs — also opens it on its home thought. See Opening a Brain.

Returning to the Home Thought

- **The Home button** — The brain toolbar has a house-icon button by default; click it to jump to the home thought from wherever you are in the brain. Pointing at it shows the home thought's name, and the button is unavailable while the home thought is already active. In the Mac desktop app you can also choose **Go > Home Thought** from the menu bar.
- **Activate Home Thought** — The command behind that button. It has no default keyboard shortcut, but you can assign one in **Settings > User > Keyboard**.



- The home thought is always public — it can't be made private, since it's the brain's entry point, so its privacy toggle is unavailable. See Private Thoughts.
- The home thought can't be merged into another thought. If you're merging a selection that includes it, remove the home thought from the selection first — see Selecting

Multiple Thoughts.

Related Topics

- The Plex

3.4 Searching

3.4.1 Finding and Creating Thoughts

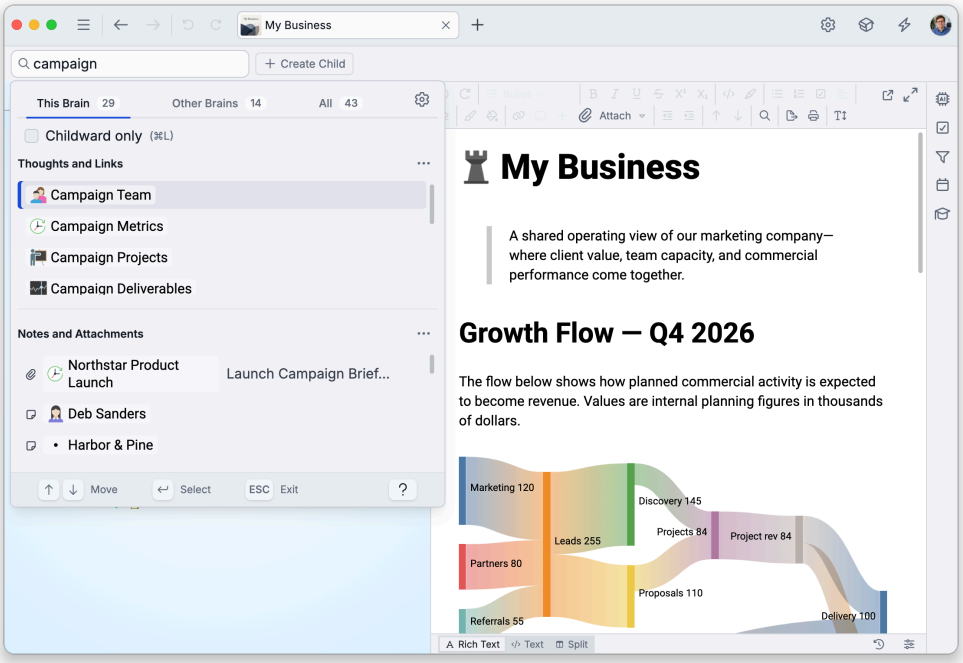
Overview

The **search box** in the brain toolbar is how you get anywhere in a brain instantly. Type part of a thought's name and matching thoughts appear; pick one to activate it and the Plex re-centers on it, no matter how far away it was. The same box doubles as a **create** box — if what you typed doesn't match an existing thought, you can turn it into a new one on the spot. It's labeled **Search/Create** for exactly this reason.

Finding a Thought

1. Click the search box in the brain toolbar and start typing. On a computer you can skip the click: while the Plex has the focus, whatever you type goes straight into the search box.
2. Thoughts whose names match appear immediately, on every keystroke, under **Thoughts and Links**. The first one is highlighted as soon as it appears, so you can press `Enter` to activate the top match without waiting for anything else.
3. Once you pause typing, TheBrain runs its full search and fills in the rest: further thought matches are added beneath the ones already showing, and matches inside notes and attachments arrive under **Notes and Attachments**. While that part is still running, a spinner sits beside that heading and the pane reads **Searching...**; **No results found.** appears only after the full search has finished with nothing to show.
4. Click a result to activate that thought.

When the box is empty, it can show your **Recent Searches** and **Recent Thoughts** to get you back where you were quickly.



Searching from the Keyboard

On a computer, in a browser or the desktop app, you can search without touching the mouse:

- **Just start typing** — Whenever the Plex has the focus, the search box is already listening. (Phones and tablets don't do this, because it would bring up the on-screen keyboard.)
- **Jump to the search box** — The default shortcut for **Focus Plex/Search** is `Ctrl+S` (`⌘S` on Mac). It moves the keyboard focus to the Plex and its search box, for example after you've been typing in a note. Press it again to open the search panel with your **Recent Searches** and **Recent Thoughts**.
- **Move through the results** — `↑` and `↓` move the highlight, `Enter` opens the highlighted result, and `Esc` closes the search.
- **Switch tabs and sections** — `Tab` and `Shift+Tab` (`⇧Tab` on Mac) cycle through the result tabs, `Shift+↑` and `Shift+↓` (`⇧↑` and `⇧↓` on Mac) jump from one section of the panel to the next, and `Shift+PgUp` and `Shift+PgDn` (`⇧PgUp` and `⇧PgDn` on Mac) jump to the top or bottom of a section.

A bar along the bottom of the results panel shows the main keys, and its **?** button lists the rest.

Phrases, AND, OR, and NOT

An ordinary search finds whatever contains **all** of the words you typed, in any order, and each word only needs to match the *beginning* of a word — so `proj plan` finds **Project Planning**. When you need to be more exact:

To find	Type	Example
Words next to each other, as an exact phrase	Double quotes around them	`"machine learning"`
Either word	`OR` between them	`python OR rust`
One word without another	`NOT`, or a minus sign or exclamation mark directly in front of the word to exclude	`budget NOT draft`, `budget -draft` or `budget !draft`
A combination	Parentheses around a group	`(python OR rust) AND NOT draft`

- Type `AND`, `OR` and `NOT` in capital letters; in lower case they don't work as operators. `AND` is optional, because a space already means "and".
- Inside quotes and parentheses, type whole words. Matching on the beginning of a word applies only to plain words outside them.
- Phrases and operators apply to note and attachment text as well as to names, so `"quarterly budget" -draft` finds notes that contain that phrase and don't mention *draft*.
- A search that uses quotes, operators or parentheses is answered by the full search only, so its results appear once you pause typing rather than on every keystroke.
- The exclamation mark excludes a word only when it comes after the first word. At the very start of a search, as in `!Important`, it is taken as part of a name, and thoughts named that way rank first in the immediate results.

Searching Inside Attachments

Search doesn't stop at names and notes: it also reads the text inside files attached to your thoughts, and lists those matches under **Notes and Attachments**.

- **Files whose text is searched** — Files stored in the brain (copied into it rather than linked), of these types: PDF, Word (`.docx`), PowerPoint (`.pptx`), Excel (`.xlsx`), RTF, OpenDocument

text (`.odt`), HTML (`.html`), email (`.eml`), CSV, plain text (`.txt` and `.log` files), Markdown (`.md`), Org (`.org`), Jupyter notebooks (`.ipynb`), and mind maps from MindManager, XMind, FreeMind, iMindMap, iThoughts, MindMeister, SimpleMind, MindGenius and MindNode.

- **Files found by name only** — Every other type, including the older Office formats (`.doc`, `.xls`, `.ppt`) and images; text in a picture isn't read. Linked files that live outside the brain, files inside a folder stored in the brain, and folders are also found by name only, whatever their type. Files inside a linked folder aren't found at all; only the folder itself is found, by its name.
- **Limits** — The text of a file larger than 50 MB isn't searched, though the file is still found by its name, and in a very long document roughly the first million characters are searched.
- **Light sync** — The desktop and mobile apps read a file's text from the copy on your device, so a light-synced file that hasn't been downloaded yet may be found by its name only.

When the match is inside one of a thought's attachments, the result names that attachment beneath the thought. Opening the result outlines that attachment in the thought's attachment list so you can find it among the others; the outline clears when you click the attachment, click away from the content area, or move to another thought. With a mouse, hovering the result previews the matching file.

Creating a Thought from the Search Box

If none of the results are what you want, create a new thought from what you typed. Once you've typed something in a brain you can edit, a **Create Child** button appears beside the search box. Click it — or press `Enter` while it's highlighted, as it is automatically when nothing matches — and the new thought becomes a child of the active thought. If what you typed is a full web address, starting with `https://` or `http://`, the new thought gets that address attached to it as a web link, and it is renamed to the page's title once that has been fetched. By default a title like `Some Article - Wikipedia` becomes the name **Some Article** with the label **Wikipedia**; to keep the whole title as the name, turn off **Split URL titles into name and label** under **Settings > User > General** (see General and Appearance).

To choose a different relationship, hold a modifier key and the button changes to match:

Hold	The button reads	The new thought is
Nothing	**Create Child**	A child of the active thought
`Shift` (`⇧` on Mac)	**Create Parent**	A parent of the active thought
`Ctrl` (`^` on Mac)	**Create Jump**	A jump of the active thought
`Ctrl+Shift` (`^⇧` on Mac)	**Create Orphan**	Unconnected

The hint beside the button, *Hold Ctrl and/or Shift for other link types*, is a reminder of these keys.

`Ctrl+Enter` (`⌘Enter` on Mac) creates the thought straight away, even while a search result is highlighted. Because holding `Ctrl` switches the button to **Create Jump**, on Windows and Linux `Ctrl+Enter` creates a *jump* thought rather than a child, and `Ctrl+Shift+Enter` creates an orphan. On a Mac, `⌘Enter` creates what the button shows: a child, unless you're also holding `⇧` or `^`.

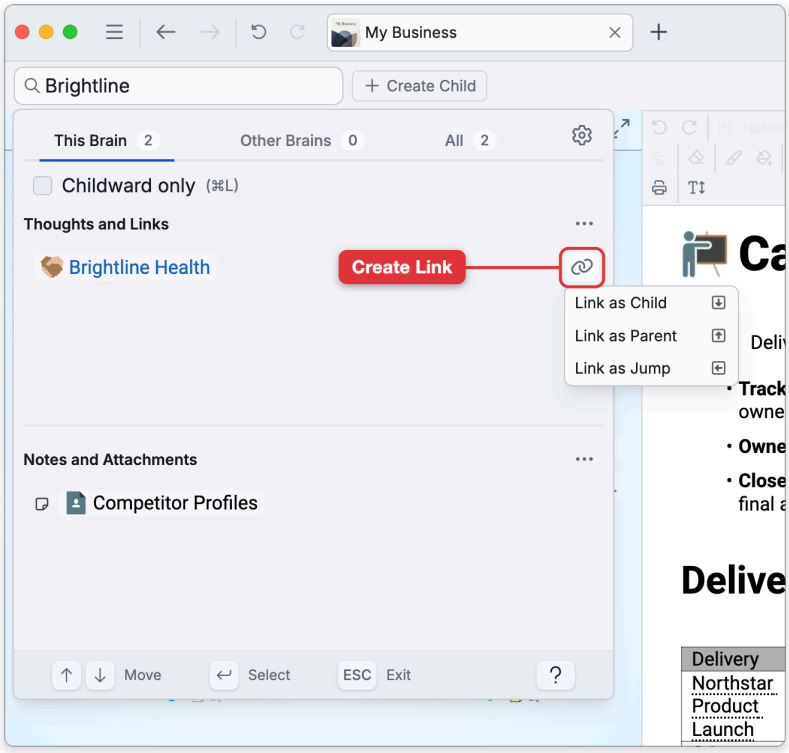
In a narrow window and on phones, where search opens in a panel of its own, there is a single **Create** button instead. It opens a menu with **Child**, **Parent**, **Jump** and **Orphan**.

The Create button always makes a **new** thought — even if a thought by that name already exists, this creates a separate one, it does **not** link to the existing thought. To connect a thought that already exists, use **Create Link** on its result row instead, as described next.

Linking an Existing Thought from the Results

You can link a thought that already exists to the active thought straight from the search panel, without creating anything:

1. Search for the thought, or leave the box empty to see **Recent Thoughts**.
2. Point at the thought's row. A link icon, **Create Link**, appears at the right end of the row. On phones and tablets it is always showing.
3. Click it and choose **Link as Child**, **Link as Parent** or **Link as Jump**.



The thought you found becomes a child, parent or jump of the active thought, the search closes, and the active thought stays active. Clicking the row itself, rather than the icon, still just activates that thought.

Create Link is offered on thought rows from the brain you're in: under **Thoughts and Links**, under **Notes and Attachments** (where it links the thought that owns the note or file), and in **Recent Thoughts**. It needs a brain you can edit. Results from other brains, and rows that are links rather than thoughts, don't have it. For the other ways to connect two existing thoughts, see Creating Thoughts and Links (**Linking Two Existing Thoughts**).

If Search Doesn't Find Something

When search can't find a thought or some note text that you know exists, check these in turn:

- **Forgotten and private thoughts** — Search follows the brain's current view. A forgotten thought is found only while **Show Forgotten Thoughts** is on, and a private thought can be hidden from the results by **Hide Private Thoughts**.
- **A ticked narrowing box** — **Childward only** or **Selection only**, just under the result tabs, limits the results to part of the brain. Untick it to search the whole brain — see Search Filters.

- **The tab you're on** — Matches from your other brains are on the **Other Brains** tab, not on **This Brain** — see Searching Other and Public Brains.
- **Text in notes and files** — Names, aliases and labels match as you type, but text inside notes and attachments is searched only after you pause typing, and appears under **Notes and Attachments**.
- **Indexing still running** — A line in the results that reads *This brain is being indexed. Results may be missing until the process completes.* or *The search index is warming up. Please try again in a few minutes.* means the search index isn't ready. Wait, then search again.
- **Exact text** — Search matches words and the starts of words, so it doesn't find text in the middle of a word, punctuation, or a pattern. Choose **Find Exact Text in this Brain...** from **Search Options** (the gear menu by the results) to hand your search to Find in Brain, which matches the exact characters — see Find in Brain.
- **Still missing** — Rebuild the brain's search index — see Rebuilding the Search Index.



- Each results section — **Thoughts and Links** and **Notes and Attachments** — has a **More Actions** (…) button at the right end of its header with **Add Results to Selection** and **Remove Results from Selection**, which add every thought listed in that section to your current selection, or take them out of it. That's a quick way to build a selection from a search — see Selecting Multiple Thoughts. The commands can be given shortcuts in **Settings > User > Keyboard**, where they're listed as *Add Title Search Results to Selection* and *Add Content Search Results to Selection* (and their Remove counterparts).
- A thought's **aliases** and **label** are matched like its name. When that's what your search hit, the result shows the thought's real name followed, in smaller muted text, by the alias or label that matched — so a search for "USA" can land on **United States**. See Thought Aliases.

Related Topics

- General and Appearance
- Keyboard Shortcuts
- Find in Brain

3.4.2 Search Filters

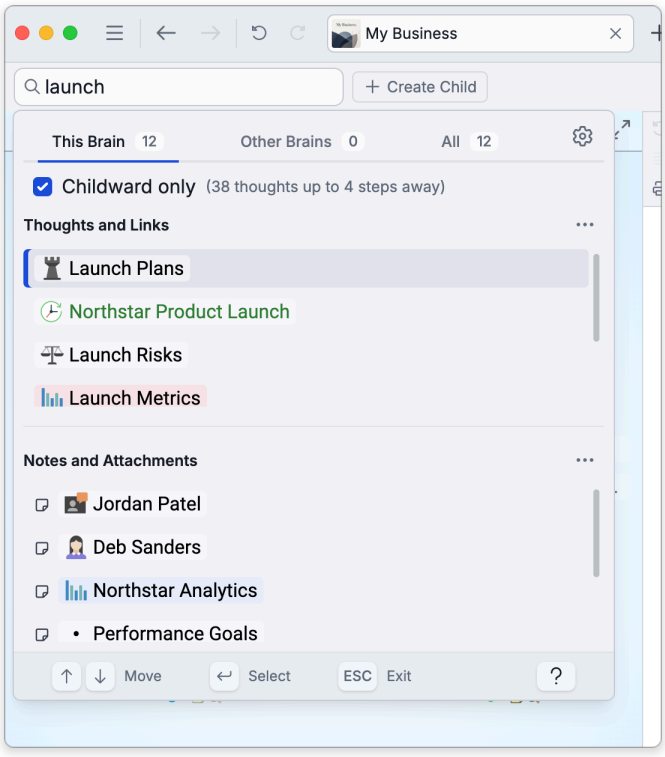
Overview

When a search returns too much, you can narrow it. In a brain's search this works two ways: you can confine results to part of the current brain, and — once a search reaches beyond the current brain — you can filter the results by which brain they came from.

Narrowing Within the Current Brain

On the **This Brain** tab of the results, two checkboxes appear just under the tabs: **Childward only** whenever a thought is active, and **Selection only** while you have thoughts selected.

- **Childward only** — limits results to the active thought and everything childward of it (its descendants), rather than the whole brain. It scans childward for up to ten seconds, and once ticked it says how much it covers, such as *38 thoughts up to 4 steps away*. The default shortcut is `Ctrl+L` (`⌘L` on Mac) while the search is showing.
- **Selection only** — limits results to the thoughts you currently have selected.



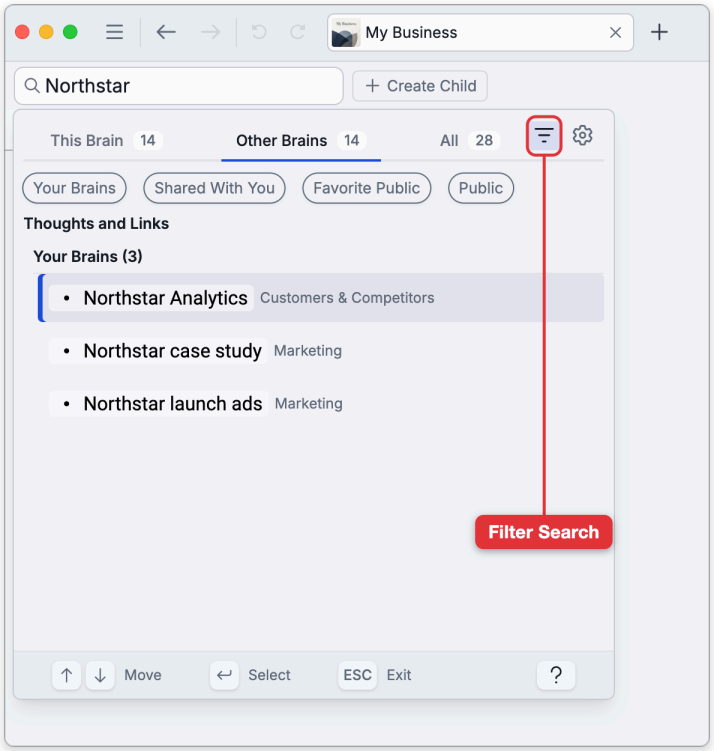
These two are mutually exclusive — turning one on turns the other off.

Filtering Cross-Brain Results by Source

When a search is widened to include your other brains and public brains (see Searching Other and Public Brains), the results span several sources. Choose **Filter Search** — the button at the right end of the row of result tabs, beside the **Search Options** gear, available on the **Other Brains** and **All** tabs — to reveal source chips and pick one to focus on:

- **Your Brains**
- **Shared With You**
- **Favorite Public**
- **Public**

Selecting a chip shows only results from that source. These source filters apply to the wider, cross-brain results — they don't narrow a search of just the current brain. Public brains are searched only when you use TheBrain in a browser, so in the desktop and mobile apps the **Favorite Public** and **Public** chips have nothing to show.



Detailed Attribute Filters Live in Reports and To-Do Lists

TheBrain's detailed filters — by **Type**, **Tag**, **Kind**, **Access**, **Created** or **Modified** date, and **Attachment Type** or **Attachment Size** — are part of building a **Report**, not the toolbar search box. The **To-Do List** panel offers the same filters except the two attachment ones. In the To-Do List and in the Report panel's **Simple** mode, **Type**, **Tag** and **Kind** are buttons and the other filters are in the **More** list beside them; the Report panel's **Advanced** mode shows every filter as an icon button. You can combine several conditions. See Reports and To-Do List.

- If a search is missing a thought you know exists, check that neither **Childward only** nor **Selection only** is still ticked. For the rest of the checklist, see Finding and Creating Thoughts (**If Search Doesn't Find Something**).

3.4.3 Searching Other and Public Brains

Overview

By default, a search doesn't stop at the brain you have open — it also looks through **your other brains**, and through **public brains** too, so a result can come from anywhere you have access. Public brains are searched only when you use TheBrain in a browser: in the desktop and mobile apps, a search returns results only from brains you own or that are shared with you. Results from outside the open brain are kept on their own tab of the results panel. When you'd rather focus on just the current brain (or turn a wider search back on), you control this in the brain's search settings.

Where the Results Appear

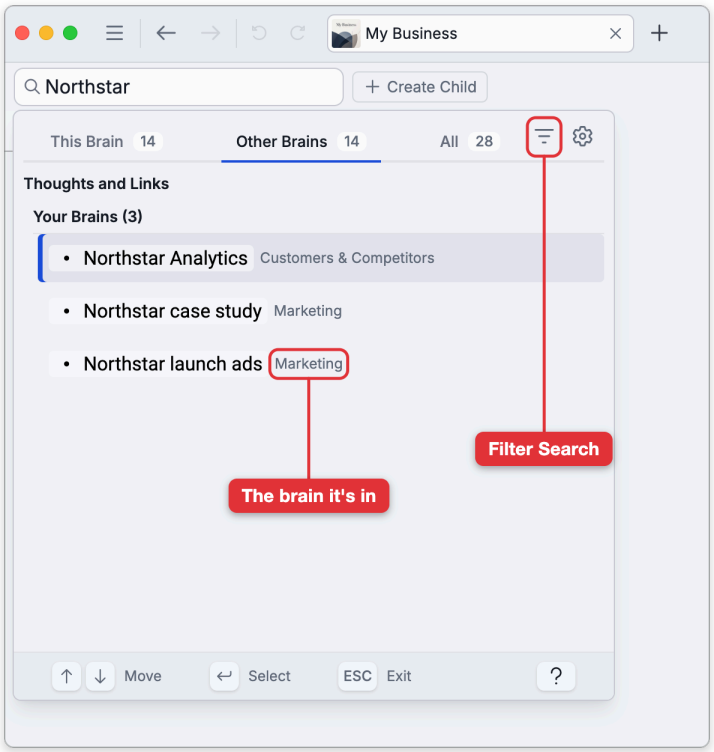
The results panel has tabs along the top, each showing how many results it holds:

- **This Brain** — matches from the brain you're in. The toolbar search opens on this tab.
- **Other Brains** — matches from everywhere else.
- **All** — both together. The compact search used in a narrow window and on phones leaves this tab out.

Other Brains and **All** are there only while the brain's search includes other brains. So if you searched and don't see results from your other brains, they are one tab over: click **Other Brains**, or press `Tab` to move through the tabs.

On **Other Brains** and **All**, results are grouped under **Your Brains** and **Brains Shared With You** — and, in a browser, **Favorite Public Brains** and **Public Brains** — with the brain's name beside each thought. Click a result to open that brain at that thought.

The **Filter Search** button, which filters these results by their source, sits at the right end of the tab row, beside the **Search Options** gear. It is available on the **Other Brains** and **All** tabs, not on **This Brain** — see Search Filters.



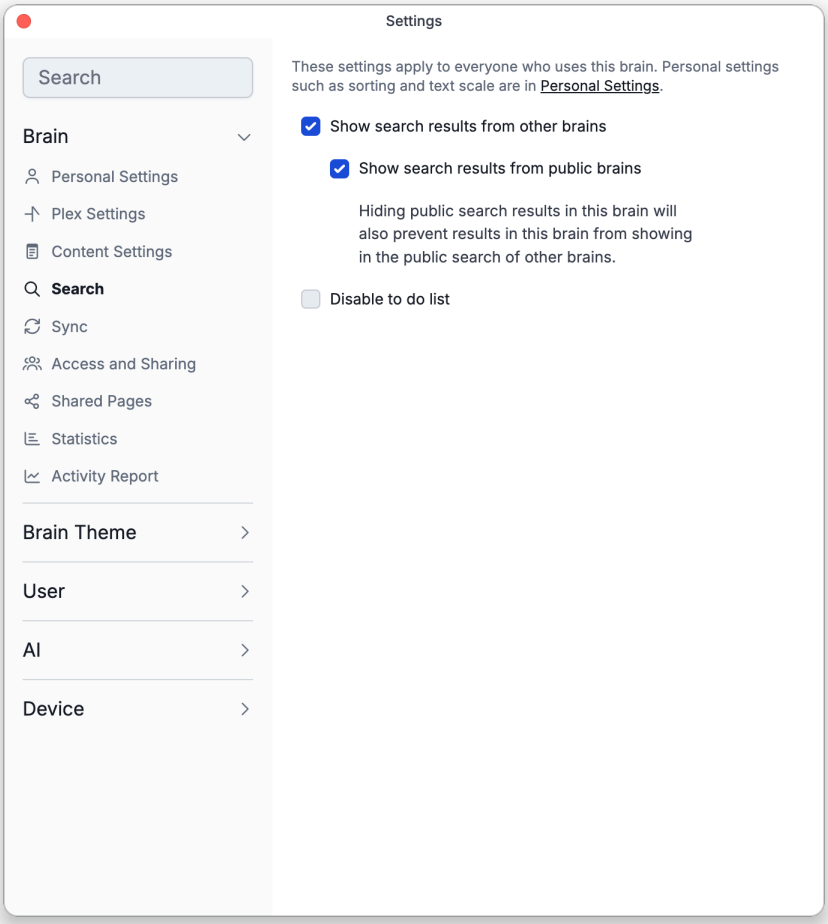
Controlling the Search Scope

Each brain keeps its own search scope, in two settings under **Settings > Brain > Search**:

- **Show search results from other brains** — include your other brains in the results, not just the open one.
- **Show search results from public brains** — also include public brains. This is a sub-option of the first: it's only available while other-brains results are on, and turning those off turns

public results off too. Public brains are searched only when you use TheBrain in a browser; the apps show this checkbox too, but it doesn't bring public-brain results into the app's own search.

Both are **on by default**, so out of the box your searches are already widened. Turn them off when you want to confine a search to the current brain.



While a widened search runs, the results note when TheBrain is *Searching Other Brains...* or *Searching Public Brains...*, since reaching beyond the current brain can take a moment longer.

- Turning off **Show search results from public brains** for a brain also works the other way: if that brain has public access, its thoughts stop appearing in other people's public-brain searches. See Brain Access and Sharing.
- To explore public and featured brains directly rather than through search, see Featured and Public Brains.

Related Topics

- Find in Brain

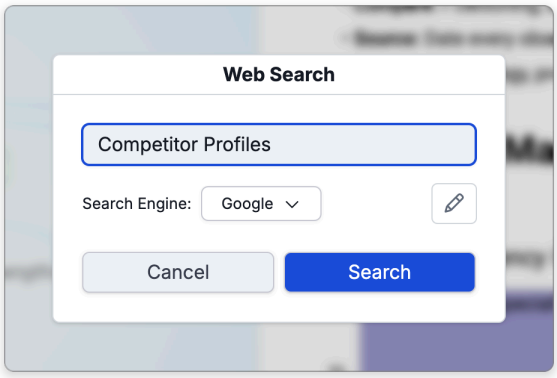
3.4.4 Web Search

Overview

Web Search sends a thought out to the open web — handy when you want to look up the subject of a thought without retyping it into a browser. It searches for the thought's name (or, if you've selected text in a note, that selection) using whichever search engine you prefer, and opens the results in your browser.

How to Search the Web

1. Right-click the thought (or select text in its note) and choose **Web Search**.
2. The Web Search dialog opens with the query filled in — the thought's name, or your selected text.
3. Pick a **Search Engine** if you want a different one, then choose **Search**.



TheBrain opens the results in your browser. The default engine is **Google**, and your choice is remembered for next time.

Choosing and Editing Engines

The dialog includes a built-in list of engines (Google, Bing, DuckDuckGo, image and video searches, and others). **Edit Search Engines** lets you add your own: give it a name and a URL that uses `TARGETSTRING` where the query should go.

- This searches the *web*, not your brains; to search your brains, see Finding and Creating Thoughts.
- Web Search has no default keyboard shortcut — open it from the right-click menu (or the thought's actions menu).

Related Topics

- Links in Notes

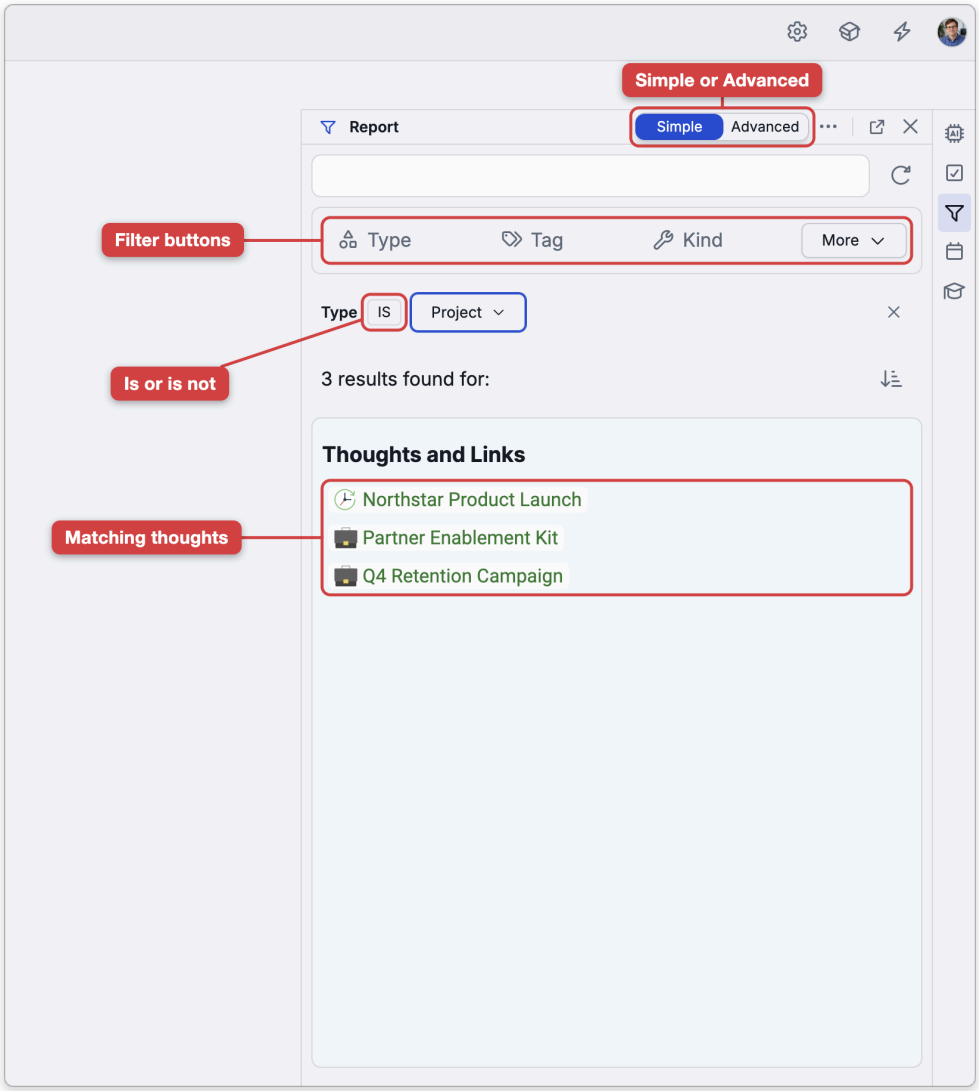
3.4.5 Reports

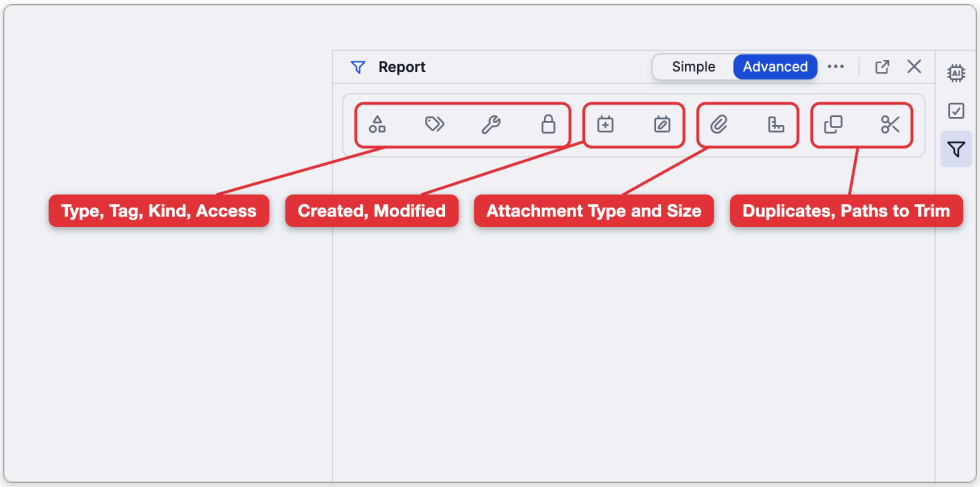
Overview

A **report** is a filtered list of thoughts that match conditions you set — for example, every thought of a given type, tagged a certain way, or modified in the last week. Reports answer "show me all the thoughts that…" questions, and you can run one on the spot or **save** it to rerun whenever you like.

Building a Report

Open the **Report** panel from the tools panel or with **Main Menu > View > Report**. Add filter conditions to describe what you want — a **Simple** mode for quick filters and an **Advanced** mode for more. In **Simple** mode, **Type**, **Tag** and **Kind** are buttons below the search field and the remaining filters are in the **More** list beside them; in **Advanced** mode every filter is an icon button above the field. Filters include:





- **Type**, **Tag**, **Kind**, and **Access**.
- **Created** and **Modified** dates.

- **Attachment Type** and **Attachment Size**.
- **Duplicate Thought Names** and **Paths to Trim**, which each run a ready-made report instead of adding a condition (see *Special Reports*).

Each condition can be *is* or *is not* (in **Simple** mode, the **IS** / **IS NOT** button beside a chosen filter switches between them), and you can combine several. The report lists the matching thoughts, which you can act on (for example, add to a selection — see Selecting Multiple Thoughts).

What Each Filter Offers

Filter	Values to choose from
Kind	**Thought**, **Orphan**, **Parentless**, **Forgotten**, **Untagged**, **Link**
Type	**Untyped**, any thought type (its sub-types are included), and link types when the brain has them
Tag	Any tag in the brain
Access	**Public**, **Private**
Attachment Type	**Internal File**, **External File**, **Url**, **With Notes**, **Paths to Trim**
Attachment Size	**Tiny (<100 KB)**, **Small (<1 MB)**, **Medium (<10 MB)**, **Large (<100 MB)**, **Huge (100+ MB)**

These cover the questions people most often bring to a report:

- **Orphan thoughts** — **Kind: Orphan** lists normal thoughts that aren't linked to any other thought.
- **Thoughts with no parent** — **Kind: Parentless** lists normal thoughts that have no parent. They may still have children or jumps.
- **Thoughts with no tags or no type** — **Kind: Untagged** lists normal thoughts without a tag, and **Type: Untyped** lists thoughts without a type.
- **Large attachments** — **Attachment Size: Large** or **Huge**. Each size starts where the one before it ends, so **Large** means 10 MB up to 100 MB and **Huge** means 100 MB and over.

Saving and Reusing

Use **Save As…** to name and keep a report. Saved reports appear in a list to rerun; a loaded report can be **renamed**, **deleted**, or **cleared**, and while you're editing one you can **Save Changes**

or **Discard Changes**. Use **Rerun Query** to refresh results as your brain changes.

Special Reports

The last two filters are housekeeping reports of their own. **Duplicate Thought Names** (the clone icon) lists the thoughts that share their name with another thought, and **Paths to Trim** (the scissors icon) lists the thoughts with an attachment whose name or path is too long to sync — the report to use when sync says an attachment path is too long. In **Simple** mode they are in the **More** list, and in **Advanced** mode they are the last two icon buttons above the search field. Neither combines with the other filters. In **Simple** mode, a row under the filter buttons names the report that is on, with an **×** that turns it off. And when you filter by **Kind: Forgotten** on its own, a **Delete Forgotten Thoughts** action appears to clear them out in bulk (with a confirmation).

Paths to Trim: When Sync Says an Attachment Path Is Too Long

The name of a file or folder stored in a brain, or the path of a file inside an attached folder, can be at most **150 characters**. A longer one can't be synced. When you start a sync in the desktop or mobile app and the brain has any, TheBrain stops with the message *Sync cannot continue because one or more attachment paths exceed the 150-character limit*, and the message's **Open Report** button opens the Report panel on **Paths to Trim**. A sync can also fail with *One or more attachment paths are too long. The Paths to Trim report can be used to find the attachment(s).*

To fix it:

1. Open the **Report** panel and choose **Paths to Trim**. In **Simple** mode it is in the **More** list; in **Advanced** mode it is one of the icon buttons above the search field.
2. The report lists every thought that has an attachment with an over-long name or path. Open each thought and look at all of its attachments.
3. Rename or move the long ones so that they fit within the limit.
4. Sync again.



- Most reports use the brain's search index, like search and the to-do list — see Rebuilding the Search Index if results look incomplete. (The Duplicate Thought Names and Paths to Trim reports read the brain directly and don't depend on the index.)

- Filtering search results as you type is covered in *Search Filters*; Reports are the saved, panel-based version of the same idea.

Related Topics

- Selecting Multiple Thoughts
- Syncing Brains
- Managing Attachments

3.4.6 Rebuilding the Search Index

Overview

TheBrain keeps a **search index** for each brain that powers search, reports, and the to-do list. Normally it maintains itself, but if search can't find a thought or note text that you know exists, or those lists start returning incomplete results, **rebuilding** the index usually puts things right. You shouldn't need to do this often — it's a troubleshooting step, not routine maintenance. It requires **admin** rights on the brain.

Before You Rebuild

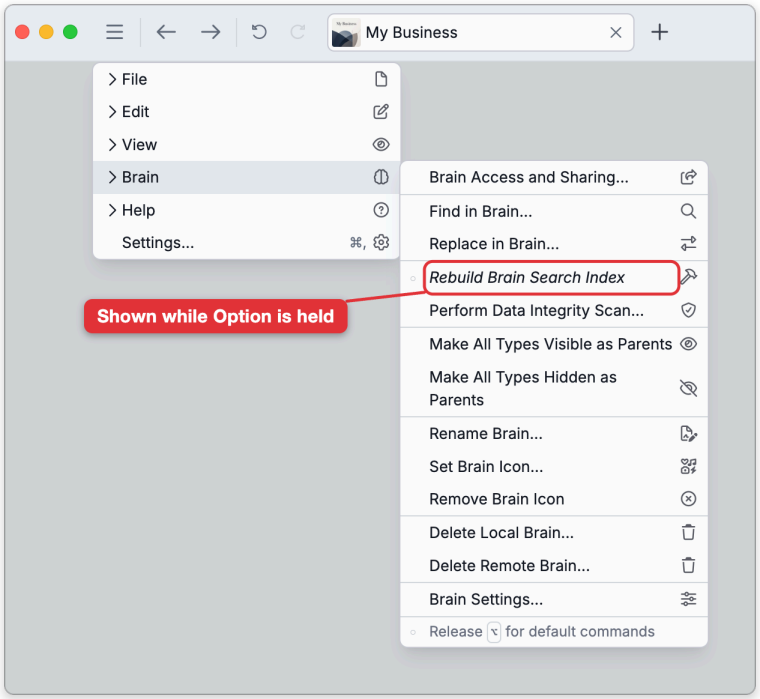
A missing result is not always the index. Check these first:

- **Forgotten and private thoughts** — Search follows the brain's view settings. Forgotten thoughts are left out of search while **Show Forgotten Thoughts** is off, and private thoughts while **Hide Private Thoughts** is on (both are in **Main Menu > View**).
- **Result limits** — In the results for this brain, a ticked **Childward only** or **Selection only** box limits the results to part of the brain.
- **An index that is still working** — If the results show *This brain is being indexed. Results may be missing until the process completes.* or *The search index is warming up. Please try again in a few minutes.*, wait and search again.

If the thought is still missing after that, rebuild the index.

How to Rebuild

The **Rebuild Brain Search Index** command is in **Main Menu > Brain**. It's tucked away as an advanced action, so you may need to reveal the menu's extra commands (hold `Shift`, or `⌥` on Mac — see Forgetting and Deleting Thoughts for how alternative commands work) to see it. On the Mac desktop app it is also **Brain > Rebuild Search Index** in the menu bar, where it is always shown. TheBrain asks you to confirm and shows an estimated time, since search results can be incomplete while the rebuild runs. When it finishes, a notification with the brain's name says *Index Complete*.



There are two strengths, and either one goes through everything in the brain:

- **Update** — Choosing the command as described above asks *Update this brain's search index?* and re-indexes everything in place. Try this first.
- **Rebuild from scratch** — Hold `Shift+Alt` (`⌥⇧` on Mac) while you choose the command. TheBrain asks *Are you sure you want to rebuild this brain's index?*, then discards the brain's index and builds it again.

- The index only affects **search, reports, and the to-do list** — rebuilding it doesn't change your thoughts, notes, or links.
- If a brain's data itself looks wrong (not just search), run a **Data Integrity Scan** instead.

- TheBrain can also recover a corrupt index automatically; manual rebuilding is the fallback when something still looks off.

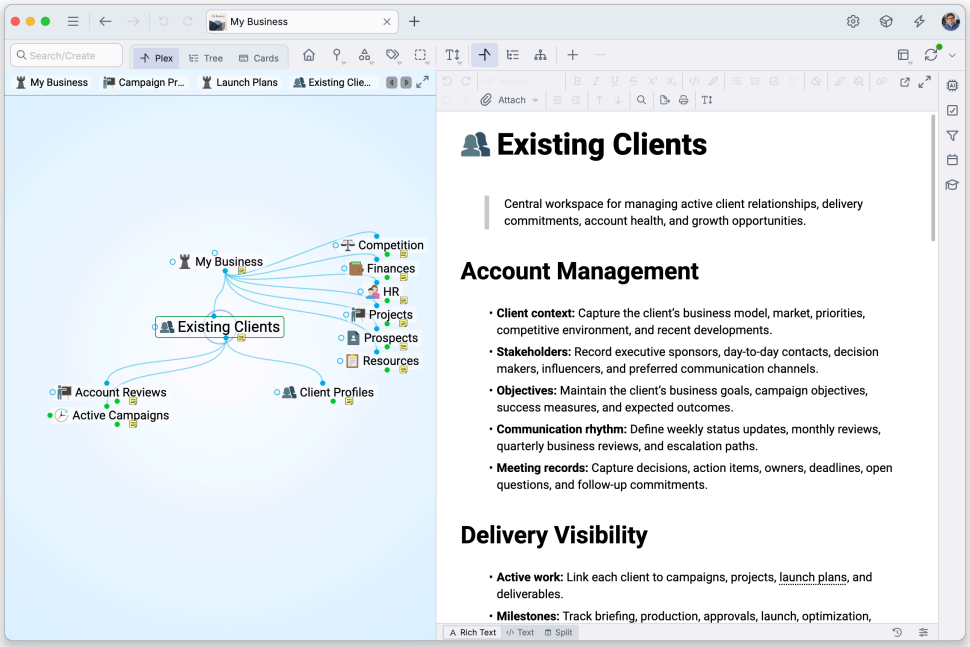
4 Notes and Attachments

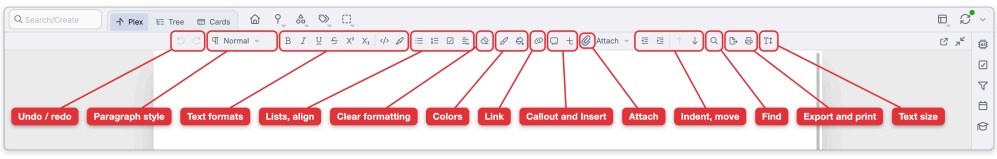
4.1 Writing and Editing Notes

4.1.1 Writing and Formatting Notes

Overview

Every thought in TheBrain has its own **note** — a full rich-text document attached to the thought, shown in the content area. This is where the substance of a thought lives: write as much or as little as you like, format it the way you would in a word processor, and it's saved for you automatically as you go. Notes can also hold links, images, tables, math, and more, each covered in its own topic.



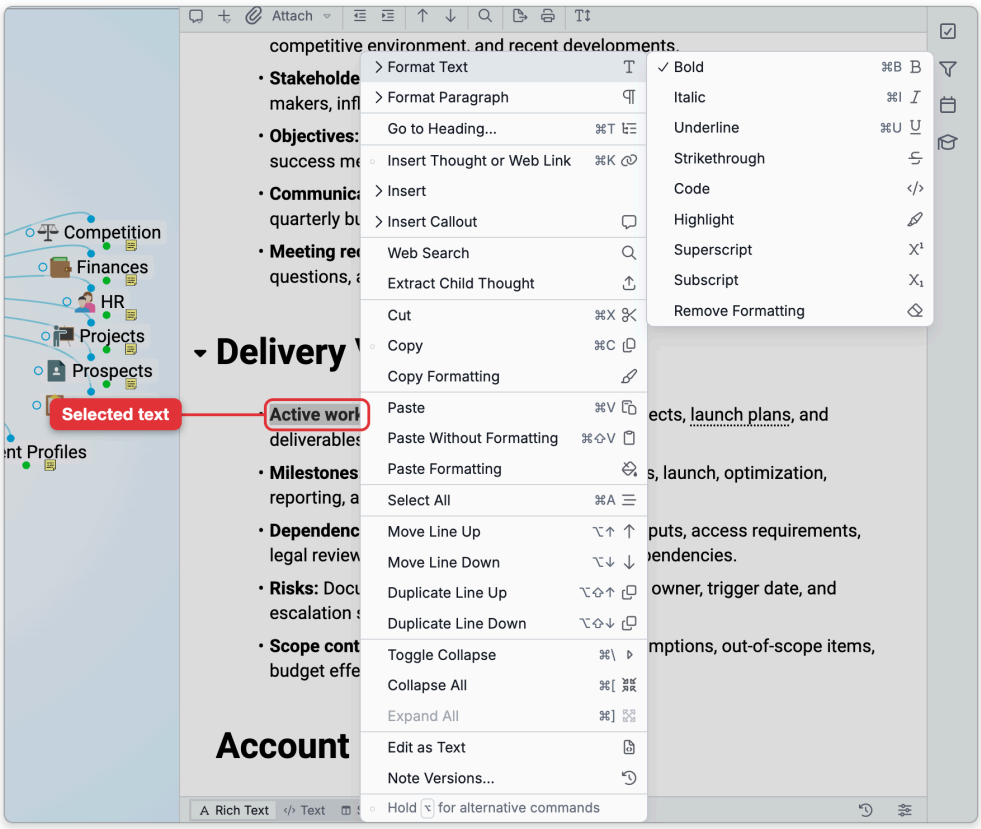


Character Formatting

Select text and apply inline formatting. The formats with default shortcuts are:

Format	Default shortcut
Bold	`Ctrl+B` (`⌘B` on Mac)
Italic	`Ctrl+I` (`⌘I` on Mac)
Underline	`Ctrl+U` (`⌘U` on Mac)

Strikethrough, **Superscript**, **Subscript**, and **Code** (inline) are on the toolbar and in the right-click **Format Text** menu. None of these has a default shortcut. On a wide window the toolbar shows Underline, Strikethrough, Superscript, and Subscript as their own buttons; as the window narrows they move into a **Text Style** menu on the toolbar, and on the narrowest layouts (including phones) into its **More** (…) menu. **Remove Formatting** clears formatting from the selection, and **Copy Formatting** / **Paste Formatting** let you carry one passage's formatting to another.



Paragraph Formatting

Apply these to whole paragraphs from the **Format Paragraph** controls:

- **Headings 1–6** and **Normal** text.
- **Bulleted List**, **Numbered List**, and **Checklist**. (Lists behave as outlines — see Outline Lists.)
- **Code Block** for multi-line code.
- **Align Left**, **Align Center**, **Align Right** (in the toolbar's **Text Align** menu).
- **Indent** (`Ctrl+.`, `⌘.` on Mac) and **Outdent** (`Ctrl+Shift+.`, `⇧⌘.` on Mac). In the rich-text editor, `Tab` and `Shift+Tab` (`⇧Tab` on Mac) do the same to the current line: a list item changes level (see Outline Lists), an ordinary paragraph becomes a quote, and a quoted line nests or un-nests one level. In a callout, `Tab` and `Shift+Tab` move the whole callout, and `Shift+Tab` on a callout that is not nested removes it (see Callouts in Notes). On a heading, `Tab` and `Shift+Tab` step the heading level instead.
- **Quotes** have no toolbar button. Make one by typing `>` followed by a space at the start of a line (see Markdown in Notes), or by indenting an ordinary paragraph as described above.

Line Breaks, and Leaving a List or Code Block

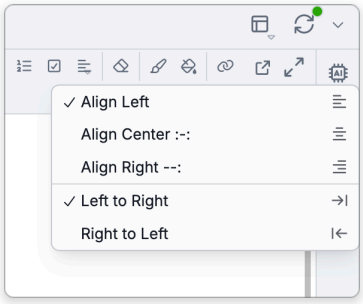
- **A new line inside the same paragraph or list item** — press `Shift+Enter` (`⇧Enter` on Mac). It adds a line break that stays inside the current paragraph, list item, or quote, where plain `Enter` starts a new line or a new list item. The same command is **Insert Line Break** in the notes toolbar's **Insert** menu. On an iPhone or iPad, while the on-screen keyboard is showing, `Shift+Enter` acts like plain `Enter`, so use **Insert Line Break** there; with a hardware keyboard attached, `Shift+Enter` works as usual.
- **Getting out of a list** — press `Enter` on an empty list item. The bullet, number, or checkbox is removed and the line becomes ordinary text.
- **Getting out of a quote** — press `Enter` on an empty quoted line, which steps back out of the quote. A callout is different: `Enter` adds lines inside it, and `↓` on its last line is the way out (see Callouts in Notes).
- **Getting out of a code block** — move the cursor out with the arrow keys: `↓` from the block's last line, or `↑` from its first. When the code block is the last or first thing in the note, or sits directly against a quote, callout, or table, TheBrain adds an empty normal line there for you to type on. If you move away without typing on that line, it's removed again.

Spacing Between Lines

Lines you separate with `Enter` sit a little apart, by the brain's **Line gap**, while the lines that a long line wraps into and lines broken with `Shift+Enter` (`⇧Enter` on Mac) keep the normal line spacing. To start a new paragraph, leave an empty line between the two, as you would in a word processor. A heading gets a little extra space above it. Both **Line spacing** and **Line gap** are set for each brain, on the **Notes** tab of **Settings > Brain > Content Settings** (see Brain Content Settings).

Text Direction

Each paragraph's writing direction is detected automatically from its first letter, so Hebrew, Arabic, and other right-to-left text lays out correctly on its own — line by line, alongside left-to-right paragraphs in the same note. To override the detection for a paragraph (say, a right-to-left sentence that happens to begin with a number or a Latin word), choose **Right to Left** or **Left to Right** from the toolbar's **Text Align** menu or from the right-click menu's **Format Paragraph** submenu. The choice applies to the selected paragraphs and has no default shortcut. Choosing **Right to Left** on a paragraph you haven't aligned also aligns it to the right. Code blocks always run left to right. Thought names and labels get the same automatic detection wherever they're shown, but without a manual override.



Color, Highlight, and Inline Code

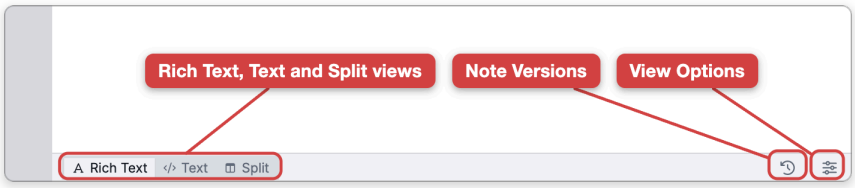
From the editor toolbar you can set a **Text Color**, a **Background Color**, apply a **Highlight**, or mark text as **Inline Code**. **Highlight** is also in the right-click **Format Text** menu. It has no default shortcut, but you can give it one in **Settings > User > Keyboard**, and the toolbar button's tooltip then shows it.

Auto-Save

In the rich-text editor, notes save automatically — there's no Save button. The note is saved shortly after you stop typing, and it's also saved immediately if you switch away or close the app, so you won't lose work. The **Text** and **Split** views work differently: they have no timed save, and keep your edits until you click **Save**, switch views, or leave the note (see The Text Editor (Text and Split Views)). Use **Undo** (`Ctrl+Z`, `⌘Z` on Mac) and **Redo** (`Ctrl+Shift+Z` or `Ctrl+Y`, `⇧⌘Z` or `⌘Y` on Mac) to step through your edits.

Note Views and the Status Bar

Everywhere but on phones, in a brain you can edit, a status bar under the note offers three views of it: **Rich Text** (the normal formatted editor), **Text** (the note's raw Markdown in a plain-text editor), and **Split** (the text editor side by side with a live preview). Your caret, scroll position, and selection carry over when you switch views.



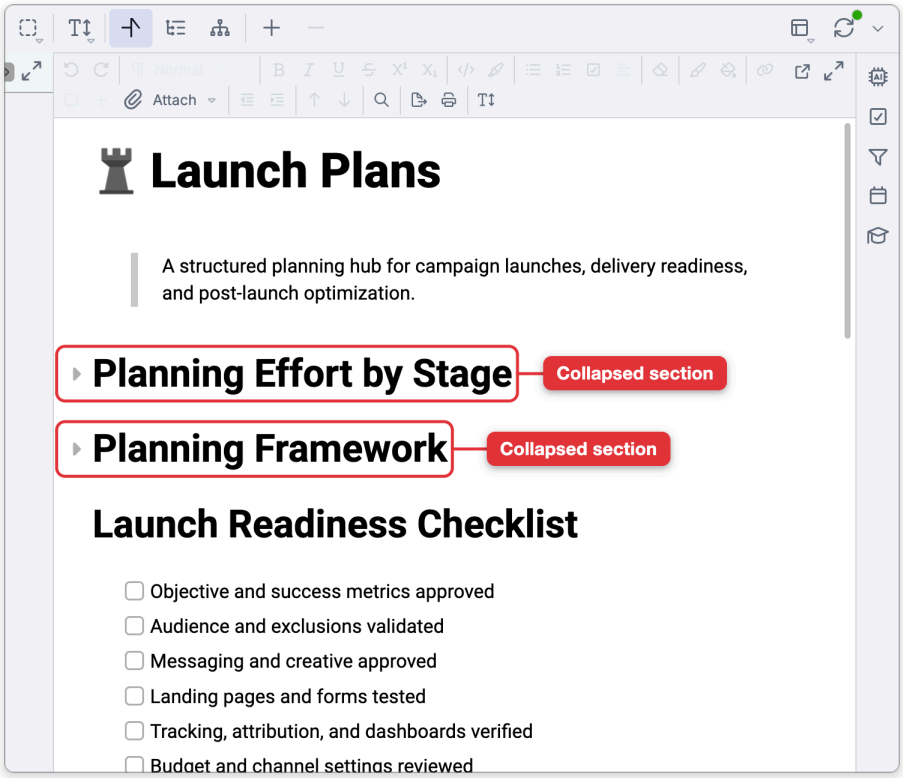
- The **Text** view is a full editor for the note's own Markdown: syntax highlighting, line numbers (on by default), smart indentation and Markdown-aware editing (see The Text Editor for the full set), its own **Find & Replace** (`Ctrl+F`, `⌘F` on Mac), an **Actions** menu of whole-text transformations (Alter Case, Make Paragraphs, Hard Wrap at 80, Sort Lines, Reverse Lines, Remove Duplicate Lines, Collapse Blank Lines, Trim Trailing Whitespace, Straighten Quotes), word-wrap and auto-indent toggles, and **Save** / **Discard Changes** buttons — switching views also saves your edits. It shows the note's file as stored, including any YAML frontmatter at the top, which the rich view keeps hidden. You can also reach it by right-clicking the note and choosing **Edit as Text**.
- The **Split** view scrolls both panes together, clicking a line in the preview selects its source line in the text pane, and the line your caret is on is highlighted in both panes. When the window is tight, entering Split view temporarily maximizes the content area; the **Maximize content area for split view when space is limited** setting (on by default) controls this.
- The status bar can also show a word count and character count (both off by default) and, in the Text and Split views, a **Ln, Col** position indicator. At its right end, a **clock** button opens the note's earlier versions (see Note Versions). Turn the counters and the bar itself

on or off from the **View Options** button (the sliders) at the right end of the status bar — **Word count**, **Character count** and **Show status bar** — or with **Show bottom status bar** in **Settings > User > Notes**. Right-clicking the notes toolbar, the status bar, the properties, or the area below the note opens the same View Options menu, which also holds the toolbar position (**On top**, **On top with all commands**, **On bottom**), the sections below the note, the **Headings Sidebar**, and **Notes Settings...**. When the status bar is hidden, **View Options** is on the notes toolbar instead, and the same menu is always at **Main Menu > View > Note View Options**.

Two related preferences in **Settings > User > Notes**: the **Toolbar** setting places the notes toolbar above the note (**Show on top**, or **Show on top with all commands** to stop it condensing when narrow) or inside the bottom status bar (**Show on bottom**); and **Highlight current line of text** (Subtle, Strong, or Disable) tints the line the cursor is on in both the rich and text editors.

Collapsing and Expanding Sections

You can fold a long note by collapsing parts of it — a heading with everything under it, a list item with its sub-items, or a foldable callout — and expanding them again. Six commands do it:



Command	Default shortcut	What it does
Toggle Collapse	`Ctrl+\` (`⌘\` on Mac)	Collapses or expands the section at the cursor
Collapse All	`Ctrl+[` (`⌘[` on Mac)	Collapses every section of the note, except any that would hide the line your cursor is on — those stay open
Expand All	`Ctrl+]` (`⌘]` on Mac)	Expands every section of the note
Collapse Others	`Ctrl+Shift+[` (`⇧⌘[` on Mac)	Collapses every section except the ones your cursor or selection is in, and expands those — so only the part you're working on stays open
Collapse This Level	None	Collapses the sub-sections inside the section at the cursor
Expand This Level	None	Expands the section at the cursor and everything inside it

Toggle Collapse, **Collapse All**, and **Expand All** are also in the note's right-click menu. In the Mac desktop app, all six are in the menu bar under **Note > Outline**. To run **Collapse This Level** or **Expand This Level** from the keyboard, give them a shortcut in **Settings > User > Keyboard**.

If Collapsing Does Nothing

The collapse commands do nothing while **Show outline controls** is set to **Never**. That setting is in **Settings > User > Notes**, on the **Outlining** tab, and TheBrain keeps two separate values for it:

- **On a computer** the default is **On text hover**, so collapsing works unless you've chosen **Never**.
- **On phones and tablets** the setting has a value of its own, offers only **Always** and **Never**, and defaults to **Never**. That's why collapsing does nothing on an iPad or a phone until you open the setting there and choose **Always**.

What Is Remembered

Collapsed headings, list items and callouts are remembered on the device you're using, so the note opens with them still collapsed next time (on the web, your browser remembers them). They aren't saved in the note or synced, so your other devices and the other people in a shared brain see the note as they left it. If the note was changed somewhere else in the meantime, a

collapsed section that can't be found with confidence opens up rather than hiding the wrong part of the note.

- Most formatting can also be produced by typing Markdown as you write — see Markdown in Notes.
- The toolbar also holds **Find and Replace** (`Ctrl+F`, `⌘F` on Mac), the **Insert** menu (image, embed thought note, table, date, horizontal rule, line break, mathematical expression, diagram, footnote, table of contents, with diagram and footnote only in brains that save standard Markdown), a **Note Text Scale** control, and **Export** / **Print** — printing isn't offered on phones and tablets, and exporting needs the installed TheBrain app on a computer, phone, or tablet (see Exporting and Printing Notes). Toolbar menus and button tooltips show each command's keyboard shortcut.
- **Move and duplicate lines** — **Move Line Up / Down** (default `Alt+↑` / `Alt+↓`, `⌥↑` / `⌥↓` on Mac) moves the current line or selection, and **Duplicate Line Up / Down** (default `Alt+Shift+↑` / `Alt+Shift+↓`, `⌥⇧↑` / `⌥⇧↓` on Mac) copies it. Both work in the rich, Text, and Split views. In the rich editor's default **Outliner** list mode, list items carry their sub-items along (see Outline Lists); in the Text and Split views, they act only on the current line or the selected lines.
- The note's right-click menu can also **Copy as Markdown**, **Copy as HTML Source**, or **Copy as Plain Text** (`Ctrl+Shift+C`, `⇧⌘C` on Mac). The three Copy-as options appear when you hold `Shift` (`⌥` on Mac) as you open the menu.

Related Topics

- Links in Notes
- Embedded Notes
- Tables in Notes
- Math Expressions
- Footnotes
- Note Versions

4.1.2 Markdown in Notes

Overview

You don't have to reach for the toolbar to format a note — TheBrain's editor understands **Markdown** as you type. Start a line with `#` and it becomes a heading; start one with `*` and it becomes a bulleted list. The Markdown markers disappear and the text takes on the formatting, so you keep your hands on the keyboard and your note stays clean. TheBrain also adds a few **extensions** of its own for things plain Markdown can't express, like highlights and text color.

Markdown That Formats as You Type

Starting at the beginning of a line, these convert automatically:

Type this	To get
`#` … `######` + space	Heading 1 through 6
`*` (asterisk) + space	A bullet list item
`1.` + space	A numbered list item
`-` (dash or hyphen) + space	An unchecked checkbox
`+` (plus sign) + space	A checked checkbox
`>` … `>>>>>>` + space	A blockquote (deeper with more `>`)
`[ ]` (or `[]`) / `[x]`	An unchecked / checked checkbox (GitHub style), as soon as you type the `]`
	A code block (leave it with `↓` from its last line, or `↑` from its first)

A dash and a space make a **checkbox**, not a bullet. In TheBrain's editor the dash (hyphen, or minus sign) gives an unchecked checkbox, the plus sign a checked one, and the asterisk a bullet — in every brain, including brains that save their notes as standard Markdown. For a bullet, type an asterisk and a space, or use **Bullet List** on the toolbar.

Inline, you can use `` `inline code` ``, `**bold**`, `*italic*`, `~~strikethrough~~`, and `==highlight==`, which all convert live as you type, and typing `$$` opens the math editor (see Math Expressions). A horizontal rule (`---`) and other standard Markdown also work.

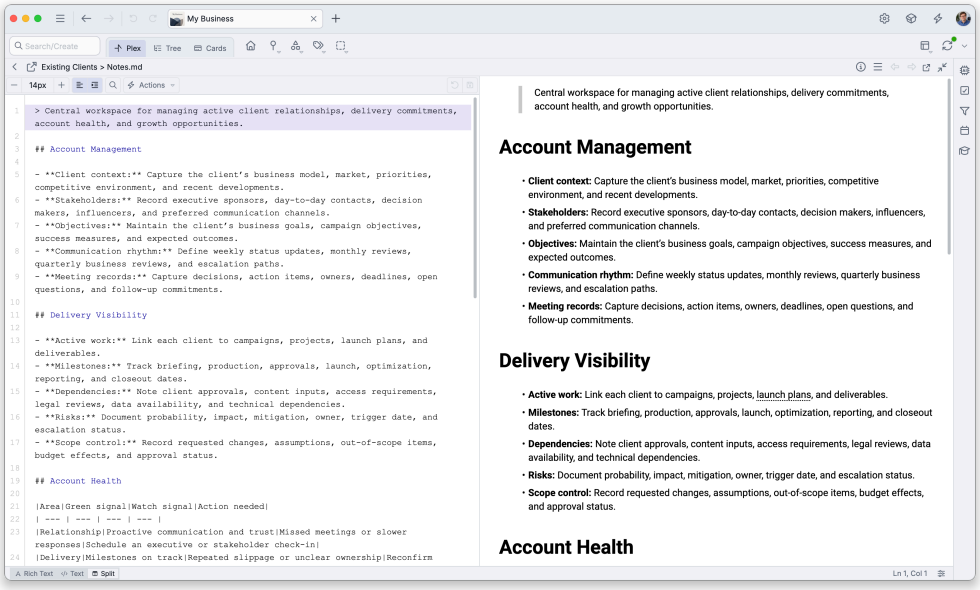
Keeping What You Typed (Undoing a Conversion)

To keep a literal `#`, `1.`, `-`, or `>` at the start of a line, press **Undo** once, straight after the conversion — the default shortcut is `Ctrl+Z` (`⌘Z` on Mac). The formatting is removed and the characters you typed, including the space, come back as plain text, so you can carry on typing. This works for headings, quotes, bulleted and numbered lists, the `–` and `+` checkboxes, and the alignment markers.

There is no setting that turns the automatic conversion off.

TheBrain's Markdown Extensions

> ⚠ **TheBrain's own Markdown dialect is deprecated.** A future release will stop saving notes in it, though notes already written in it stay readable. The forms below are what that older dialect looks like; *Editing the Raw Markdown* says which brains still save it, and *Standard Markdown Notes* shows what each form becomes.



Beyond standard Markdown, TheBrain adds:

- **Highlight** — `==highlighted text==`.
- **Underline** — `_{underlined}_`; **strikethrough** — `~{struck}~`.
- **Superscript** — `^` ; **subscript** — `~`.
- **Alignment prefixes** at the start of a line — `:--` (left), `:-:` (center), `--:` (right).

- **Color and style spans** — `:{text:(style="…"):}:` to set foreground/background color, font, or size. Colors are written as hex in `RRGGBBAA` order.
- **Checkbox markers** differ from classic Markdown: `+` is checked, `–` is unchecked, and `*` is an ordinary bullet.
- **Single line breaks are kept** as you typed them (unlike classic Markdown, which collapses them).
- **Escape** a Markdown character by preceding it with a backslash `\`.

These extension forms describe how a note is **stored and pasted** — most don't convert as you type. (Typing `~text~`, for example, produces strikethrough, not subscript; the `~` subscript marker applies to pasted or loaded Markdown.)

Tables are written differently in the two dialects too: in TheBrain's own, a table has no separator row of dashes below its header. See Standard Markdown Notes for how each dialect writes a table, and *Tables in Notes* for working with tables in the editor.

Editing the Raw Markdown

A note's text is stored as Markdown, and pasting Markdown into a note formats it on the spot. To work on the raw text itself, right-click the note and choose **Edit as Text**, or use the **Text** button in the status bar under the note — the note's Markdown opens in a plain-text editor with syntax highlighting, including any YAML frontmatter at the top of the file, which the rich view keeps hidden. The **Split** button shows the raw text side by side with a live preview. Neither view is available on phones; see Writing and Formatting Notes for what they offer. Edits made there are saved in the dialect the view shows.

Notes can be stored in either of two Markdown dialects: TheBrain's own, described above, or **standard Markdown** — GitHub-flavored Markdown plus the note-taking extensions that apps such as Obsidian, Joplin, and Typora commonly implement, which other Markdown tools read and edit correctly. A brain you create yourself starts out in TheBrain's dialect and stays that way until you choose **Switch to Standard Markdown…** on the **Note Format** tab of **Settings > Brain > Content Settings**; a brain created by an import (from Obsidian, Notion, Evernote, a folder of Markdown files, and so on) uses standard Markdown from the start, except that a brain created by the **TheBrain 8 Brain** import starts out on TheBrain's dialect, and one restored from a brain archive keeps whatever the archived brain used. The **Note Format** tab shows which dialect a brain saves. The extension forms listed above describe that older dialect; in a standard-Markdown brain, underline is written `<u>text</u>`, checkboxes are `– [ ]` and `– [x]`, tables carry a separator row, and so on. What you type in the editor is the same either way. The

Text and Split views always show the brain's own dialect: in a standard-Markdown brain, a note still stored in the older dialect is displayed converted, and editing it there saves it converted. See Standard Markdown Notes for the full comparison and how to switch a brain.

- The same results are available from the toolbar if you prefer clicking — see Writing and Formatting Notes.

Related Topics

- Math Expressions
- Tables in Notes
- Footnotes

4.1.3 Outline Lists — Indent, Outdent, and Move

Overview

By default, bulleted and numbered lists in notes behave as **outlines**: each item has both a *level* (how far it's indented) and a *parent* (the item it lives under), and an item's sub-items travel with it. The keyboard shortcuts for reorganizing a list fall into two groups — ones that change an item's **level** in the hierarchy (`Tab` / `Shift+Tab`, `⇧Tab` on Mac), and ones that change its **order** while carrying its sub-items along (`Alt+↑` / `Alt+↓`, `⌥↑` / `⌥↓` on Mac).

This is the **Outliner** list mode. If you would rather edit lists line by line, like ordinary text, switch the **Lists** setting to **Separate lines** — see *Choosing a List Mode* at the end.

Shortcuts at a Glance

Action	Windows / Linux	Mac	What it does
Indent (demote)	`Tab`	`Tab`	Makes the item (with its sub-items) a child of the bullet above it
Outdent (promote)	`Shift+Tab`	`⇧Tab`	Raises the item (with its sub-items) one level in the hierarchy
Move up	`Alt+↑`	`⌥↑`	Moves the item and all its sub-items above the previous sibling
Move down	`Alt+↓`	`⌥↓`	Moves the item and all its sub-items below the next sibling
Duplicate	`Alt+Shift+↑` / `Alt+Shift+↓`	`⌥⇧↑` / `⌥⇧↓`	Copies the item and all its sub-items above or below itself

The same commands are on the notes toolbar (**Indent**, **Outdent**, **Move Up**, **Move Down**) and in the note's right-click menu.

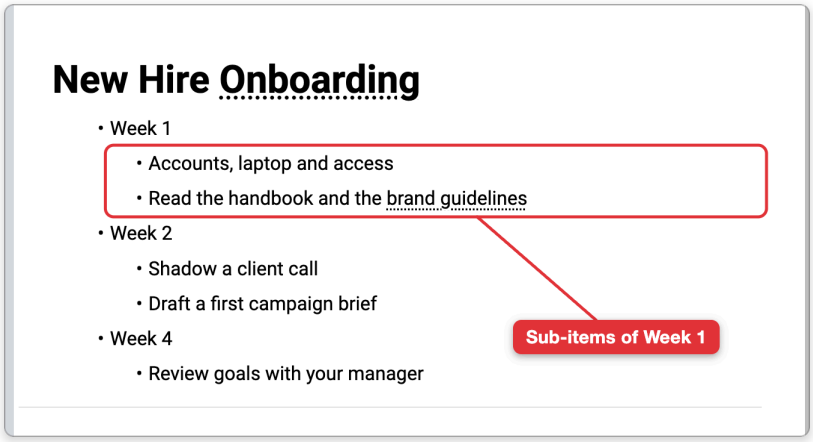
Bullets Aren't Independent Lines — They're a Hierarchy

A bullet isn't just "the third line on the page" — it's *"an item that belongs to the one above it."* Consider this list:

```
* Smoothie
    * Banana
    * Strawberries
    * Yogurt
* Cleanup
    * Rinse blender
    * Wipe counter
```

Here, **Banana**, **Strawberries**, and **Yogurt** are all sub-items of **Smoothie**.

The same structure in a note: under the heading New Hire Onboarding, **Week 1**, **Week 2**, and **Week 4** each have indented sub-items.



Outdenting Promotes an Item in Place

`Shift+Tab` (`⇧Tab` on Mac) doesn't slide an item up or down the list. It **promotes** it: the item stays on its line and moves up one level in the hierarchy, becoming a sibling of what used to be its parent. This is the usual outliner convention.

Because the item stays where it is, the items that followed it at its old level are now indented one level deeper than it — so they become **its** sub-items. Outdent **Banana** and you get:

```
* Smoothie
* Banana          ← now a top-level item
    * Strawberries   ← now sub-items of Banana
    * Yogurt
* Cleanup
    * Rinse blender
    * Wipe counter
```

Banana kept its place on the page and adopted Strawberries and Yogurt. That's handy when you are splitting a group in two — outdent the first item of the second half and everything after it comes along — but it isn't what you want if the item should stand on its own.

Outdenting to the Bottom of the Group Instead

If you would rather the item leave its former siblings untouched, turn on **Outdent moves the item below its former siblings first** in **Settings > User > Notes**, on the **Outlining** tab (it only appears while **Lists** is set to **Outliner**). With it on, `Shift+Tab` first moves the item to the end of its group and then raises its level, so nothing gets re-parented:

```
* Smoothie
    * Strawberries
    * Yogurt
* Banana          ← moved below its former siblings, then promoted
* Cleanup
    * Rinse blender
    * Wipe counter
```

Either way, an item's own sub-items always come with it — outdenting only ever changes what happens to the siblings that followed it.

Moving an Item Up or Down

Indent and outdent change an item's **level** in the hierarchy. When you instead want to **reorder** items — move one above or below another *without* changing how deeply it's nested — use the move commands: `Alt+↑` (move up) and `Alt+↓` (move down), `⌥↑` and `⌥↓` on Mac. Adding `Shift` duplicates instead of moving: `Alt+Shift+↑` / `Alt+Shift+↓` (`⌥⇧↑` / `⌥⇧↓` on Mac) copy the item and its sub-items above or below itself.

Move Carries the Whole Branch With It

"Move" doesn't move a single line — it moves the item **together with all of its sub-items**. The item and everything nested beneath it travel as one block, and every item keeps its relative level inside that block.

Take this list:

```
* Breakfast
    * Eggs
    * Toast
* Smoothie
    * Banana
    * Strawberries
    * Yogurt
* Cleanup
```

If your cursor is on **Smoothie** and you press `Alt+↑` (`⌥↑` on Mac), the entire Smoothie group — Smoothie *and* its three ingredients — jumps above Breakfast as a single unit:

```
* Smoothie
    * Banana
    * Strawberries
    * Yogurt
* Breakfast
    * Eggs
    * Toast
* Cleanup
```

The ingredients stayed attached to "Smoothie" and kept their indentation. You moved the branch, not just the heading.

Moving a Child Reorders It Within Its Group

Move also works at deeper levels. If your cursor is on **Banana** and you press `Alt+↓` (`⌥↓` on Mac), it swaps places with "Strawberries" — but it stays *inside* the Smoothie group at the same level:

```
* Smoothie
    * Strawberries
    * Banana
    * Yogurt
```

Move never changes an item's level. As long as the item has a sibling (an item sharing the same parent) to pass in that direction, it only changes the item's order among its **siblings**, and the item stays in its group.

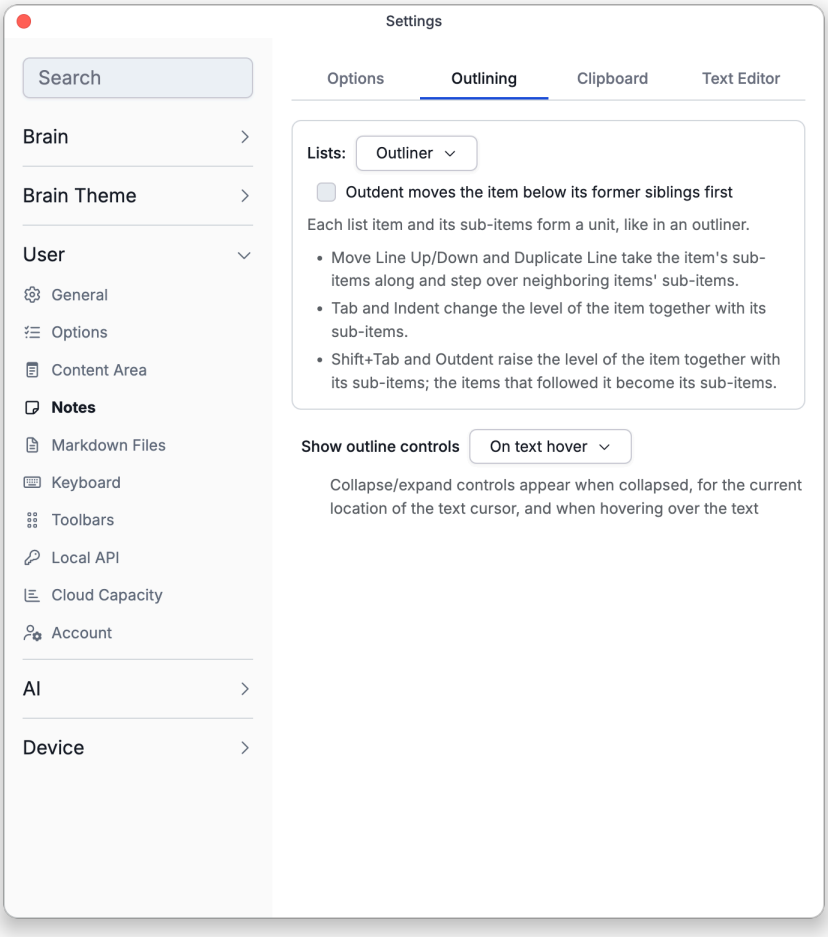
Move vs. Indent at a Boundary

If an item is already the last child in its group and you press `Alt+↓` (`⌥↓` on Mac), there is no sibling left to pass, so it trades places with the line below instead. It keeps its level, so it lands in the next group: with the cursor on **Yogurt**, it moves below **Cleanup** and becomes one of Cleanup's sub-items. `Alt+↑` (`⌥↑` on Mac) on the first child of a group does the same upward, moving the item above its parent and into the group before it. To make an item part of a

different group on purpose, indent or outdent it (`Tab` / `Shift+Tab`, `⇧Tab` on Mac); to change the order of things within a group, move it (`Alt+↑` / `Alt+↓`, `⌥↑` / `⌥↓` on Mac).

Choosing a List Mode

The **Lists** setting in **Settings > User > Notes**, on the **Outlining** tab, picks between two editing models. The setting panel describes what each does to the move, duplicate, indent, and outdent commands, and the change applies right away to any note you have open.



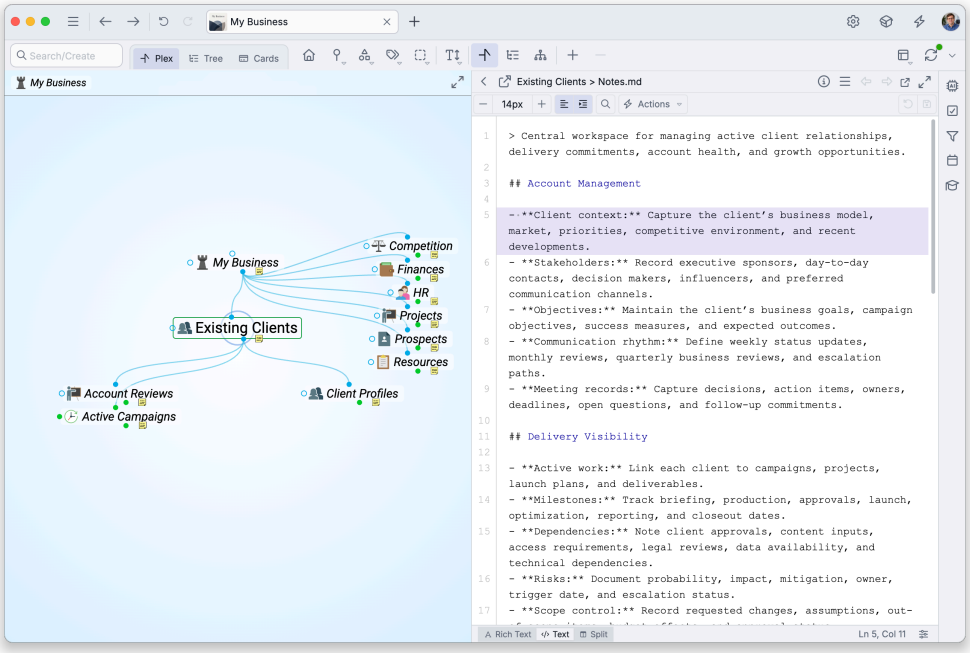
- **Outliner** (the default) — Each list item and its sub-items form a unit, as described throughout this article: Move Line Up/Down and Duplicate Line take the item's sub-items along and step over neighboring items' sub-items; `Tab` and Indent change the level of the item together with its sub-items; `Shift+Tab` (`⇧Tab` on Mac) and Outdent raise the item with its sub-items (in place, or below its former siblings first if that option is on).
- **Separate lines** — Each line in a list is edited on its own, like ordinary text: Move Line Up/Down and Duplicate Line affect only the current line, and `Tab` / `Shift+Tab` (or Indent /

Outdent) change the level of the current line only. The lines below stay where they are, whatever their level.

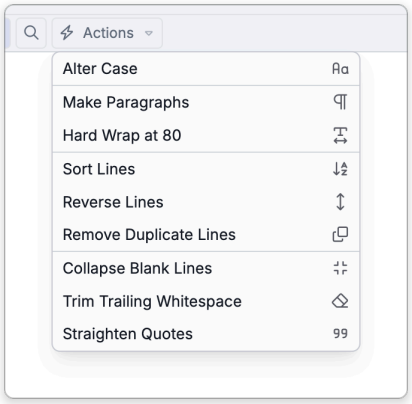
4.1.4 The Text Editor (Text and Split Views)

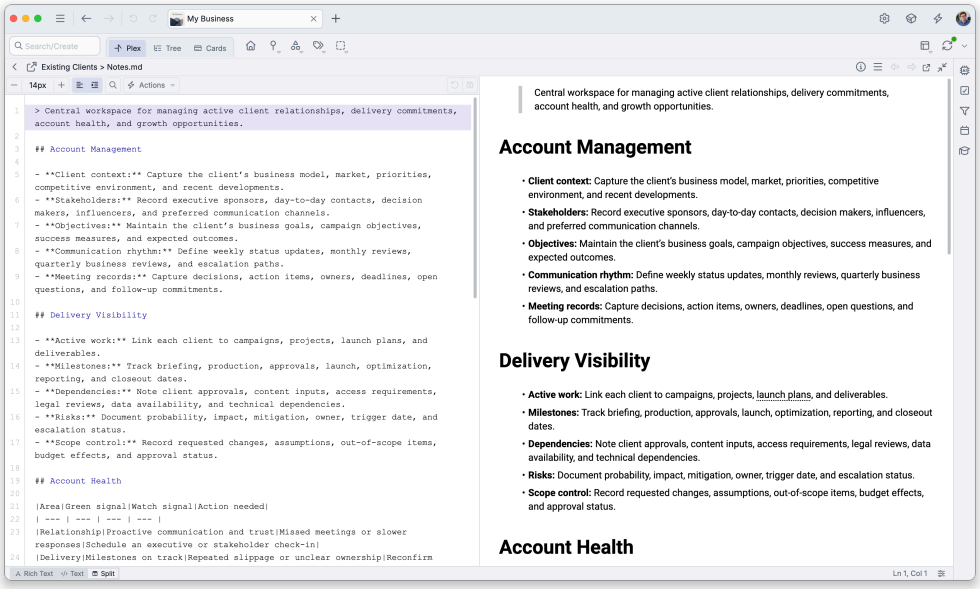
Overview

The note's **Text** view (and the text pane of the **Split** view) is a real plain-text Markdown editor, not just a raw file display. It has the editing behaviors you'd expect from a code editor — smart indentation, Markdown list continuation, bracket pairing, line moves and duplication, go-to-line, and visual aids like line numbers, indent guides, and whitespace markers. The same editor is used when you open an editable text attachment.



Switch views with the status bar under the note (see Writing and Formatting Notes), or right-click the note and choose **Edit as Text**. The Text and Split views aren't available on phones; on tablets, the shortcuts described here need a hardware keyboard. Most of the behaviors below can be turned on or off in **Settings > User > Notes > Text Editor** — see Notes Settings.





Typing and Indentation

- `Tab` types indentation at the caret instead of moving focus — a tab character by default, or spaces if you've set **Indent using** to **Spaces**. `Shift+Tab` (`⇧Tab` on Mac) removes one level of indentation to the left of the caret.
- With a **multi-line selection**, `Tab` indents every selected line and `Shift+Tab` outdents them.
- `Enter` carries the current line's leading indentation onto the new line (**Auto-indent new lines**, on by default).
- In a note (Markdown), `Enter` also continues lists: bulleted (`- `), numbered (numbers increment automatically), checklist (`- [ ] `), and quoted (`> `) lines continue onto the new line, and pressing `Enter` on an empty list item clears it — the same feel as the rich editor. This is the **Continue lists automatically** option, which works only while **Auto-indent new lines** is on.

Brackets, Quotes, and Comments

- Typing an opening bracket or quote — `(`, `[`, `{`, `"`, `'`, or a backtick — inserts the closing one and puts the caret between them; typing the closing character moves past it instead of doubling it, and `Backspace` inside an empty pair removes both. This is the **Auto-close brackets and quotes** option.
- With text **selected**, typing a bracket or quote wraps the selection instead of replacing it; in notes, `*` and `_` wrap the selection too, for Markdown emphasis. This is the **Wrap selection when typing ([{ " ' ` * _** option.
- `Ctrl+/` (`⌘/` on Mac) toggles a comment on the current line or selection — in a note this wraps it in an HTML comment (`<!-- … -->`), which standard Markdown renderers hide.

Moving and Duplicating Lines

- **Move Line Up / Down** — the default shortcut is `Alt+↑` / `Alt+↓` (`⌥↑` / `⌥↓` on Mac). The selected lines move as a block.
- **Duplicate Line Up / Down** — the default shortcut is `Alt+Shift+↑` / `Alt+Shift+↓` (`⌥⇧↑` / `⌥⇧↓` on Mac). Duplicate Down puts the caret in the copy; Duplicate Up leaves it on the original.

These are the same commands the rich editor uses, so a shortcut you customize in **Settings > User > Keyboard** applies in both views — as do the shortcuts for Cut, Copy, Paste, Select All, and Find & Replace.

Navigation

- **Go to Line** — press `Ctrl+G` (`^G` on Mac, with the Control key), or right-click and choose **Go to Line**, then enter a line number.
- `Home` first jumps to the line's first non-space character, then to the true start of the line if pressed again.
- **Find & Replace** — `Ctrl+F` (`⌘F` on Mac); see Find and Replace in Notes.

Visual Aids

- **Line numbers** — shown in a gutter (on by default; toggle from the editor's right-click menu or **Settings > User > Notes > Text Editor**).
- **Highlight current line** — the line the caret is on is tinted, following the **Highlight current line of text** setting on the **Options** tab of **Settings > User > Notes**. In the **Split** view, the matching block in the rich preview is highlighted too, so you can see where you are in the rendered note; when the caret is inside a diagram's code, the rendered diagram is outlined instead.
- **Indent guides** — faint vertical lines at each indentation stop (on by default).
- **Highlight all occurrences** — selecting a word highlights its other occurrences in the text (on by default).
- **Render whitespace** and **Render newlines** — show dots for spaces, arrows for tabs, and return marks for line endings. By default both appear only inside a selection; you can set them to always show, or off. Render whitespace also offers **Boundary** (all whitespace except single spaces between words) and **Trailing** (only line-end whitespace).

All of the others have options in **Settings > User > Notes > Text Editor**; word wrap and auto-indent also have quick toggles on the text editor's toolbar.

The Split View and Diagrams

The **Split** view keeps the text pane and the rendered preview scrolled together, anchored on your caret. When the caret is inside a Mermaid diagram's code, the preview centers the rendered diagram and stops following your caret so you can study the drawing while you edit — scroll the preview freely; normal following resumes when the caret leaves the diagram, and returning to it re-centers.

Saving in the Text and Split Views

The rich editor saves by itself shortly after you stop typing. The Text and Split views do not: there is no timed save while you type in them. Your edits are saved when you:

- click **Save** on the text editor's toolbar,
- switch views — between **Text**, **Split**, and **Rich Text**,
- go to another thought, or
- close the brain's tab or quit the app.

Until one of those happens, **Discard Changes** returns the text to the last saved version, after asking you to confirm. **Save** and **Discard Changes** are available only while there are unsaved edits.

> The text editor's toolbar also offers font size controls and the **Actions** menu of whole-text transformations — see Writing and Formatting Notes for the full toolbar and status bar description.

Related Topics

- Keyboard Shortcuts

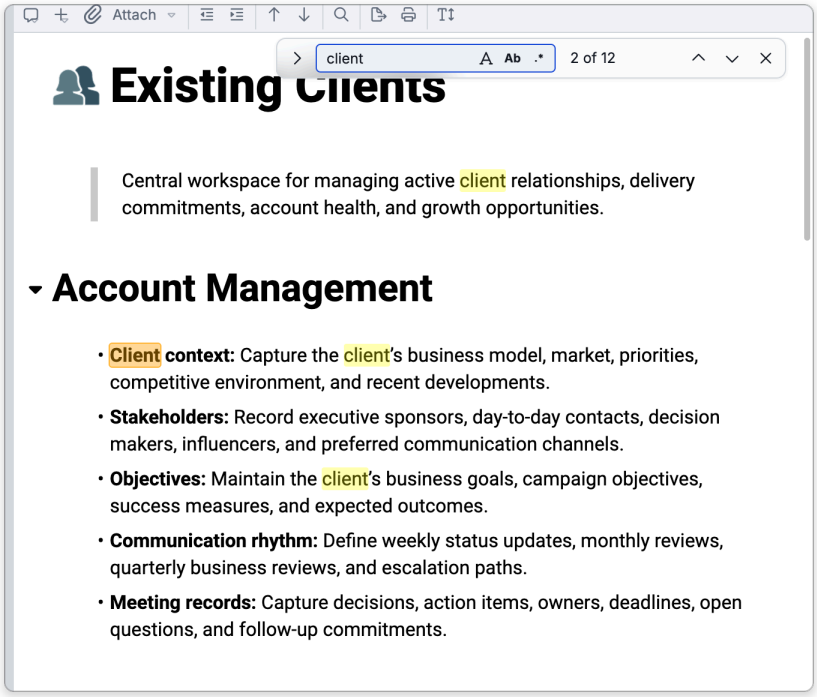
4.1.5 Find and Replace in Notes

Overview

When a note gets long, **Find and Replace** lets you jump to any word or phrase inside it and, if you want, swap it for something else. It works within the note you're currently editing — a focused search of one document, separate from searching across the whole brain.

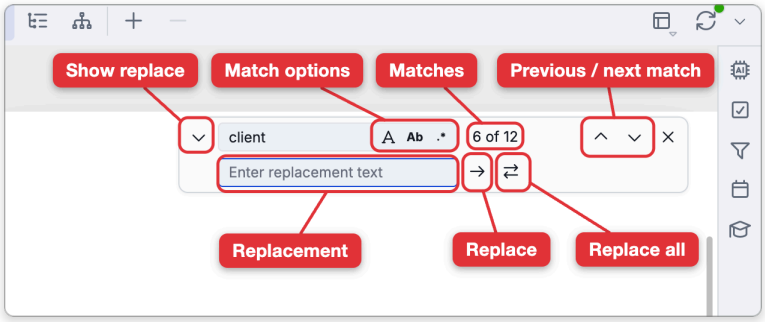
How to Find and Replace

1. In the notes editor, open **Find and Replace** — the default shortcut is `Ctrl+F` (`⌘F` on Mac) while you're working in a note. If text is selected, it becomes the search term — and pressing the shortcut again with a new selection updates the term while the bar stays open.
2. Type what you're looking for; matches are highlighted and counted.
3. Move through matches with the **Next Match** and **Previous Match** arrows on the bar, or with the keys listed under *Keys in the Find Bar*. Both directions wrap around at the ends of the note.
4. To replace, click the **chevron arrow** at the left edge of the find bar to reveal the replace field, enter the replacement, and use **Replace** for one match or **Replace All** for every match.



Match Options

- **Case sensitive** — match exact capitalization.
- **Whole word only** — match the term only as a complete word.
- **Use regular expression** — match a pattern rather than literal text.



Keys in the Find Bar

These work while the cursor is in the find box or the replace box:

Key	What it does
`Enter` in the find box	Goes to the next match
`Shift+Enter` (`⇧Enter` on Mac) in the find box	Goes to the previous match
`Enter` in the replace box	Replaces the current match and moves on to the next
`Ctrl+H` (`^H` on Mac)	Shows or hides the replace row
`Tab`	Moves between the find box and the replace box while the replace row is showing
`Esc`	Closes the bar

Regular Expressions and Limits

- Patterns use JavaScript regular-expression syntax.
- The replacement is inserted as plain text. `$1` and other capture-group references are not expanded — they're inserted exactly as typed.
- `^` and `$` don't match at the start and end of each line: `^` matches only at the very start of the note, and `$` only at its very end. In the rich editor the note's text always ends with a line break, so a pattern with `$` straight after a word finds nothing there, even on the last line.
- A search that finds more than 10,000 matches stops with a **Too many matches found** message; narrow the search term or pattern.
- A **Replace All** can be reversed with **Undo**.

The keys, the regular-expression rules, and the limit are the same in the rich editor's find bar and in the one the Text and Split views use.



- This in-note Find and Replace acts on the **current note** only. To replace text across every note in the brain — or across thought names, labels, and attached URLs — use **Main Menu > Brain > Replace in Brain** instead; see Find in Brain.
- The note's **Text** and **Split** views have their own **Find & Replace**, on the text toolbar and its right-click menu, with the same case, whole-word, and regular-expression options. `Ctrl+F` (`⌘F` on Mac) opens it whenever one of those views is showing, seeded with your current selection.

Related Topics

- Finding and Creating Thoughts

4.1.6 Spellcheck

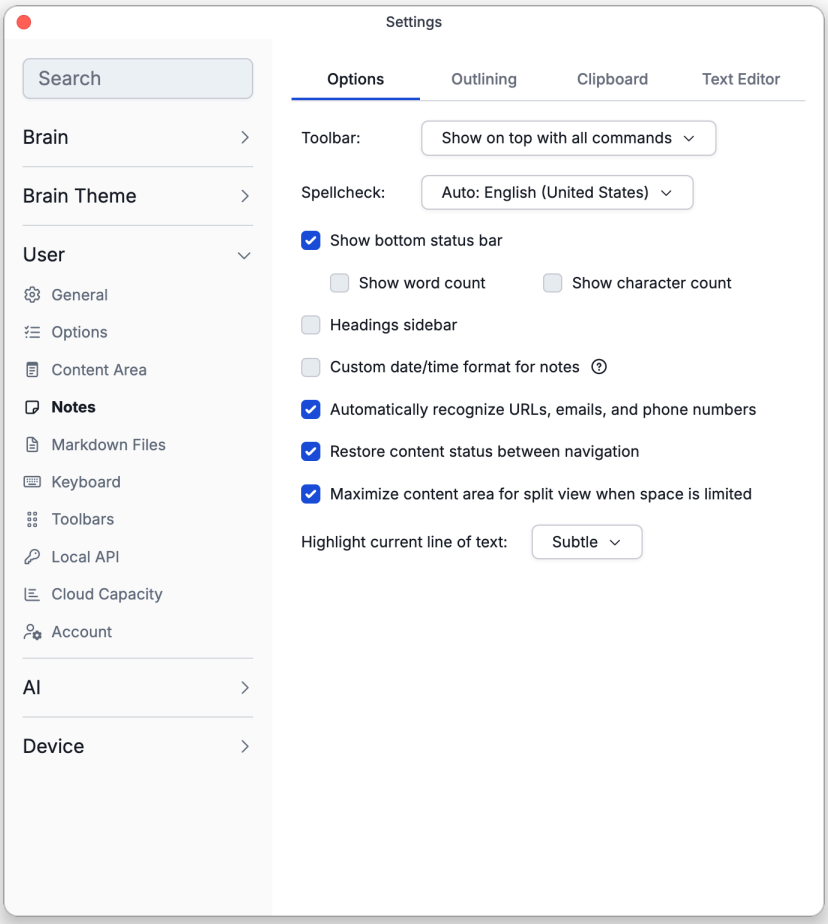
Overview

TheBrain checks your spelling as you write notes — on by default — underlining words it doesn't recognize so you can fix them. It uses TheBrain's own spellchecker on every platform (not your browser's or operating system's), and you can teach it the words you use that aren't in its dictionary so it stops flagging them.

Spellcheck and Dictionaries

Spellcheck is controlled by the **Spellcheck** setting in **Settings > User > Notes**, on the **Options** tab:

- **Automatic** (the default) — checks against the dictionary for the language TheBrain's interface is set to, which is the **Language** setting in **Settings > User > General**. It does not look at the text you write, so notes written in another language are still checked in the interface language. With the default setting, the Spellcheck button reads **Auto:** followed by that language. When TheBrain has no dictionary for the interface language, it uses English (US).
- **Specific languages** — tick one or more language dictionaries; you can enable several at once, and suggestions are then grouped per dictionary. With several dictionaries in use, a word is flagged only when none of them accepts it.
- **Disabled** — turn spellchecking off.



How to Check Notes Written in Another Language

If you write in German, say, while TheBrain's interface is in English, **Automatic** checks your German against the English dictionary. To have it checked as German:

1. Open **Settings > User > Notes** and stay on the **Options** tab.
2. Click the **Spellcheck** button and tick the language you write in.

Your notes are then checked against that dictionary as well, and a word is flagged only when none of the dictionaries in use accepts it. You can tick more than one language if you write in several.

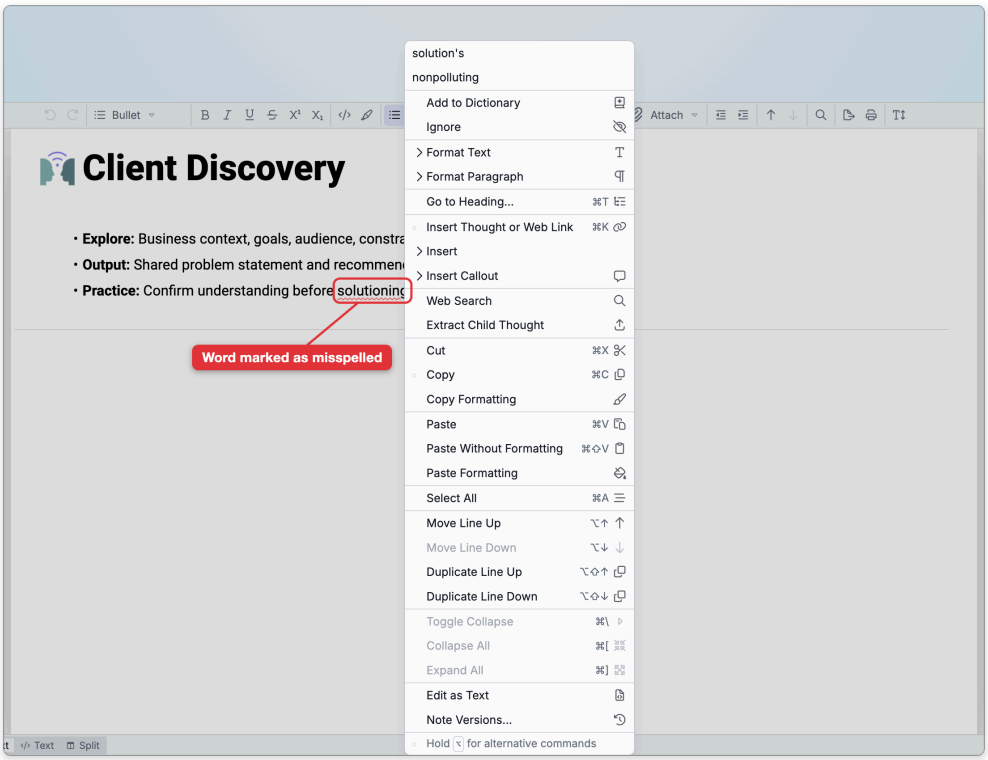
Where Dictionaries Come From

In the desktop and mobile apps, English (US) is built in. Every other dictionary is downloaded from TheBrain's servers the first time you use it, so you need to be signed in and online then; after that it stays on the device. When the list of languages can't be fetched because you're offline or signed out, the **Spellcheck** menu offers only English (US) and the dictionaries already downloaded. If a dictionary can't be loaded, a **Dictionary Load Failed** notification names it.

Fixing a Flagged Word

Right-click a word the checker has underlined to:

- Choose a **suggested** correction.
- **Add to Dictionary** so the word is remembered as correct from now on, on the device you're using. This is in the desktop and mobile apps only; in the web app you can still **Ignore** a flagged word.
- **Ignore** the word for now (it won't be flagged again this session).



The suggestions sit at the top of the menu — up to five per enabled dictionary — and the note's usual right-click commands (formatting, insert, clipboard) follow below a separator, so you can act on the word without first clicking elsewhere.

What Spellcheck Doesn't Flag

Some text is skipped on purpose, so a word that looks wrong may never be underlined:

- Words written entirely in capitals, which are treated as acronyms, and words that contain a digit.
- Inline code and code blocks.
- Web addresses that begin with `https://`, `http://`, or a similar prefix, email addresses, and phone numbers. A web address typed without that prefix, such as `www.example.com`, is checked like ordinary words.
- With several dictionaries in use, any word that at least one of them accepts.
- Anything in the raw-Markdown **Text** view, which doesn't check spelling; spellcheck works in the rich text view.

Words You Add to the Dictionary

Add to Dictionary saves the word on the device you're using. It's a single list that applies whichever languages you have ticked, and it ignores capitalization. The list isn't synced: words you add on one computer, phone, or tablet don't appear on your other devices, so add them there as well.



- There is also a **Spellcheck** toggle command that turns spellcheck on or off in one step — assign it a keyboard shortcut or toolbar button from the **Settings Toggles** command category. Toggling back on restores the languages you had chosen.
- The word you're currently typing isn't flagged mid-word — the underline appears a couple of seconds after you pause.

4.1.7 Dates and Times in Notes

Overview

When you're keeping a log, a journal, or dated entries in a note, **Insert Date** drops the current date in at the cursor without breaking your flow. If the default format isn't what you want, you can define a **custom date/time format** so inserted dates always look the way you prefer.

Inserting a Date

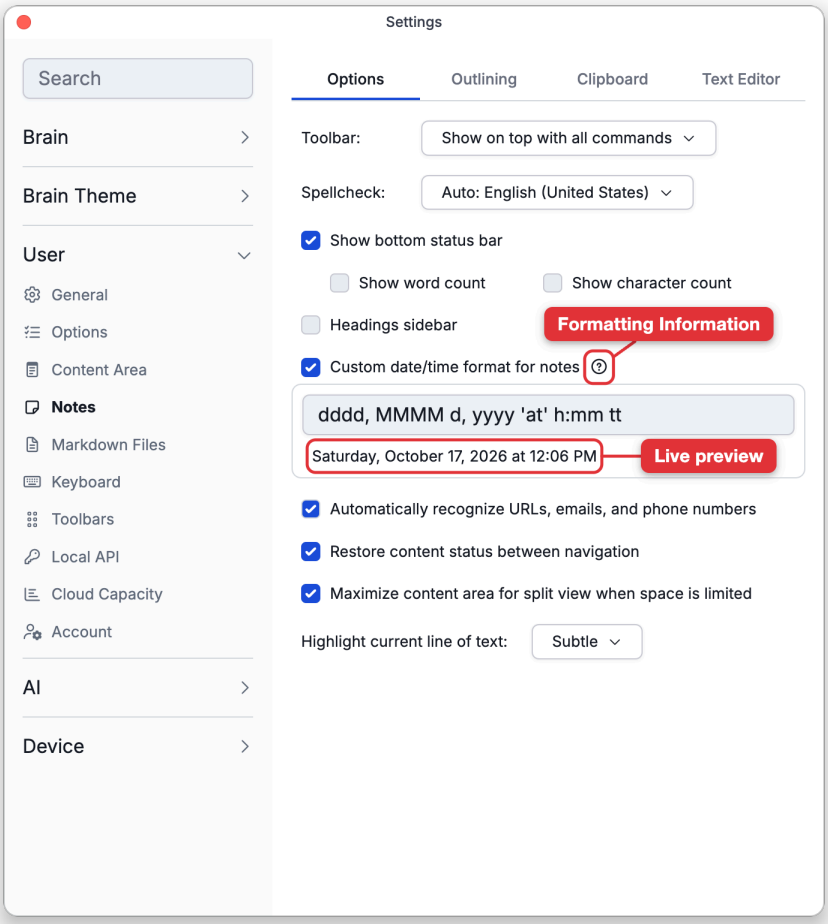
Place your cursor where you want the date and use **Insert Date** — the default shortcut is `Ctrl+D` (`⌘D` on Mac), and it's also in the notes editor's **Insert** menu. With no custom format set, it inserts the current **date and time** in your device's regional format.

Customizing the Format

In **Settings > User > Notes**, on the **Options** tab, tick **Custom date/time format for notes** and type the format in the box that appears, using format tokens. The line under the box shows the current date and time in your format as you type, and the **?** button beside the setting (**Formatting Information**) opens a page that explains the tokens. TheBrain uses standard format specifiers, including:

Token	Means
`d` / `dd`	Day of month (e.g. `5` / `05`)
`ddd` / `dddd`	Abbreviated / full weekday name
`M` / `MM`	Month number
`MMM` / `MMMM`	Abbreviated / full month name
`yy` / `yyyy`	Two- / four-digit year
`H` / `HH`	24-hour hour
`h` / `hh`	12-hour hour
`m` / `mm`	Minutes
`s` / `ss`	Seconds
`tt`	AM/PM designator

Note that `MM` **means month** and `mm` **means minutes** — a common mix-up, so when your format seems to use `mm` for the month, the line under the box shows **Possible month/minute mix-up**, and its info button offers to correct the format. An invalid format is flagged too: the line under the box reads **Invalid format** instead of a preview. To include literal text in a format, wrap it in single or double quotes.



4.1.8 Table of Contents

Overview

For a long, well-structured note, its headings give you a map of what's inside and a way to jump to any section. TheBrain builds it automatically from the note's headings and keeps it up to date as you edit, so you never maintain it by hand.

There are three ways to use it:

- **Go to Heading** — A list of the note's headings that opens at your cursor. Type to filter it, press `Enter`, and the note goes to that heading. Nothing is added to the note.
- **Headings Sidebar** — A pane beside the note that lists its headings, marks the section you're reading, and goes to a heading in one click.

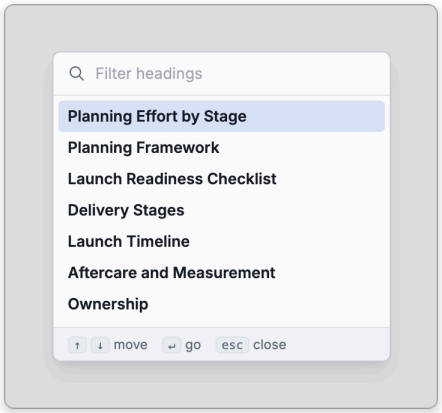
- **Table of contents** — A contents block inserted into the note itself, which everyone reading the note sees.

All three are built from the note's headings, so make sure your sections use heading styles at the right levels (see Writing and Formatting Notes and Markdown in Notes). They work in the rich text editor and, for Markdown notes, in the text editor and split view.

Going to a heading from any of them scrolls that heading to the top of the note, briefly highlights it, and puts your cursor at the start of the heading so you can keep typing there. If the heading is inside a collapsed section, the section is expanded first.

How to Go to a Heading

1. Click in the note, then press `Ctrl+T` (`⌘T` on Mac). You can also right-click in the note and choose **Go to Heading**.
2. The list opens at your cursor (on a phone, along the bottom of the screen), with the section you're in already selected.
3. Type a few letters to filter the headings. Matching headings stay in the list, together with the headings above them (shown grayed) so you can see where each match sits.
4. Use `↑` and `↓` to pick a heading, then press `Enter`. You can also click a heading.

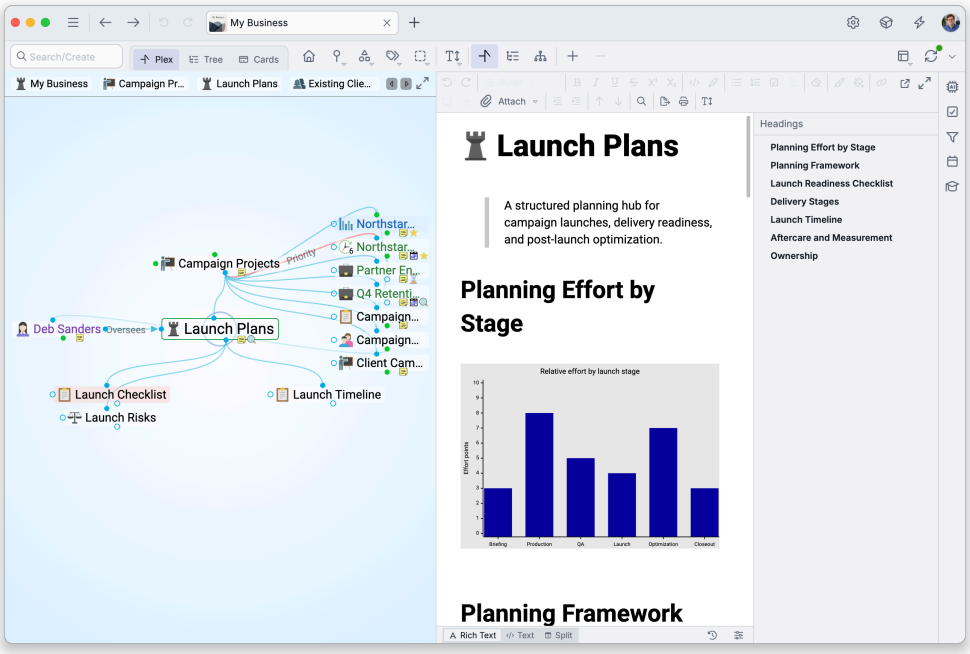


To close the list without going anywhere, press `Esc`, press `Ctrl+T` (`⌘T` on Mac) again, or click outside it. Your cursor and scroll position stay where they were.

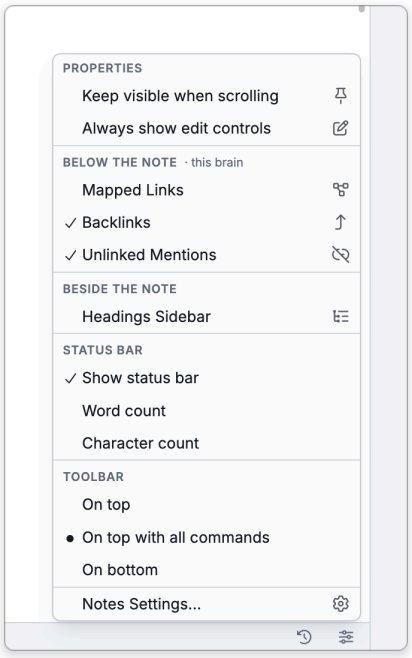
In the web app, your browser keeps `Ctrl+T` (`⌘T` on Mac) for opening a new browser tab, so open the list from the right-click menu instead, or assign it a different shortcut.

How to Show the Headings Sidebar

1. Click the **View Options** button (the sliders at the right end of the status bar) and choose **Headings Sidebar**. The same menu opens when you right-click the notes toolbar or status bar, and when the status bar is hidden it's in the notes toolbar as **View Options**. You can also choose **Main Menu > View > Set View Mode > Headings Sidebar** (in the Mac menu bar, **View > Window Layout > Headings Sidebar**), or turn on **Headings sidebar** in **Settings > User > Notes**, on the **Options** tab.
2. The sidebar appears beside the note. The heading of the section you're reading is highlighted, and the highlight follows along as you scroll.
3. Click a heading to go to it. Click the arrow beside a heading to collapse or expand its subheadings in the sidebar (this doesn't collapse the note).



The sidebar is a setting that stays on for every note until you turn it off, but it only appears beside notes that have headings. It sits on the left of the note, except when the content area is beside the navigation pane on its right side, where it sits on the right so it never comes between the navigation and the note. It hides when the content area is too narrow, and comes back when there is room. It isn't available on phones, where there's no room beside the note.



To resize the sidebar, drag its edge. Double-click the edge to return it to its standard width. To hide it, right-click anywhere in the sidebar and choose **Headings Sidebar**, or turn off **Headings Sidebar** in the status bar's **View Options** menu.

How to Insert a Table of Contents

Place your cursor where you want the contents (usually near the top) and choose **Insert Table of Contents** from the editor's Insert controls. Click any entry in it to go to that heading.

Unlike Go to Heading and the Headings Sidebar, which only you see and which don't change the note, an inserted table of contents is part of the note, so it is exported with it. In a PDF made in the desktop app, each of its entries also gives the page its heading is on. Printing leaves it out, and so does a PDF made on an iPhone or iPad.

4.1.9 Notes Settings

Overview

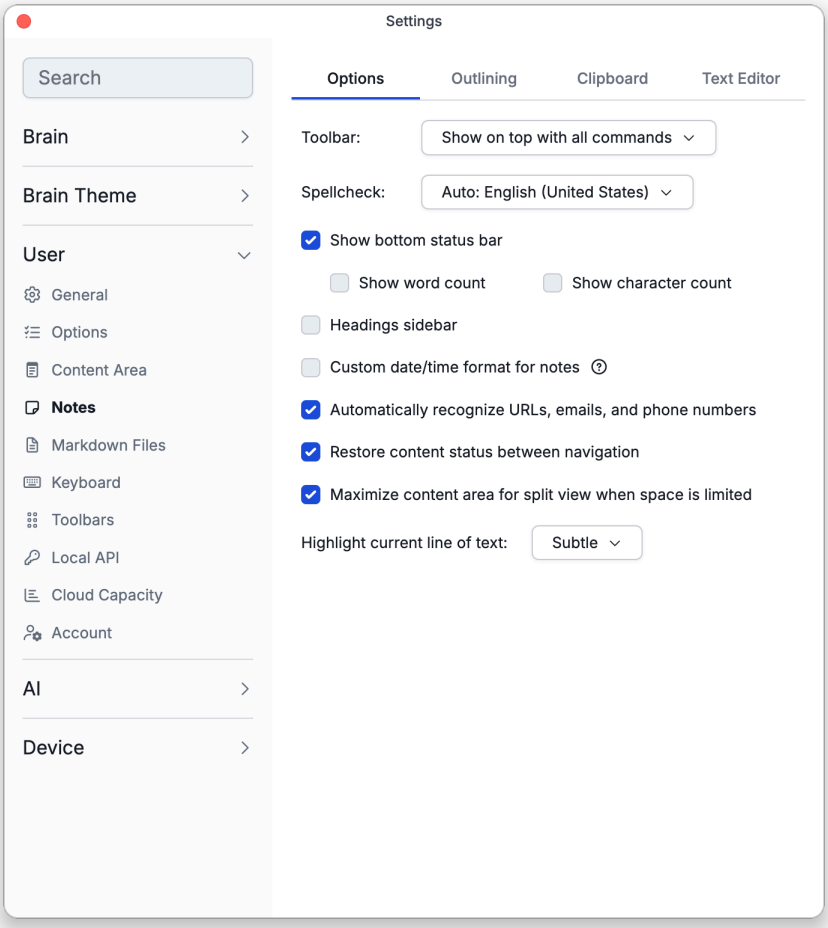
The **Notes** settings (under **Settings > User**) tune how the notes editor works — where its toolbar sits, spellchecking, the status bar and its counters, how dates are formatted, how lists are edited, how pasting behaves, and how the plain-text editor edits. The tab has four sub-tabs:

Options, **Outlining**, **Clipboard**, and **Text Editor**. These are personal settings that follow your account, so you set them once and they apply across your notes.

Options

On phones, where the status bar and the Text and Split views don't apply, the toolbar placement, the status bar, the word and character counts, and the split-view option are hidden.

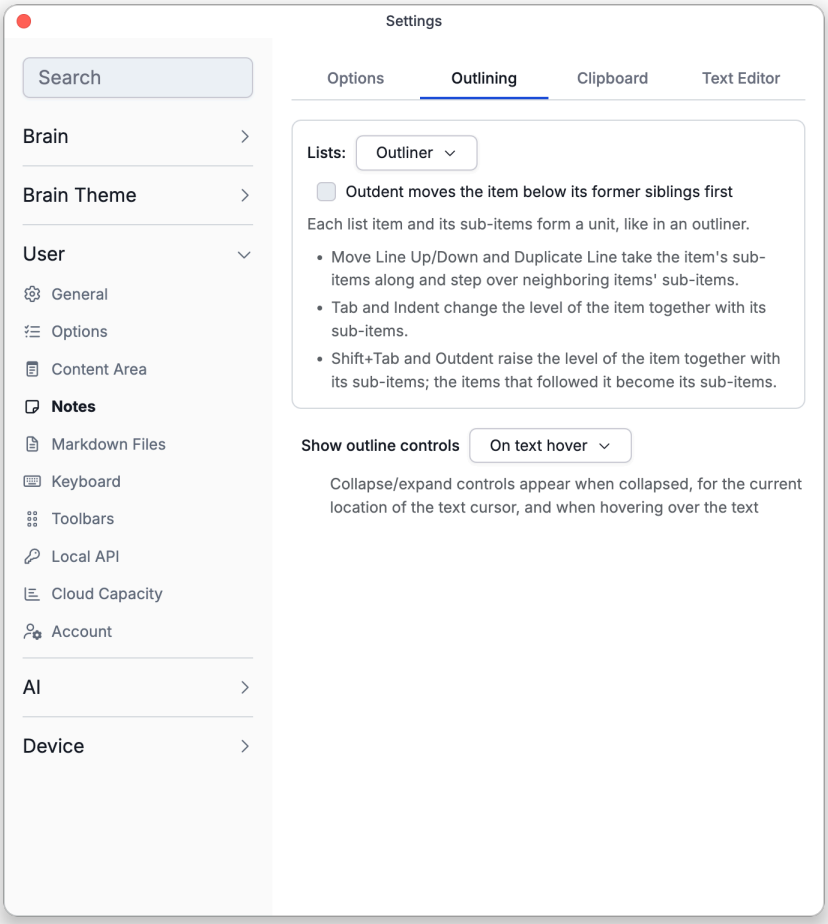
- **Toolbar** — Where the notes toolbar sits: **Show on top** (condenses when narrow), **Show on top with all commands** (never condenses), or **Show on bottom** (hosted inside the bottom status bar; available only while the status bar is on).
- **Spellcheck** — **Disabled**, **Automatic**, or one or more language dictionaries. **Automatic** checks against the dictionary for TheBrain's interface language (the **Language** setting in **Settings > User > General**), not the language you write in, so tick the language you write in if it is a different one. See Spellcheck for the details and for fixing flagged words.
- **Show bottom status bar** — The bar under the note holding the Rich Text / Text / Split view switcher and the counters (on by default).
- **Show word count** and **Show character count** — Display counters in the status bar (both off by default; they need the status bar on).
- **Headings sidebar** — Show a list of the note's headings beside the note (off by default). It is the same setting as **Headings Sidebar** in the status bar's **View Options** menu (see Table of Contents). It isn't offered on phones.
- **Custom date/time format for notes** — Define exactly how inserted dates look (see Dates and Times in Notes).
- **Automatically recognize URLs, emails, and phone numbers** — Typed web addresses, email addresses, and phone numbers become clickable links automatically (on by default). Turning this off stops new auto-linking and also removes previously auto-recognized links; links you inserted yourself are not affected. The change applies immediately to the note you have open.
- **Maximize content area for split view when space is limited** — Entering the note's Split view temporarily maximizes the content area when the window is tight (on by default).
- **Restore content status between navigation** — Returning to a thought restores where you were in its note — caret, scroll position, and view (on by default).
- **Highlight current line of text** — Tint the line the cursor is on in the note editors: **Subtle** (the default), **Strong**, or **Disable**. In the note's Split view the highlight shows in both the text pane and the rendered preview.



Outlining

- **Lists** — How list items are edited: **Outliner** (the default) treats each item and its sub-items as a unit, so Move Line, Duplicate Line, `Tab`/Indent, and `Shift+Tab`/Outdent (`⇧Tab` on Mac) all carry the sub-items along; **Separate lines** edits each line on its own, like ordinary text, leaving the lines below where they are. The panel spells out what the chosen mode does to each command, and a change applies at once to open notes. See Outline Lists for the details.
- **Outdent moves the item below its former siblings first** — Shown only in **Outliner** mode (off by default). Normally `Shift+Tab` (`⇧Tab` on Mac) raises an item in place, so the items that followed it become its sub-items; with this on, the item is first moved below its former siblings and then raised, so those siblings stay where they are.
- **Show outline controls** — Choose when the list collapse/expand controls appear: **Always**, **On text hover** (the default), **Minimally**, or **Never**. Phones and tablets have a separate choice of their own, which offers only **Always** and **Never** and starts as **Never**. That is why

the collapse and expand controls can show on your computer and not on your phone or tablet: to see them there, open this setting on the phone or tablet and choose **Always**. Changing it there leaves your computers as they are. With **Never**, notes open with nothing collapsed and the collapse commands, such as **Toggle Collapse** and **Collapse All**, do nothing; the collapsed sections remembered on this device are kept, and they come back in notes you open after choosing another option.

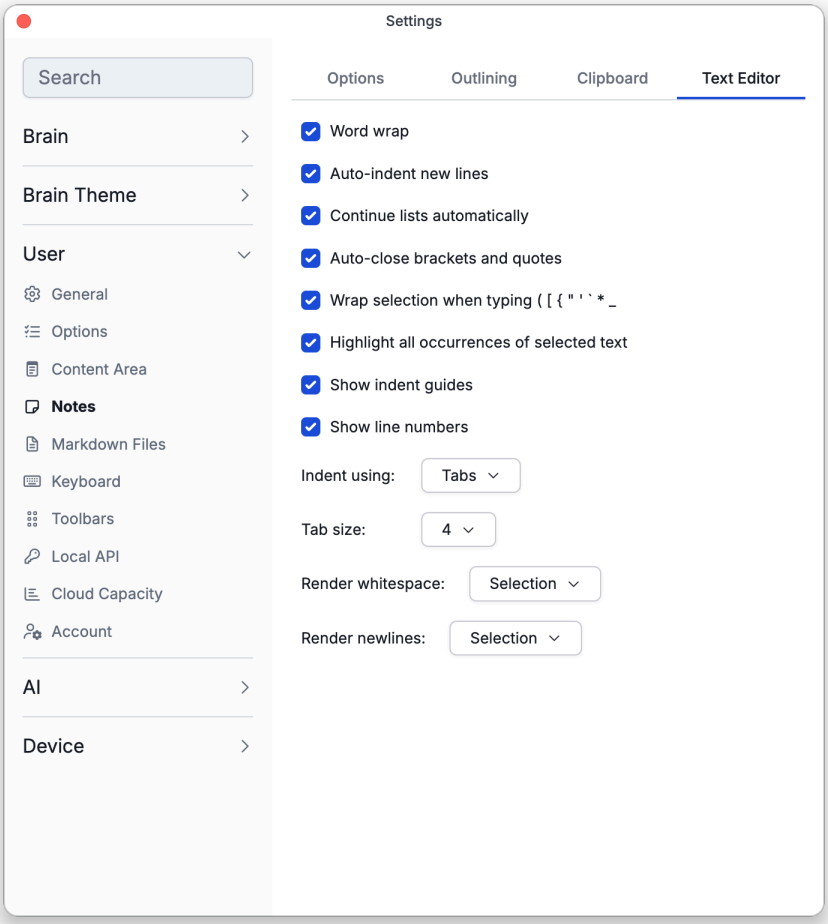


Text Editor

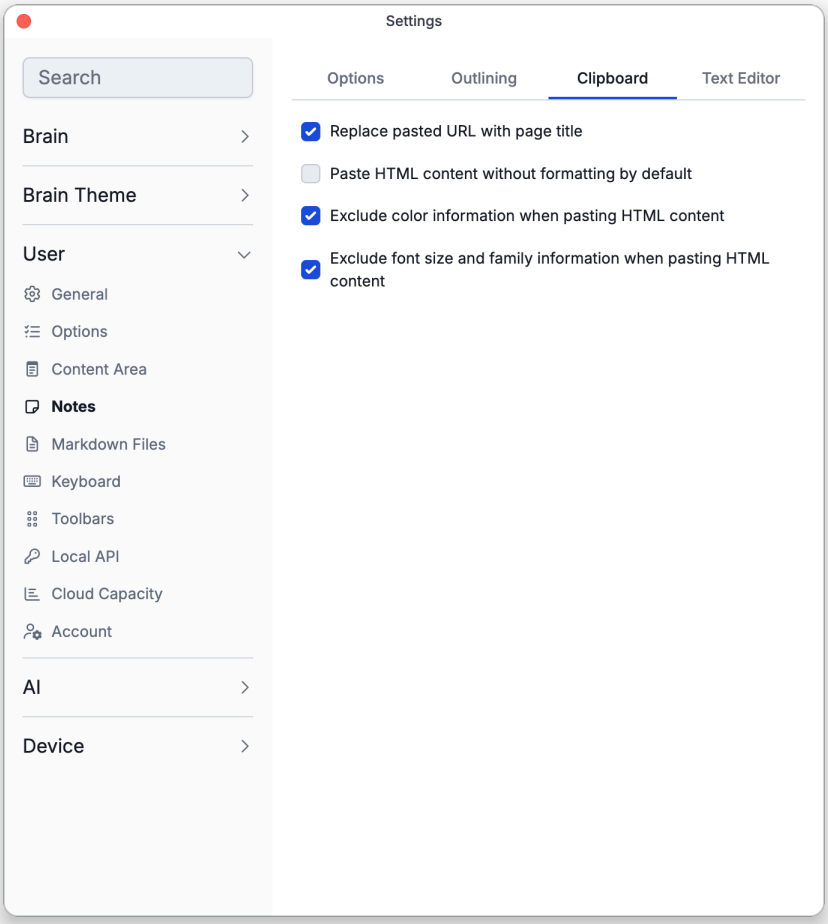
These options shape the plain-text editor used by the note's Text and Split views and by editable text attachments — see The Text Editor for what each behavior does in practice:

- **Word wrap** — Wrap long lines instead of scrolling sideways (on by default).
- **Auto-indent new lines** — New lines keep the previous line's indentation (on by default).
- **Continue lists automatically** — `Enter` continues Markdown bulleted, numbered, checklist, and quoted lines (on by default).

- **Auto-close brackets and quotes** — Typing an opening bracket or quote inserts its partner (on by default).
- **Wrap selection when typing ([{ " ' ` * _** — Typing one of those characters with text selected wraps the selection instead of replacing it (on by default; `*` and `_` wrap in notes, where they mean emphasis).
- **Highlight all occurrences of selected text** — Selecting a word lights up its other occurrences (on by default).
- **Show indent guides** — Vertical guide lines at each indentation stop (on by default).
- **Show line numbers** — The line-number gutter along the editor's left edge (on by default).
- **Indent using** — Whether the `Tab` key types **Tabs** (the default) or **Spaces**.
- **Tab size** — How wide a tab stop is: **2**, **4** (the default), or **8** characters.
- **Render whitespace** — Show dots for spaces and arrows for tabs: **None**, **Boundary**, **Selection** (the default), **Trailing**, or **All**.
- **Render newlines** — Show a return mark at line endings: **None**, **Selection** (the default), or **All**.


Settings
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Continue lists automatically
Auto-close brackets and quotes
Wrap selection when typing ([{ " ' ` * _
Highlight all occurrences of selected text
Show indent guides
Show line numbers
Indent using:
Tabs
Tab size:
4
Render whitespace:
Selection
Render newlines:
Selection

Clipboard



- **Replace pasted URL with page title** — On by default. When what you paste is a single web address (starting with `http://` or `https://`) and nothing else, TheBrain looks up the page and replaces the address you see with the page's title; the link still points to the address. An address that points to an image is replaced by the image itself, and a YouTube or Vimeo address on a line of its own can become an embedded video instead (see Video Embeds in Notes). The replacement is its own undo step, so one Undo right after it (the default shortcut is `Ctrl+Z`, `⌘Z` on Mac) brings back the plain address without removing what you pasted. Nothing is replaced inside inline code or a code block, and if the page's title can't be fetched the address stays as it is. Turn the option off to keep a pasted address as it is. A YouTube or Vimeo address on a line of its own still becomes an embedded video; the brain's **Show YouTube and Vimeo links as embedded videos** setting controls that (see Brain Content Settings).
- **Paste HTML content without formatting by default** — Off by default. Turn it on to have an ordinary paste of HTML content drop all of its formatting.
- **Exclude color information when pasting HTML content** — On by default, which is why pasted content arrives without its text colors and highlight colors. Turn it off to keep them.

- **Exclude font size and family information when pasting HTML content** — On by default, which is why pasted content arrives without its fonts. Turn it off to keep the fonts. Font sizes are not kept with either setting.

The last three apply only to **HTML content** — what you copy from a web page, a word processor, or another rich-text editor. Markdown you paste always arrives as fully formatted content, whatever these are set to.

Paste Without Formatting, in the notes right-click menu, is separate from these: it inserts the clipboard's text exactly as it is, with no Markdown conversion at all, so a web address pasted this way stays a plain address and is not replaced by a page title. Its default shortcut is `Ctrl+Shift+V` (`⇧⌘V` on Mac).

If text is selected when you paste a single web address, the selected text becomes a link to that address instead.



- **Spellcheck** can also be flipped with a bindable toggle command — see Spellcheck.
- The **line spacing** and **line gap** of note text are not set here. They are settings of each brain, under **Settings > Brain > Content Settings** on the **Notes** tab — see Brain Content Settings.

Related Topics

- Settings Overview
- Links in Notes
- Video Embeds in Notes
- Brain Content Settings

4.2 Tables, Images, and More

4.2.1 Tables in Notes

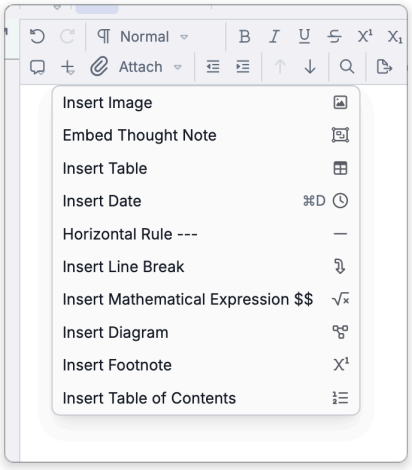
Overview

Notes can hold **tables** for anything grid-shaped — comparisons, schedules, simple data. Insert a table, then build it out by adding and rearranging rows and columns, aligning content, and applying a visual **theme** so it looks the part. The table controls appear automatically whenever your cursor is inside a table.

Agency	Primary strength	Observed gap
Brightline	Broad channel execution	Less specialized in B2B analytics
Northstar Studio	Senior strategic counsel	Smaller production capacity
MetricWorks	Performance measurement	Limited creative services
Harbor Creative	Strong brand storytelling	Less mature demand-generation practice
Our Agency	Strategy-to-execution integration	Need more published case studies

Inserting a Table

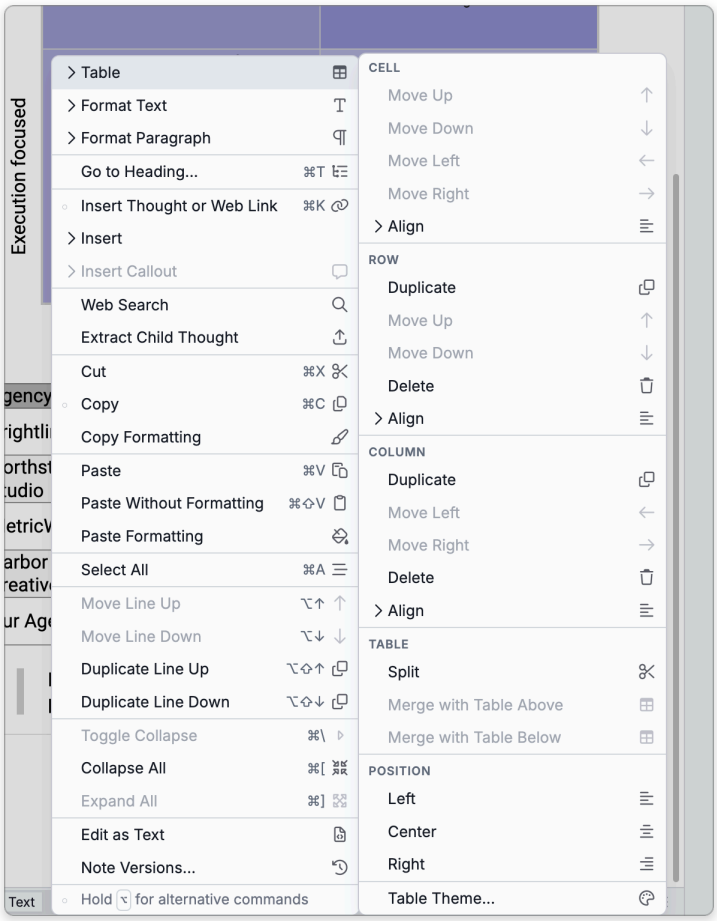
Place your cursor where you want the table and choose **Insert Table** from the notes toolbar's **Insert** menu. A grid picker appears — sweep across it to choose the size (up to 8 rows by 10 columns) and click to insert. (You can't insert a table inside another table.)



Editing Rows, Columns, and Cells

With the cursor in a table, right-click it and open **Table** on the menu. When you have selected several cells, right-clicking them shows these commands directly. The commands are grouped by what they act on:

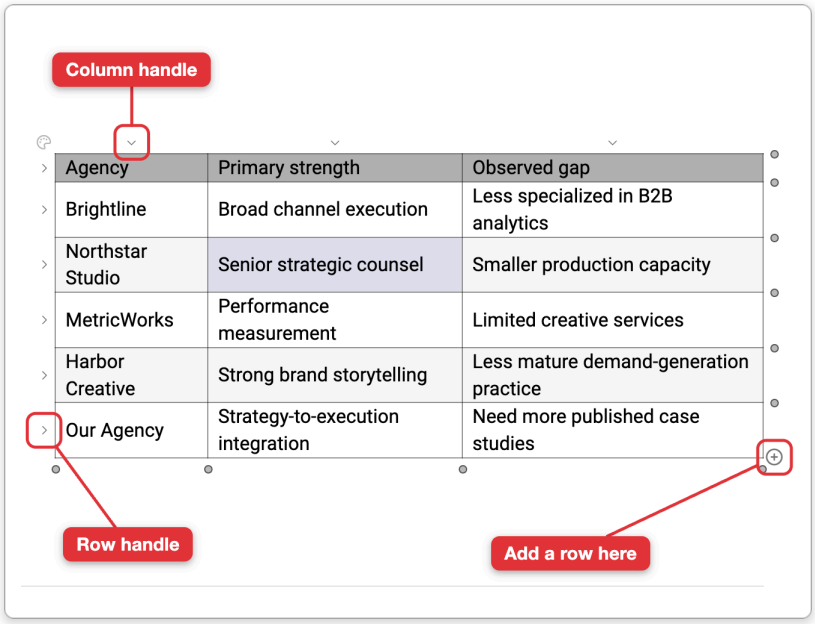
- **Cell** — **Move Up**, **Move Down**, **Move Left**, **Move Right**, and **Align**.
- **Row** — **Duplicate**, **Move Up**, **Move Down**, **Delete**, and **Align**.
- **Column** — **Duplicate**, **Move Left**, **Move Right**, **Delete**, and **Align**.
- **Table** — **Split**, **Merge with Table Above**, **Merge with Table Below**.
- **Position** — **Left**, **Center**, **Right** for the whole table.



The menu on a row's handle offers that row's **Duplicate**, **Move Up**, and **Move Down** and the **Table** commands, and the menu on a column's handle offers **Duplicate**, **Move Left**, and **Move Right**. Each ends with **Delete Row** or **Delete Column**.

Adding a Row or Column

Click in the table so its controls appear. Small round markers sit along the table's **right edge**, one at every row boundary, and along its **bottom edge**, one at every column boundary — including before the first row or column and after the last. Point at a marker and it turns into a plus; click it to insert an empty row (right edge) or an empty column (bottom edge) at that boundary.



Duplicate in the **Row** or **Column** group is the other way to grow a table: it adds a copy of the current row or column right after it. Pressing `Tab` in the last cell does not add a row.

Moving Between Cells and Selecting Them

- `Tab` moves to the next cell and `Shift+Tab` (`⇧Tab` on Mac) to the previous one, carrying on from the end of one row to the start of the next.
- The arrow keys cross into the neighboring cell when the cursor is at the edge of the cell it's in.
- **Select a block of cells** by dragging across them. From the keyboard, hold `Shift` and press an arrow key at the edge of a cell to start a selection, then keep going to extend it. `Esc` clears the selection.
- **Select a whole row or column** by clicking its handle — the small arrow at the left of each row and at the top of each column. Right-click the handle for that row's or column's menu.

Deleting Cells, Rows, Columns, or a Whole Table

Select cells, then press `Delete` or `Backspace`. What is removed depends on what is selected:

- **Whole rows or whole columns** — those rows or columns are deleted. Clicking a row's or column's handle selects it whole.
- **Every cell in the table** — the whole table is deleted.
- **Any other block of cells** — the cells are emptied and the table keeps its shape.

Every table has a space below it, one empty line tall, the way other Markdown apps show tables. The space isn't a line of the note, so text you type after a table goes on the line below the space.

To delete a whole table without selecting its cells by hand, put the cursor at the start of the line directly below the table and press `Backspace` twice: the first press selects the whole table, and the second removes it. (`Delete`, pressed at the end of the line directly above the table, works the same way.) If you select by dragging or with `Shift` and the arrow keys instead, start at the top-left cell and end at the bottom-right cell, so that the selection counts as whole rows, whole columns, or the whole table.

To remove a single row or column, you can also use **Delete** in the **Row** or **Column** group, or **Delete Row** or **Delete Column** on its handle's menu.

Alignment

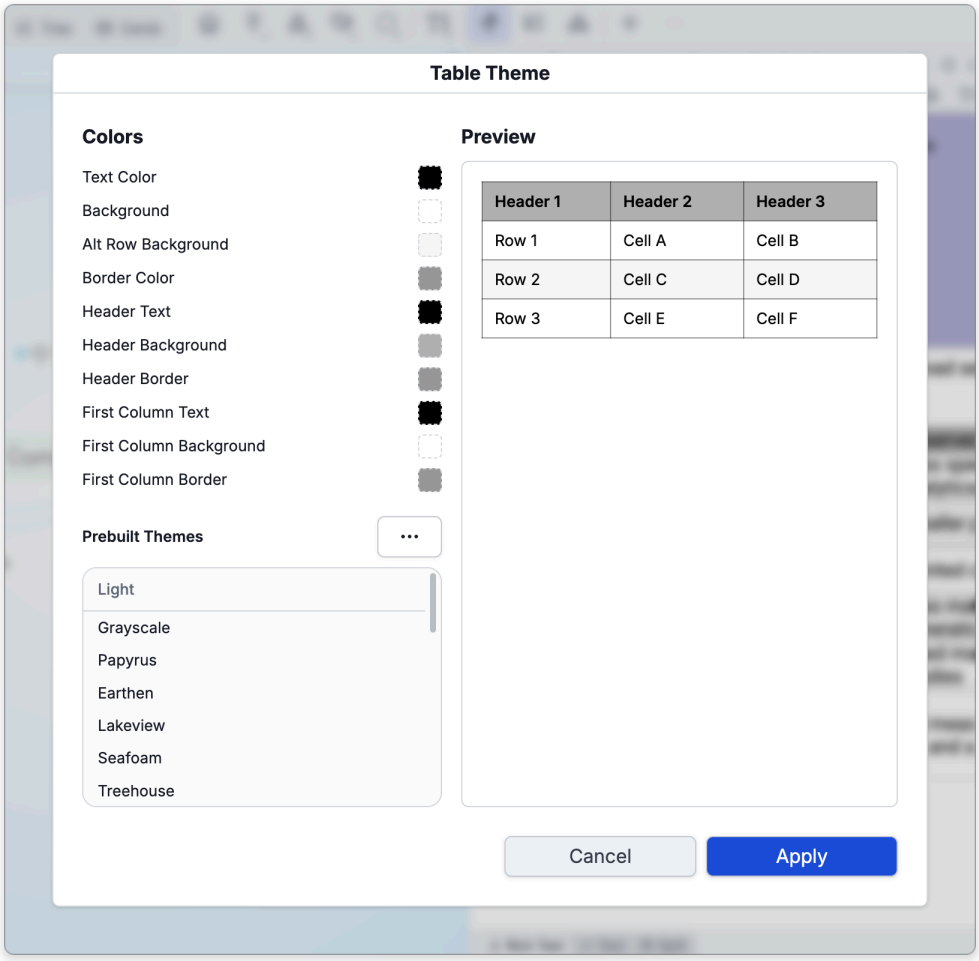
You can align content at several levels:

- **Position** — **Left**, **Center**, or **Right** places the whole table.
- **Align** in the **Cell**, **Row**, or **Column** group sets left/center/right alignment for a single cell, a row, or a column.

Table Themes

Table Theme..., at the end of the **Table** menu, opens a styling dialog with a live preview: ready-made looks in the **Prebuilt Themes** list, grouped as **Light**, **Dark**, and **Fun**, alongside a **Colors** panel where you set individual colors yourself — text, background, alternating-row background,

and borders, with distinct header and first-column styling. From the **…** menu beside **Prebuilt Themes** you can **Copy Theme**, **Paste Theme**, **Import Theme**, and **Export Theme**, or **Clear All Colors** to start over. Click **Apply** to style the table.



- A table is stored in the note's Markdown as a pipe table, so you can also write and edit it as text; see Standard Markdown Notes for how a table and its column widths and colors are written.
- Themes restyle a table's appearance only; they don't change its contents.

Related Topics

- Writing and Formatting Notes
- Markdown in Notes
- Standard Markdown Notes

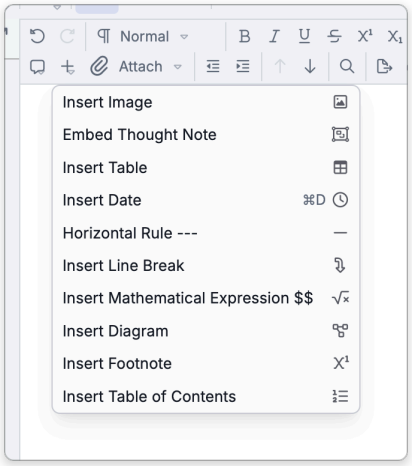
4.2.2 Images in Notes

Overview

Notes can contain **images** inline alongside your text — diagrams, screenshots, photos, anything visual. The quickest way to add one is to paste it straight into the note, or in the desktop app to drag it onto the note; the **Insert Image** dialog lets you upload image files instead. Once an image is in, you can resize it to fit the note.

Adding an Image

- **Paste** — Copy an image anywhere and paste it directly into the note. (A tip in the insert dialog points this out: *you can also copy an image and paste it directly into the note*.)
- **Drag and drop (desktop app)** — Drag an image file from your computer onto the note. While you drag, a pulsing bar in the note shows where the image will go. The image goes into the note where you drop it, as a copy, just as a pasted image does; the original file is not changed. Other kinds of files dropped on the note, on their own or together with images, are added to the thought as attachments.
- **Upload** — Choose **Insert Image** from the notes toolbar's **Insert** menu and pick one or more image files (PNG, JPG, GIF, WEBP, SVG, or BMP). On the mobile app the dialog offers **Upload Photo** and **Take Photo** (using the camera) instead of drag-and-drop.



Showing an Image That's Already Attached

A note can also show an image file that is already attached to its thought, without making a second copy of it:

- **Drag it in (desktop app)** — Drag an image from the thought's attachments section into the note. The image appears where you drop it, and the note refers to the attached file rather than storing a copy.
- **Pick or paste it (desktop app)** — When you insert or paste an image file that is already one of the thought's attachments, the note refers to that attachment in the same way.
- **Relative paths** — In a Markdown note, an image written with a path relative to the note, such as `![](images/screen.png)`, shows the thought's attached file at that path. Notes written in other Markdown tools often refer to their images this way. When TheBrain saves the note, it keeps the path as it was written.

The same applies to a Markdown file attached to the thought and opened in the editor. Images shown this way also appear in note versions, embedded notes, and printed or exported documents.

Where Note Images Are Stored

An image you paste or upload into a note is saved in the brain as a file of its own, in a hidden images folder kept with that thought. It does not show up as an attachment: it isn't listed in the thought's attachments and isn't included in the thought's attachment count.

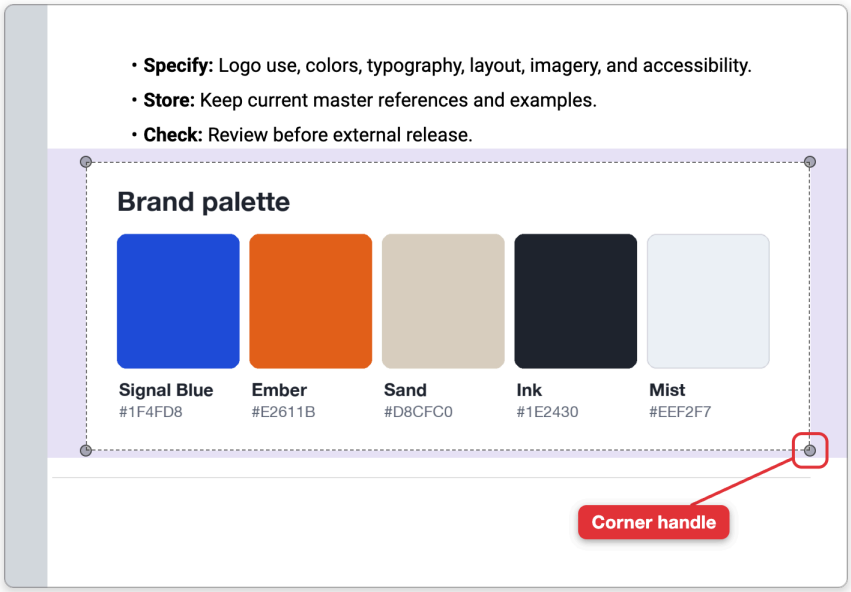
It is still part of the brain's stored data. In a brain you sync, note images count toward your cloud attachment storage like the other files the brain stores (see Cloud Capacity). To see how much space they take, open the brain's statistics and look at the **Notes images** row (see Brain Statistics).

The exception is an image shown from a file that is already attached to the thought, as described above: the note refers to that attachment, so no second copy is stored.

Resizing

Click an image to select it, then drag any **corner handle** to resize it — a live percentage readout appears while you drag, and the size snaps to the nearest 5%, from full width (100%) down to

5%. The percentage is measured against the image's own full size.



An image can never be shown wider than the note. For an image wider than the note, the largest size you can drag to is the one that fills the note's width, and the readout starts there. If you leave the image at that size, it keeps filling the note's width when the note gets wider.

The corner handles are for a mouse or trackpad on a computer, in the desktop app or the web app, and appear only in a note you can edit. On an iPhone, iPad, or Android device, tapping an image selects it but does not bring up the handles. An image keeps the size it was given, so resize it on a computer and it shows at that size on your phone or tablet too.

Viewing an Image

Double-click an image in a note to open it in the image viewer, where the mouse wheel, a trackpad pinch, or a touch pinch zooms and dragging pans. On iPhone, iPad, and Android, images open in the device's own image viewer instead, so you can share them or save them to your photos.

On the desktop app, a note image's menu also offers **Copy Attachment**, **Set as Thought Icon**, and **Show Attachment Properties**.

- For files you want to keep as full attachments rather than inline pictures, see Adding Attachments.

- When you copy or cut part of a note that includes images, the images are copied with the text, so pasting into another app such as Word or Google Docs brings them along. Very large images, or a selection with many large images, may not come along.

Related Topics

- Writing and Formatting Notes
- Brain Statistics
- Cloud Capacity

4.2.3 Video Embeds in Notes

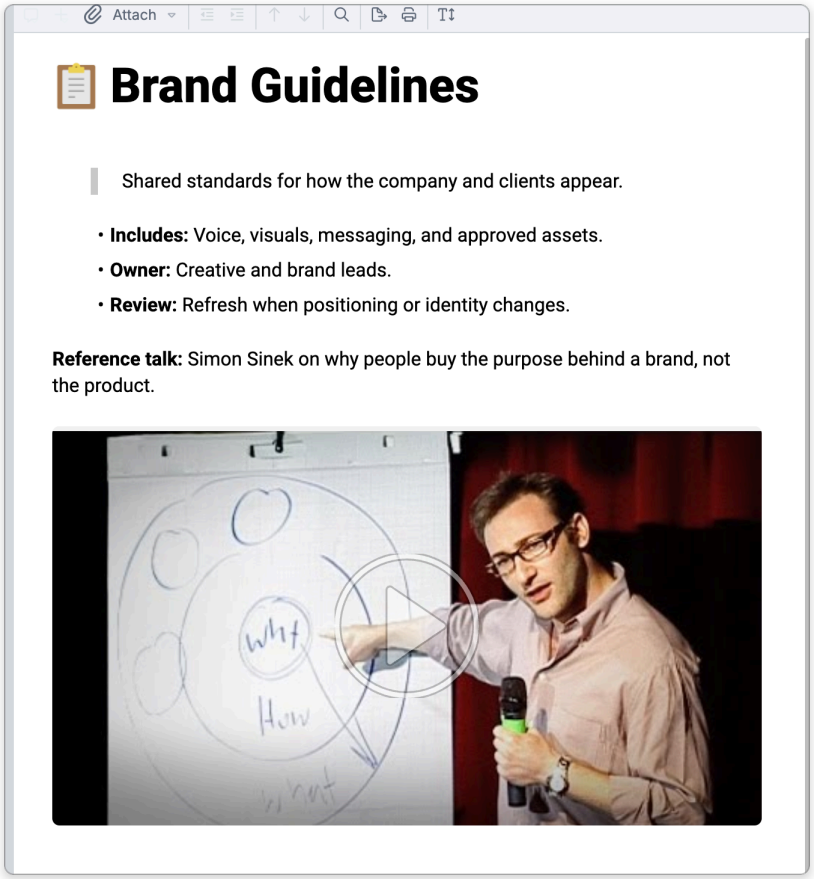
Overview

When a **YouTube** or **Vimeo** link sits on its own line in a note, TheBrain shows it as an embedded video: a preview with a play button, playable right in the note. The preview is the video's poster image until you press play. In the note's Markdown the line stays a plain link, so nothing changes about how your note is stored or how it reads elsewhere — the embed is how TheBrain renders it.

How to Embed a Video

1. Copy a YouTube or Vimeo video link.
2. Paste it into a note **on its own line**.

That's it — the line becomes a playable embed. A link that shares a line with other text stays an ordinary link. A link with its own text (link text pointing at the video URL) also embeds when it's alone on its line.



You can also type the address on a line of its own and press `Enter` at the end of it. Pressing Undo right after that turns the video back into the address you typed.

Which Links Become Videos

If a link isn't turning into a video, check these three things:

- **The address has a recognized form.** It must start with `https://` and be one of: `youtube.com/watch?v=…` (with `v=` as the first parameter), `youtube.com/shorts/…`, `youtu.be/…`, or `vimeo.com/` followed by just the video's number. A leading `www.` (or `m.` for YouTube) is fine, and so are further parameters after the video's ID — a start time such as `t=90` is carried into the player. The addresses of playlist and channel pages, `/embed/` and `/live/` addresses, `music.youtube.com` and `player.vimeo.com` links, and Vimeo addresses with anything besides the number in their path all stay ordinary links.
- **The link is alone on a plain paragraph line.** A link that is part of a list item, a quote, a callout, a heading, a code block, or a table cell is shown as a link.
- **Embeds are on for the brain** — see *Turning Embeds Off* below.

Editing or Removing a Video

In a note you can edit, click the video anywhere outside its play button to select it, or move onto it with the arrow keys. Then:

- **Change it** — press `Enter`, or click the selected video again. A small dialog opens with the video's link and a **Title (optional)** field; edit them and choose **Save**. **Save** stays unavailable until the link is a recognized YouTube or Vimeo address.
- **Remove it** — press `Backspace` or `Delete`. Only the video is removed.
- **Leave it as it is** — press `Esc` or an arrow key to move the cursor back into the text.

Turning Embeds Off

Embedding is controlled per brain by **Show YouTube and Vimeo links as embedded videos** on the **Notes** tab of **Settings > Brain > Content Settings** (on by default). With it off, the links render as ordinary links. Changing the setting reloads the open note, so the change shows right away.

> Some web clippers and older notes write a video link as a **thumbnail image that links to the video**, alone on its line. When embeds are on, TheBrain converts that line into a plain link with the image's caption as its text as the note loads, so it shows as a playable video instead of a static picture; the converted line is kept when the note is next saved. With embeds off, the image link is left exactly as written.

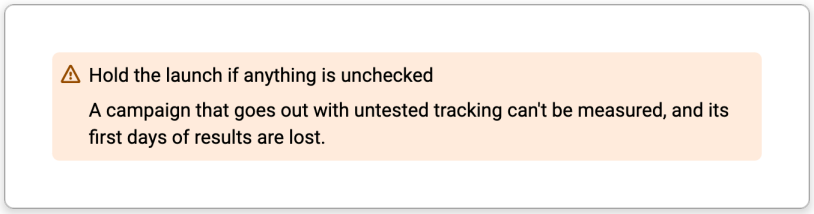
Related Topics

- Links in Notes
- Writing and Formatting Notes

4.2.4 Callouts in Notes

Overview

A callout is a highlighted block that sets important information apart from the rest of your note — a tinted, rounded panel with an accent color and an icon in its left margin. Use callouts to flag warnings, capture tips, mark open questions, or give a summary its own visual weight.

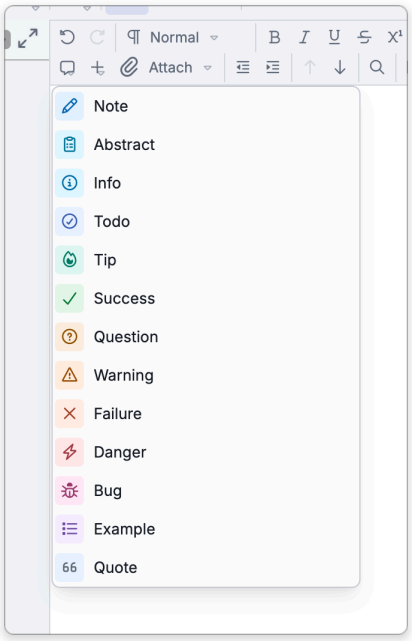


TheBrain offers thirteen callout types, each with its own color and icon: **Note**, **Abstract**, **Info**, **Todo**, **Tip**, **Success**, **Question**, **Warning**, **Failure**, **Danger**, **Bug**, **Example**, and **Quote**. The colors adapt automatically to light and dark themes, and you can restyle any type — its accent, background, icon, text color, and title typography — in the content theme editor's **Callouts** section.

How to insert a callout

1. Place the cursor where you want the callout, or select the lines you want to convert — inserting turns the current or selected lines into the callout's body.
2. Click the **Callout** button on the notes toolbar (just left of **Insert**), or right-click in the note and choose **Insert Callout**.
3. Pick a type from the menu. Each row shows a color swatch so you can see the block's look before choosing.

Insert Callout and the toolbar's **Callout** button are unavailable while the cursor or selection is inside a code block, in a table cell, or on a line holding a table. A callout inside a table cell is saved as a plain quote.



You can also type the marker directly: type `[!warning]` (or `> [!warning]` on a plain line) at the start of a line and press `Space`. Any of the thirteen type names works, and so do common aliases like `hint`, `important`, `summary`, `error`, and `caution` — an alias keeps its spelling but renders in its parent type's style. An unrecognized type name still becomes a callout, styled like **Note**.

New callouts start without a title line. To add one, press `↑` while on the first line of the callout — an editable title row appears above the body. Leaving an empty title row removes it again.

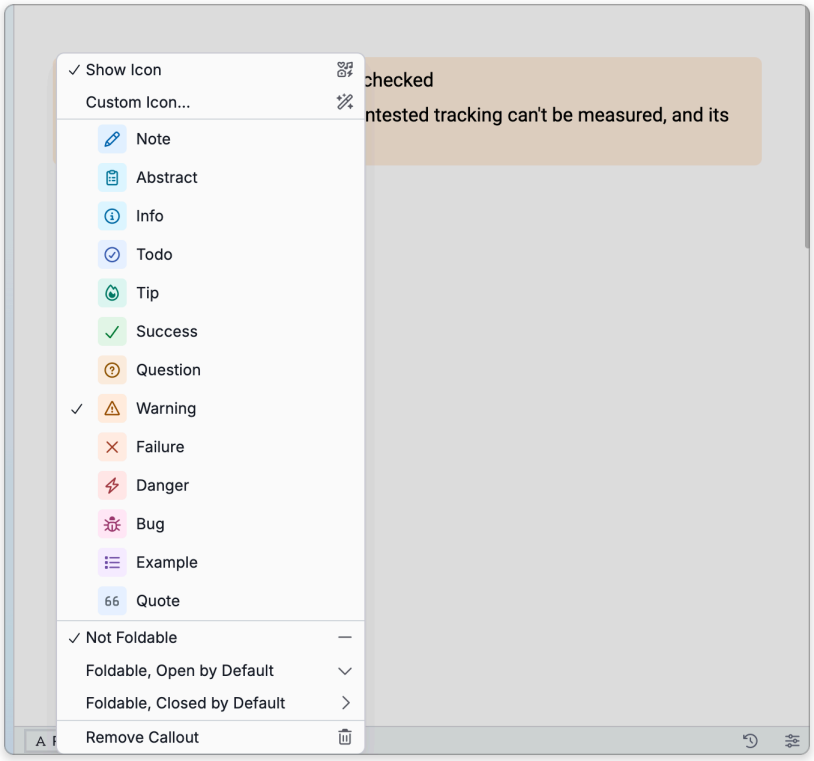
How to change or remove a callout

Click the callout's icon — or right-click anywhere in the callout's margin — to open its controls menu. On touch screens, tap the margin. The menu offers:

- **Show Icon** — toggle the icon in the left margin.
- **Custom Icon...** — replace the default icon with any standard icon or an emoji, for this callout only.
- The thirteen type rows — click one to change the whole callout's type in place.
- **Not Foldable** / **Foldable, Open by Default** / **Foldable, Closed by Default** — a foldable callout shows a chevron so readers can collapse it to its title. Collapsing one is remembered on the device you're using, like other collapsed sections of a note, without changing the note. A callout set to **Foldable, Closed by Default** opens closed every time,

so expanding one isn't remembered; choose **Foldable, Open by Default** if you want it to stay open.

- **Remove Callout** — unwraps the callout while keeping its content as ordinary text.



Pressing `Backspace` at the very start of a callout also unwraps it, one step at a time: if the first line is an indented list item, `Backspace` first moves it out a level, and if it's a heading, list item or code block, `Backspace` first turns it into an ordinary line. Only then does it remove the callout. Callouts can be nested inside each other: with the cursor on any line of a callout below its first line, inserting another callout creates one a level deeper.

How to leave a callout and type below it

`Enter` does not take you out of a callout. An empty line is ordinary callout content, so pressing `Enter` just adds more lines inside it. (On an empty list item inside a callout, `Enter` ends the list, and the cursor stays in the callout.)

To get out and keep typing below the callout, put the cursor on its last line and press `↓`:

- When an ordinary line follows the callout, the cursor moves down to it.

- When there is no such line, TheBrain adds a new empty line outside the callout for you to type on. This happens when the callout ends the note, and when it is followed directly by another callout, a quote, a code block, a table, a divider, a diagram, a video, an embedded note or a table of contents. If you move away from the new line without typing on it, it is removed again.

In a nested callout, each press of `↓` steps out one level. `↑` on a callout's first line works the same way above the callout. On a callout that has no title, the first `↑` adds the title row instead.

Indenting and outdenting a callout

On an ordinary line of a callout, `Tab` does not indent just that line. It moves the whole callout the cursor is in, every line of it, one quote level deeper. `Shift+Tab` (`⇧Tab` on Mac) moves the whole callout back out one level. The **Indent** and **Outdent** commands do the same; their default shortcuts are `Ctrl+.` and `Ctrl+Shift+.` (`⌘.` and `⇧⌘.` on Mac).

Pressing `Shift+Tab` (or **Outdent**) in a callout that is not inside another callout or a quote removes the callout and leaves its content as ordinary text, the same as **Remove Callout**. If your callout disappeared this way, **Undo** puts it back.

Some lines behave differently. On a list item inside a callout, `Tab` and `Shift+Tab` change the item's list level, and on a heading they change the heading level. On a line of a code block inside a callout they do not move the callout.

Callouts in markdown

Callouts use the same markdown as Obsidian and GitHub: a blockquote whose first line is a type marker, with an optional title after it.

```
> [!warning] Watch out
> This paragraph is the callout body.
```

The marker's spelling is preserved exactly as you (or another app) wrote it, so notes exchanged with Obsidian or GitHub keep working in both directions. A `-` right after the marker makes the callout foldable and closed by default, and a `+` makes it foldable and open by default. Callouts are written the same way in both note formats — standard Markdown and TheBrain's deprecated dialect.

- A callout's body can hold more than text: code blocks, tables, dividers, diagrams and math blocks can all sit inside it. Inserting a table or typing a divider while the cursor is in a callout puts it inside the callout, and selecting a code block before inserting a callout wraps the code block into it.
- When exporting notes with **Export Notes**, a **Callouts** section shows a button for each callout type found in the content, with a check mark while it is on — turn a type off to leave all callouts of that type out of the exported document. The plain **Text** format always drops the callout markers themselves, keeping titles and body text.
- A fourteenth type, **Conflict** (red, with a merge icon), is written by sync, not by you: when a note was edited in two places and both changed the same lines, the merged note shows each version in its own **Conflict** callout, titled with whose version it is and when it was edited (in UTC). It isn't offered when inserting a callout or switching a callout's type, but you can restyle it in the content theme editor like the others. To resolve a conflict, delete the callout you don't want and use **Remove Callout** on the one you keep. See Working Offline and Sync Recovery.

Related Topics

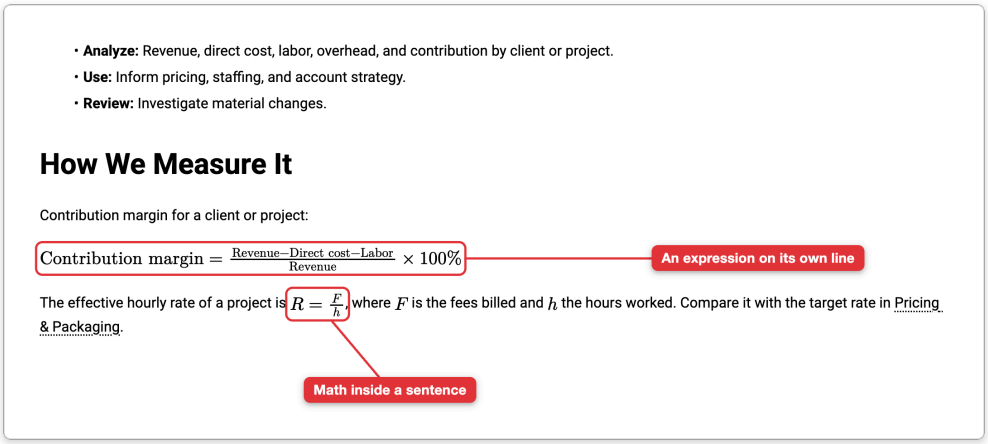
- Writing and Formatting Notes
- Markdown in Notes
- Standard Markdown Notes
- Working Offline and Sync Recovery

4.2.5 Math Expressions

Overview

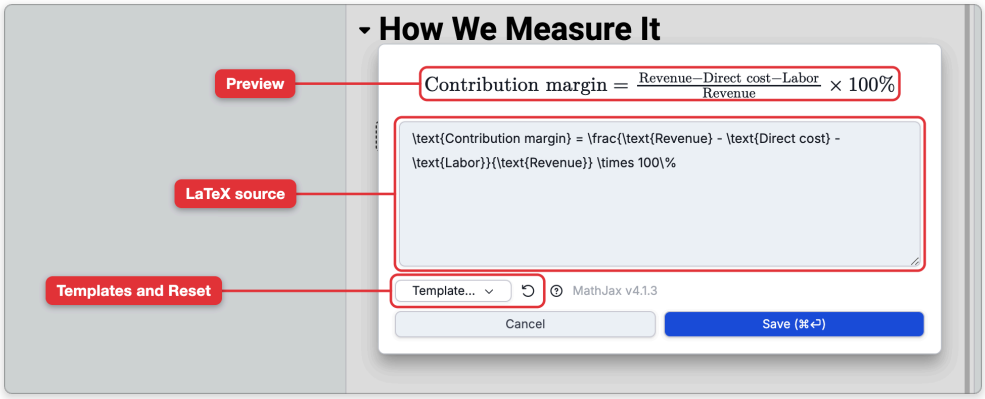
TheBrain supports rendering mathematical expressions in notes using LaTeX syntax powered by MathJax. Type standard LaTeX math notation and it renders as beautifully formatted equations — fractions, integrals, matrices, chemical formulas, and more.

For a comprehensive reference of all supported commands, see the MathJax TeX command reference.



How to Insert a Math Expression

1. In the notes editor, choose **Insert Mathematical Expression** from the toolbar's **Insert** menu or from the right-click menu's **Insert** submenu, or type `$$`.
2. Type your LaTeX expression in the input field, or pick a starting point from the **Template…** menu — seven ready-made expressions (Quadratic formula, Infinite series, Integral, Limit, Matrix, Piecewise function, Euler's identity). Picking a template over an expression you've written asks before replacing it. A live preview above the input field shows the result as you type.
3. Click **Save**, or press `Ctrl+Enter` (`⌘Enter` on Mac) — the **Save** button shows the shortcut. The expression renders inline with your text.



Pressing `Enter` on its own does not save. The input field holds several lines, so `Enter` and `Shift+Enter` (`⇧Enter` on Mac) both start a new line in the LaTeX source. Clicking outside the math editor saves, the same as **Save**. To close the math editor without keeping your changes, click **Cancel**, or press `Esc` while the cursor is in the input field.

A **Reset** button returns the expression to how it was when the editor opened (it asks first). On phones the math editor fills the screen and makes room for the on-screen keyboard.

How to Edit or Delete a Math Expression

Clicking an expression once does not open the math editor. The first click only selects the expression, and it gets a dashed outline. You can also select it by moving onto it with the arrow keys.

- **To edit it** — Click the selected expression a second time, or press `Enter`. Typing a lowercase letter or a digit opens the math editor too. A double-click selects and opens in one go. On a touch screen, tap the expression and then tap it again.
- **To delete it** — With the expression selected, press `Backspace` or `Delete`.
- **To leave it as it is** — Press `Esc` or an arrow key to move the cursor off the expression.

Inline vs. Display Math

- **Inline math** — Renders within the flow of text, sized to match the surrounding line. Every single-line expression is shown this way, even one on a line of its own.
- **Display math** — Used automatically when your expression contains line breaks (`\\`) and you haven't already chosen an environment yourself. The lines are stacked in display style and each one is centered (equivalent to wrapping the content in `\displaylines{}`), but the expression stays in the line of text where you put it rather than becoming a centered block.

Basic Syntax

What you type	What renders
`x^2 + y^2 = z^2`	Pythagorean theorem
`\frac{a}{b}`	Fraction
`\sqrt{x}`	Square root
`\sum_{n=1}^{\infty} \frac{1}{n^2}`	Summation
`\int_0^\infty e^{-x} dx`	Integral
`\alpha, \beta, \gamma, \theta`	Greek letters
`\leq, \geq, \neq, \approx`	Comparison operators
`\mathbb{R}, \mathcal{L}, \mathfrak{g}`	Special fonts

Multi-line Expressions

Use `\\` to break an expression across multiple lines. Each line is automatically centered:

```
a = b + c \\
d = e + f
```

A new line in the math editor's source is only for readability: as in standard LaTeX, it is treated as whitespace. To produce a visible line break in the rendered output, type `\\` (either on its own line or inline). For alignment, use a standard environment like `aligned`, `cases`, or a matrix environment, and `\\` separates rows the usual way.

Available Extensions

TheBrain includes the full set of MathJax TeX extensions. Most work automatically — just use their commands. Here are some commonly used ones:

Chemistry (mhchem)

Write chemical formulas and reactions with `\ce{}`:

Expression	Description
`\ce{H2O}`	Water
`\ce{CO2 + C -> 2CO}`	Reaction
`\ce{2H2 + O2 ->[\text{heat}] 2H2O}`	Reaction with conditions
`\ce{Hg^2+ ->[I-] HgI2}`	Ionic reaction
`\ce{^{227}_{90}Th+}`	Isotope notation

Cancel

Strike through parts of an expression to show cancellation:

Expression	Description
`\cancel{x}`	Forward slash
`\bcancel{x}`	Backward slash
`\xcancel{x}`	X-shaped

Enclose

Draw shapes around expressions:

Expression	Description
`\enclose{circle}{x}`	Circle
`\enclose{box}{x + y}`	Box

Color

Expression	Description
`\color{red}{x^2}`	Colored text
`\bbox[yellow, 5px]{E = mc^2}`	Background color with padding

Braket (Dirac Notation)

Expression	Description
`\ket{\psi}`	Ket
`\bra{\phi}`	Bra

For an inner product, separate the two with a bar: `\braket{\phi|\psi}`.

Other Extensions

These also work automatically:

- **boldsymbol** — `\boldsymbol{\alpha}` for bold math symbols
- **amscd** — Commutative diagrams
- **mathtools** — Extended math tools beyond AMS
- **extpfeil** — Extensible arrows
- **unicode** — `\unicode{x263A}` for Unicode characters
- **textcomp** — Text companion symbols
- **cases** — Extended cases environment
- **empheq** — Emphasized equations

Physics Extension

The physics extension provides shorthand notation for vectors, derivatives, and other physics operations. Because it redefines common commands like `\sin` and `\cos`, it is **not loaded automatically**, as in MathJax itself — you must opt in.

Add `\require{physics}` at the beginning of your expression to enable it:

Expression	Description
`\require{physics} \va{a}`	Vector arrow
`\require{physics} \vu{x}`	Unit vector
`\require{physics} \dv{f}{x}`	Derivative
`\require{physics} \pdv{f}{x}{y}`	Partial derivative
`\require{physics} \abs{x}`	Absolute value
`\require{physics} \norm{x}`	Norm

You only need `\require{physics}` once per expression.

Matrices

Use standard LaTeX matrix environments:

```
\begin{pmatrix} a & b \\ c & d \end{pmatrix}
```

Available matrix styles: `pmatrix` (parentheses), `bmatrix` (brackets), `vmatrix` (vertical bars), `Bmatrix` (braces), `matrix` (no delimiters).

- Math expressions are stored as LaTeX source text, so they remain editable and searchable.
- If an expression doesn't render, check for typos in the LaTeX syntax — MathJax flags the expression instead of rendering it when it hits an error.

Related Topics

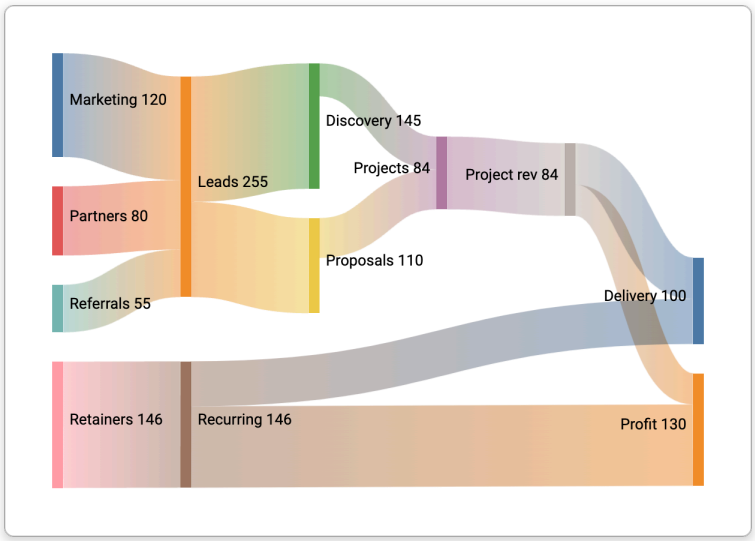
- Writing and Formatting Notes

4.2.6 Diagrams in Notes

Overview

Notes can hold diagrams — flowcharts, sequence diagrams, Gantt charts, mind maps, pie charts, timelines, and more — written in the widely used Mermaid text language. You describe the diagram in a few lines of text and TheBrain draws it; the drawing updates whenever you edit the text. Because a diagram is stored in the note as an ordinary Mermaid code block, the same notes render in other Mermaid-aware tools such as Obsidian, GitHub, and GitLab, and diagrams written elsewhere render in TheBrain.

Diagram colors follow your content theme automatically, so diagrams stay readable in both light and dark themes.



Inserting diagrams requires the brain to save notes in standard Markdown. Notes containing diagrams are readable in any brain, and an existing diagram can always be opened and edited.

How to insert a diagram

1. Right-click in the note and choose **Insert > Insert Diagram**, or use the notes toolbar's **Insert** menu. On the Mac desktop app it is also in the menu bar under **Note > Insert > Diagram**.
2. The diagram editor opens with a live preview on top and the text source below. A starter Flowchart is filled in so you see a drawing immediately.
3. Pick a different starting point from the **Template…** menu if you like — there are eighteen ready-made starters (Flowchart, Sequence, Class, State, Entity relationship, Gantt, Mind map, Pie, Timeline, Git graph, User journey, Quadrant chart, XY chart, Kanban board, Sankey, Block, Architecture, Requirement), each a small working example.
4. Edit the text; the preview redraws as you type. If a line doesn't parse, the message under the editor names the line, and the last good drawing stays visible (dimmed) until the text parses again.
5. Press **Save** (`Ctrl+Enter`, `⌘Enter` on Mac). `Esc` cancels.

The **Help** button opens the Mermaid documentation in your browser, where the full diagram language is described.

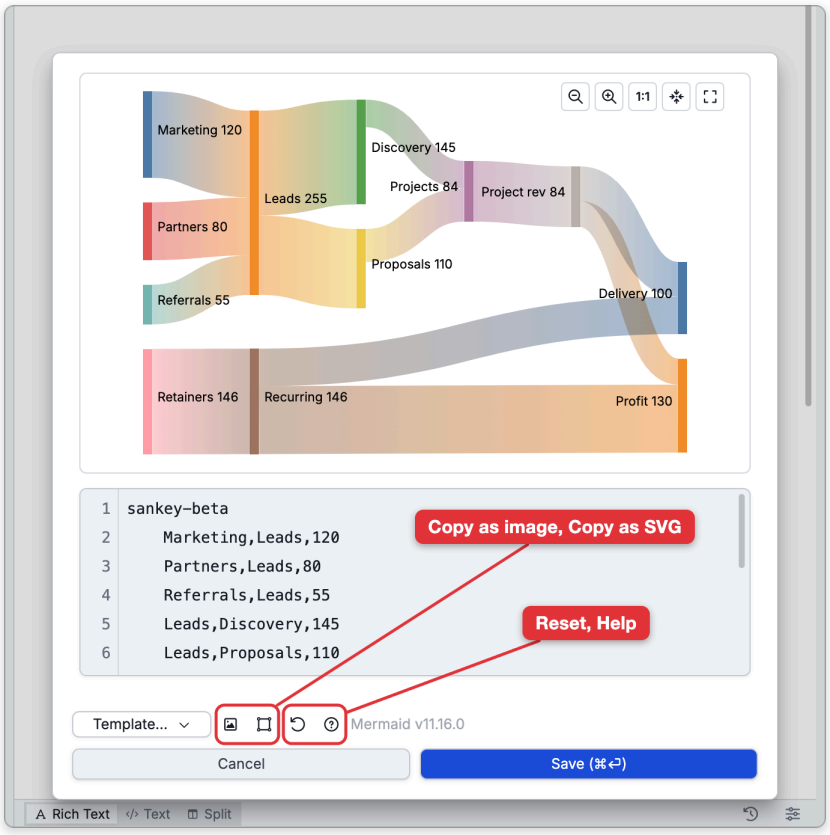
If you don't see **Insert Diagram**: in a brain that hasn't switched to standard Markdown, **Enable Footnotes and Diagrams…** appears instead at the bottom of the **Insert** menu that right-clicking

in the note opens — it explains the requirement and takes you to the brain's **Note Format** settings. The notes toolbar's **Insert** menu just leaves **Insert Diagram** out. Diagrams can't be inserted inside table cells.

How to edit an existing diagram

1. Click the diagram once to select it, then click it again to open the editor. On touch screens, tap twice the same way.
2. With the keyboard, arrow onto the diagram and press `Enter`.

In the editor's preview you can zoom with the mouse wheel, drag to pan, and use the view buttons (**Zoom in**, **Zoom out**, **Actual size**, **Zoom to fit**, **Fill the window**); double-click the drawing to reset the view. **Copy as image** and **Copy as SVG** put the rendered drawing on the clipboard for use in other apps, and **Reset** returns the text to what it was when the editor opened.



On phones the diagram editor fills the screen and makes room for the on-screen keyboard.

How to delete a diagram

1. Click the diagram once so that it is selected. A selected diagram has a dashed outline. With the keyboard, arrow onto the diagram instead.
2. Press `Backspace` or `Delete`.

Press the key after the first click. A second click on a selected diagram opens the diagram editor instead, and so does pressing `Enter` or typing a lowercase letter or a digit. `Esc` or an arrow key moves the cursor off the diagram and leaves it in the note. If you delete a diagram by mistake, **Undo** brings it back.

When a Mermaid code block shows as code

A fenced code block is drawn as a diagram only when all of these are true:

- Its opening line is three or more backticks followed by exactly the lowercase word `mermaid` and nothing else. A fence written as ``` ```Mermaid ```, ``` ``` mermaid ``` (with a space), ``` ```mermaid-example ``` or ``` ```mermaid ``` with more text after the word stays an ordinary code block. (Inside a callout, every line of the block starts with the callout's `>` marker, and the fence comes right after it.)
- The block has a closing fence.
- The block is not inside a table cell.

A diagram whose text grows very long is too large to draw, and TheBrain says so with the message **Diagram source is too large to render**.

In the rich text editor you cannot make a diagram by typing a fence. The third backtick turns the line into a plain code block at once, so whatever you type next, including the word `mermaid`, is code. Use **Insert > Insert Diagram** instead, or switch the note to the **Text** view and write the fence there.



- Wide diagrams scroll inside their own frame rather than widening the note.
- Diagrams render in read-only and shared views, and in HTML, PDF, and print output.
- Diagrams are drawings of their text — Find & Replace in the note does not reach inside them.

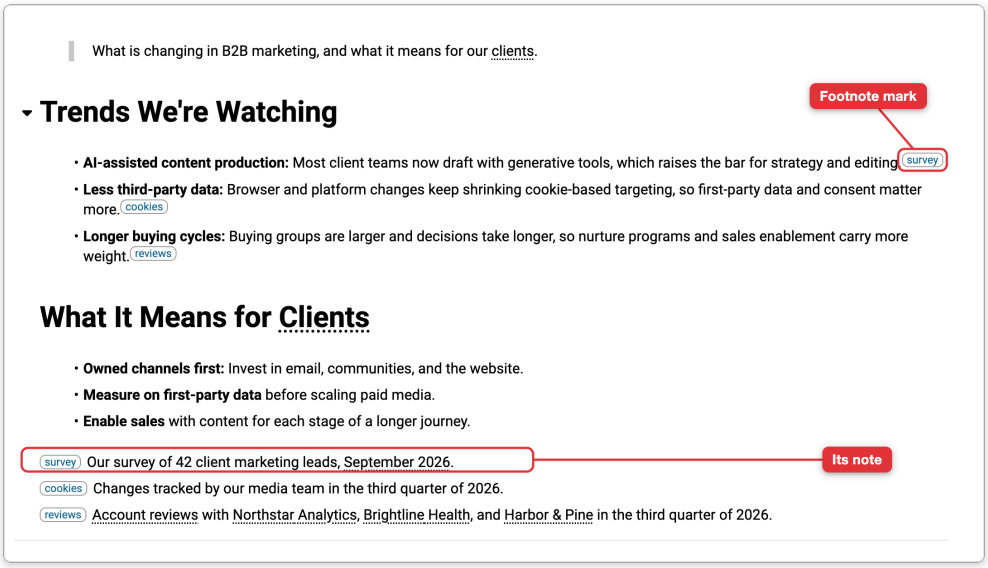
Related Topics

- Standard Markdown Notes
- Writing and Formatting Notes

4.2.7 Footnotes

Overview

A footnote is a small numbered **mark** in your text and a matching note at the foot of the page. The mark appears in two places — after the passage it annotates, and again in front of the note itself — and TheBrain keeps them together by the label they share.



Footnotes are saved in standard Markdown (`[^1]` in the text, `[^1]: the note` at the bottom), which is the same syntax Obsidian, GitHub, Typora and Pandoc use — so a note with footnotes reads correctly in those tools too.

Adding a Footnote

1. Put the cursor where the mark belongs and choose **Insert > Insert Footnote** from the note's right-click menu, or use the notes toolbar's **Insert** menu.

2. The mark appears with the next unused number, **already selected — type anything you like to replace it**. A label does not have to be a number: `[^method]`, `[^Klein 1978]` or `[^why]` all work, and a word is often easier to follow than a digit. A label can't be empty or contain `]`, but spaces are fine once you have typed something. Keep the number by simply not typing. Press `Enter` or `→` to leave the mark and carry on with your sentence.
3. **Click the mark to write its note.** The note is added at the foot of the page, in the right place among the others, with the cursor in it.

Writing the note is deliberately a separate step: you can drop marks through a draft while the sentences are still moving and fill in the notes afterwards.

Position matters: with the cursor at the start of a line (nothing but spaces before it), the menu item reads **Insert Footnote Definition** and inserting creates the footnote's note itself there, with the rest of the line as its text — rather than a mark in a sentence. Footnotes can't go inside table cells.

Whatever you name a mark, its note carries the same label — that is what keeps the two together, so renaming one half is how you rename the footnote.

Adding footnotes requires the brain to save notes in standard Markdown — see Standard Markdown Notes. In a brain that hasn't switched, **Insert Footnote** doesn't appear; instead **Enable Footnotes and Diagrams…** at the bottom of the **Insert** menu that right-clicking in the note opens explains the requirement and offers to open the brain's **Note Format** settings. The notes toolbar's **Insert** menu just leaves **Insert Footnote** out.

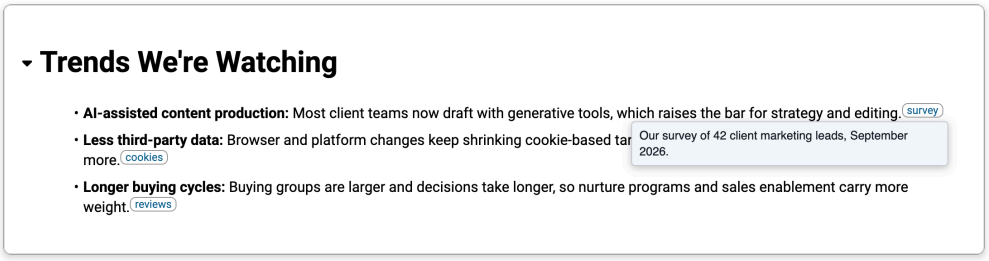
Only inserting is restricted: any brain and any account still shows footnotes a note already has, and editing, arranging, and renumbering existing footnotes work for everyone.

Typing a Footnote as Markdown

Typing `[^1]` in the rich text editor does not create a footnote. The editor has no typing shortcut for footnotes, so the characters stay plain text, and they are still plain text after the note is saved and reopened. To write a footnote as Markdown, switch the note to the **Text** view and type it there: `[^1]` where the mark goes, and `[^1]: your note` at the start of a line of its own. The rest of that line is the footnote's note. Back in the rich text view, both show as a footnote. Otherwise use **Insert > Insert Footnote**.

Reading and Moving Between Them

- **Hover a mark** to read its note without leaving your place. Click it to jump to the note.
- **Hover the mark in front of a note** to see **Go to mark**, and click to jump back to the text.
- On a phone or tablet, **tap once** to see what hovering would show, then tap that to go.



Unfinished Footnotes

A mark with no note yet — or a note whose mark you deleted — is **outlined in orange**, so you can see at a glance what is still unfinished rather than having to hunt for it. Hovering says which it is: *Click to add footnote* on a mark that needs a note, *Mark is missing* on a note that has lost its mark. Adding the missing half clears the outline.

Arranging and Renumbering

Right-click any footnote mark for two commands:

- **Arrange Footnotes** — Gathers the notes at the foot of the page, under a horizontal rule, in the order their marks appear in the text.
- **Renumber Footnotes** — Numbers every footnote 1, 2, 3… in that same order. **Any label you typed yourself is replaced by a number** — `[^Klein 1978]` becomes `[^4]` — so this is not the command to reach for in a note with named footnotes. Undo puts them back if you run it by mistake.

Both keep each note and its mark together. A note whose mark is missing has no place in the reading order, so it is left at the end with its label untouched.



- Editing a footnote is ordinary editing — retype either mark, move a note somewhere else, or delete one half without the other. Nothing is locked.

- Two marks can share a label when you want to cite the same source twice; they both point at the one note.
- Exporting a document gathers the footnotes at the end under a rule, wherever you left them in the note itself.

Related Topics

- Standard Markdown Notes
- Writing and Formatting Notes
- Markdown in Notes

4.3 Linking Notes Together

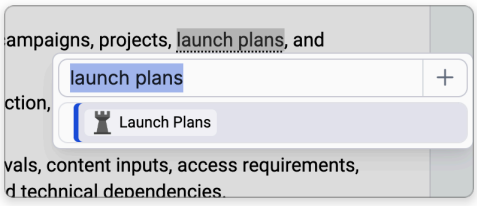
4.3.1 Links in Notes

Overview

Text in a note can link out — to **another thought** in the brain or to a **web page**. Links to thoughts are especially powerful: TheBrain can treat a link in your note as a real connection between the two thoughts, show you every note that **links back** to the current thought, and even point out **mentions** of a thought's name that aren't linked yet. This keeps your writing woven into the brain's structure instead of sitting apart from it.

Inserting a Link

Select the text you want to link and choose **Insert Thought or Web Link** — the default shortcut is `Ctrl+K` (`⌘K` on Mac). With nothing selected, the word the cursor is in or next to is linked, if there is one. The same command handles both kinds of link: pick a thought to create a thought link (you can create a brand-new thought right from the picker), or enter a URL to create a web link. The picker finds only thoughts in the brain you're in; for a thought in a different brain, see *Linking to a Thought in Another Brain* below.



When there is no text to link, the link's text is the thought's name — unless you found the thought by typing one of its **aliases**, in which case that alias becomes the link text instead (see Thought Aliases). Finding it by its label still links with the name. The link's tooltip always shows the thought's real name, whatever the text says.

Following a Link

In a note you can edit, clicking a link doesn't open it: the click only places the cursor in the link, so you can edit its text. Whenever the cursor is inside a link, a small tooltip appears beside it showing the linked thought's name or the web address. To follow the link, click that name or address in the tooltip, or open the menu button beside it and choose **Open Link** (web link) or **Activate "<the name>"** (thought link). On a computer, right-clicking the link offers the same commands.

Where a note can't be edited, a single click follows the link directly — in a brain you can only view, and in the rendered preview of the **Split** view. Links inside an embedded note also open with a single click, even while you're editing the note around them.

Following a **thought link** activates that thought. Where a **web link** opens depends on what you're using:

- **Desktop app, and tablets in the mobile app** — the page opens in TheBrain's **embedded browser** in the content area by default. To open web links in your own browser instead, go to **Settings > User > Content Area** and set **URL attachments** to **Open in external browser**; the setting covers web links in notes as well as link attachments (see Content Area Settings). **Open Link** in the link's menu always uses your own browser, whatever that setting says.
- **Web app and phones** — there is no embedded browser, so the link opens in your browser.

A link's tooltip menu offers actions that fit its kind: a **web link** gets **Open Link**, **Copy Link**, **Edit Link**, and **Remove Link**; a **thought link** gets **Activate "<the name>"** (jump to the thought), **Open in New Content Window** (desktop app; see Content Windows), **Convert Link to Embed** (for a thought in the same brain — it replaces the link with the thought's live note; see Embedded

Notes), plus Copy/Edit/Remove. Right-clicking a thought link offers the same actions plus the **Mapped link** choices below and **Add "<the name>" to Selection**. In the desktop app, `Ctrl+Shift`-click a thought link (`⇧⌘`-click on Mac) to open the thought in a content window of its own, even while you're editing the note.

Pasting a Web Address

By default, when you paste a single web address — one starting with `http://` or `https://`, and nothing else — TheBrain looks up the page and replaces the address with the page's **title**, as a link to that address. An address that points to an image is replaced by the image itself, and a YouTube or Vimeo address pasted on a line of its own becomes a video player (see Video Embeds in Notes). The same lookup happens when you add a web link with **Insert Thought or Web Link** when there is no text to link.

To keep the plain address instead:

- **Undo once** right after the title appears — the default shortcut is `Ctrl+Z` (`⌘Z` on Mac). The swap is its own undo step, so the address you pasted stays.
- **Paste Without Formatting** — the default shortcut is `Ctrl+Shift+V` (`⇧⌘V` on Mac) — inserts the clipboard's text exactly as it is and skips the lookup.
- **Turn it off** — clear **Replace pasted URL with page title** in **Settings > User > Notes**, on the **Clipboard** tab (see Notes Settings). It is on by default.

The title is not looked up inside inline code or a code block, and when a page's title can't be fetched the address is left as it is. Pasting an address while text is selected does something different: the selected text becomes a link to that address.

Linking to a Thought in Another Brain

To link to a thought in a different brain, copy that thought and paste it into your note:

1. Open the other brain, right-click the thought, and choose **Copy Thought**.
2. Return to your note, put the cursor where the link should go, and paste.

The thought arrives as a link that shows its name, and following the link opens the other brain at that thought. Because the two thoughts are in different brains, the **Mapped link** choices and **Convert Link to Embed** aren't offered for it.

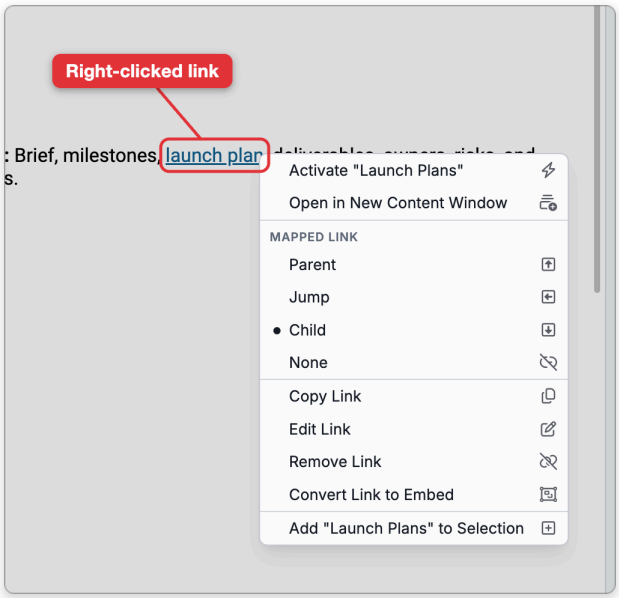
In the desktop and mobile apps this works across tabs and windows. In the web app, a thought copied in one browser tab pastes into a note in another browser tab as its name only, not as a link.

Mapped Links

A link to another thought can also be **mapped** to a real connection in the Plex, so the relationship you describe in prose becomes part of the brain's structure. Right-click a thought link: its menu has a **Mapped link** group with four choices (the menu button on the link's tooltip opens a shorter menu without them). The choices act on the actual connection between the active thought (normally the thought whose note you're writing) and the linked thought:

- **Parent**, **Jump**, or **Child** — connects the two thoughts, making the linked thought a parent, a jump, or a child of the active thought. If the two are already connected, the existing connection is changed to the one you pick.
- **None** — removes the connection between the two thoughts from the brain, including one you made in the Plex rather than from the note. The link itself stays in the note. **None** can be chosen only while the two thoughts are connected.

The checked choice shows how the two thoughts are connected right now, wherever that connection was made. The choices are offered only when you can edit the brain and the link points to another thought in the same brain.

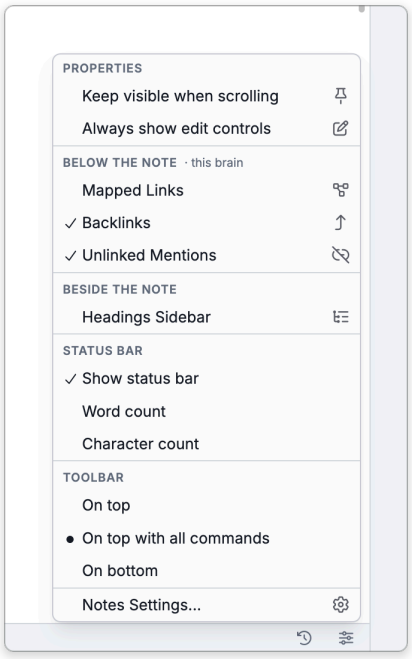


Extracting a Child Thought from Note Text

You can turn a passage of a note into its own thought. Select the text and choose **Extract Child Thought** from the note's right-click menu: TheBrain creates a **new child** of the current thought — using the selection's **first line as the new thought's name** and the **rest as its note** — and replaces the selected text with a link to that new thought. It's a quick way to split a growing note into linked pieces. (You can also **add the thoughts already linked in a passage to your selection** from the same menu.)

Backlinks and Mentions

Three display toggles control what TheBrain shows below a note. They're in the **View Options** menu (the sliders button at the right end of the notes status bar, or right-click the properties or the area below the note), under **Below the note · this brain**, and in **Settings > Brain > Personal Settings** under **Note Sections**. They apply to the brain you're in; in a shared brain they change only your own view.

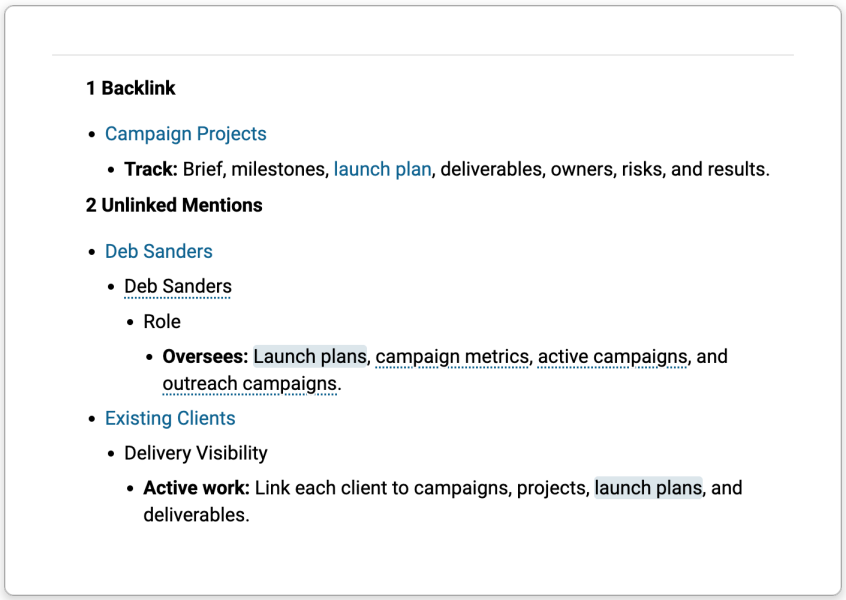


- **Mapped Links** — show a tree of this thought's own connections: the thought itself, its children, and **Parents** and **Jumps** groups (each labeled with a count, such as **2 Parents**) that you can expand. Click a thought in the tree to go to it. The tree is built from the thought's connections in the brain, not from the links in the note's text, so it appears even

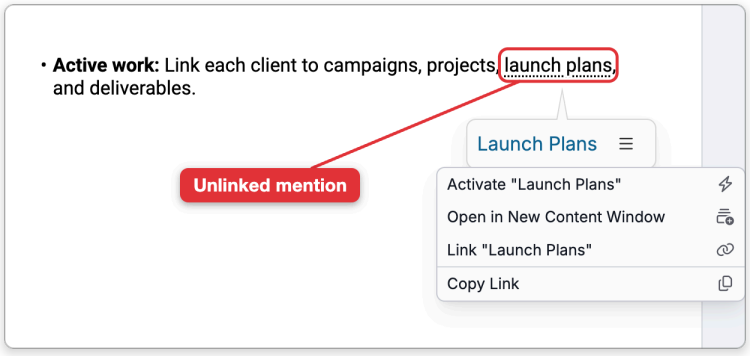
for a note that contains no links. It is off by default. (In the Cards and Tree views this is always on.)

- **Backlinks** — list other thoughts whose notes link *to* this thought.
- **Unlinked Mentions** — point out places where this thought's **name**, one of its **aliases**, or its **label** appears in other notes without being linked.

Notes that **embed** this thought's note (see Embedded Notes) are listed in the same area under their own **Embeds** heading, separately from the **Backlinks** list.



Mentions are detected automatically from thought names, aliases, and labels — you don't type a special character to create one. Matching ignores case and accents, so "Etats-Unis" in a note is recognized as the thought **États-Unis**. If the same text could belong to more than one thought, a real name wins over an alias, and an alias over a label (see Thought Aliases). When TheBrain shows an unlinked mention, you can turn it into a real link with **Link "<the name>"** from its menu — and when the same name appears several times in that note, the menu also offers **Link All <N> Mentions in This Note** to link every occurrence at once. The same all-at-once command appears in the editor when you open a mention's popover or right-click it.



When you can edit the brain, right-clicking a thought's link in the **Backlinks** or **Unlinked Mentions** list offers **Link As Parent**, **Link as Jump**, **Link as Child**, and **No Mapped Link**. They connect that thought to the active thought, or remove the connection, exactly as the **Mapped link** choices on a link in the note do.

Choosing Which Names Are Marked as Mentions

To stop TheBrain from marking thought names in your notes, or to have it mark fewer of them, open **Settings > Brain > Content Settings**, go to the **Notes** tab, and set **Show mentioned names**:

- **Always** (the default) — a thought's name, alias, or label is marked wherever it appears. In a brain that uses context-sensitive thought names, the part of a name before its comma is marked too — "Paris" for a thought named "Paris, France" (see Context-Sensitive Thought Names).
- **Full matches only** — only a thought's whole name, alias, or label is marked.
- **Never** — thought names are not marked in notes at all.

Ignore common words, just below (hidden when you choose **Never**), is on by default. It keeps a one-word name that is also an ordinary English word from being marked each time that word turns up in a note; turn it off to have such names marked as well. With **Always** or **Full matches only**, a name is recognized in both its singular and plural form.

These settings apply to the whole brain. They control which names are marked inside notes; the **Unlinked Mentions** list below a note has its own toggle, described above.

- The **Mapped Links** section below a note and the **Mapped link** choices on a thought link are two different things: the section lists the thought's connections, while the choices create, change, or remove one connection. Neither is stored in the note's text.

- Renaming a thought updates the links in notes whose text was the old name. A link whose text is an alias keeps that text, and still points at the thought.
- To keep the wording of your links when you rename a thought, turn off **Rename thought updates links** in **Settings > Brain > Content Settings** on the **Notes** tab. It is on by default and applies to the whole brain. With it off, the links still point at the renamed thought; only their text stays as you wrote it.

Related Topics

- Writing and Formatting Notes
- Creating Thoughts and Links
- Link Types and Properties
- Video Embeds in Notes
- Content Area Settings
- Notes Settings
- Copying and Duplicating Thoughts
- Context-Sensitive Thought Names

4.3.2 Embedded Notes

Overview

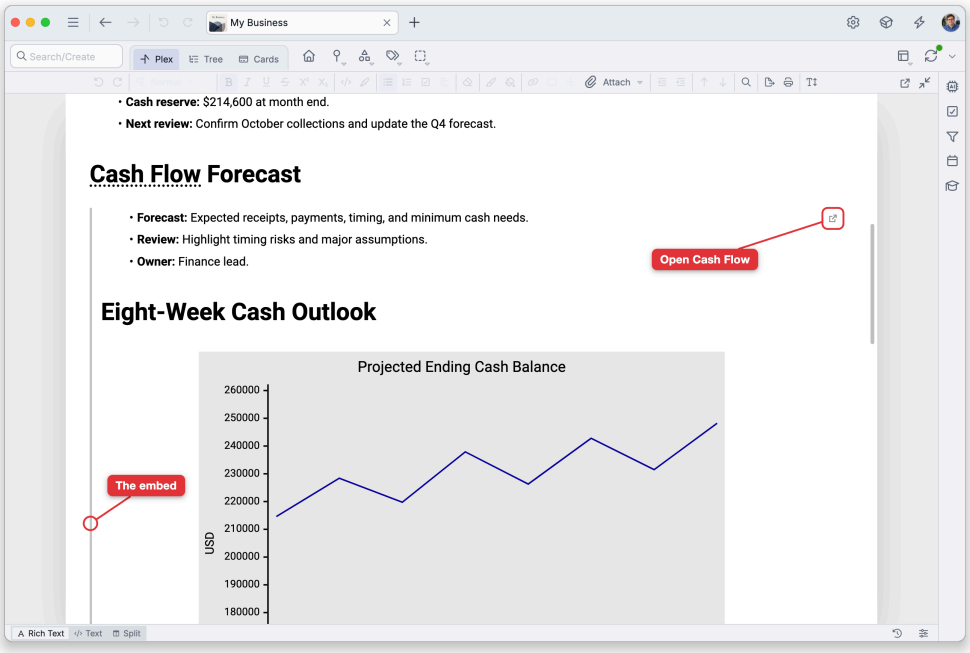
An **embedded note** shows another thought's note inside the note you're writing. The embedded content is live: it always reflects the source thought's note as it is now, so a project overview can pull in the notes of the pieces it's made of, and a meeting note can show the current state of a decision without copying it. The embed is read-only in place; you change what it shows by editing the source thought's note.

How to Embed a Thought's Note

1. In the notes editor, put the cursor on the line where the embed should go.
2. Open the toolbar's **Insert** menu and choose **Embed Thought Note**.

3. In the thought picker (its search box reads **Enter Thought to Embed**), find and choose the thought.

The thought's note appears in place as a block marked by a thin bar along its left edge. You can also hold `Shift` (`⌥` on Mac) while right-clicking in the note to reveal **Embed Thought Note** in the menu, where **Insert Thought or Web Link** normally sits. On the Mac desktop app, the menu bar's **Note > Insert** menu offers **Embed Thought Note…** as well. The command isn't offered inside a table cell. There's no default keyboard shortcut; you can assign one in **Settings > User > Keyboard** (see Keyboard Shortcuts).



Working with an Embed

- **Open the source** — A small control in the embed's top-right corner opens the source thought; pointing at it shows the thought's name. Links inside the embedded content open with a single click, even while you're editing the note that holds the embed.
- **Right-click the embed** for its own menu: **Activate Source Thought**, **Convert Embed to Link** (replaces the embed with an ordinary link to the thought, using its current name), and **Delete Embed** (removes the embed and leaves the rest of the note alone).
- **Turn a link into an embed** — A thought link's menu offers **Convert Link to Embed** for links to thoughts in the same brain (not inside a table).
- **Edit the content** by opening the source thought and editing its note there. The embed picks up the change shortly after the source note saves, and renaming the source

thought updates the corner control's name too.

- The embed behaves as a single block. Clicking it, or arrowing onto it with the keyboard, selects the whole embed; with it selected, `Enter` opens the source thought, `Backspace` or `Delete` removes the embed and nothing else, and `Esc` or an arrow key moves the cursor back into the text before or after it. You can't type into an embed — to place text right before or after one, arrow past it and start typing there.

Nesting and Placeholders

An embedded note can itself contain embeds, up to ten levels deep. Anything deeper — or an embed that leads back to a note already being shown, including a note embedding itself — shows **Nested too deeply** instead of content.

Other states show a short placeholder in place of the content:

Placeholder	When it appears
No notes	The source thought exists but its note is empty.
Missing thought: followed by the name	The source thought no longer exists, or the viewer can't access it — for example a private thought seen by someone who isn't logged in with access to the brain (see *Private Thoughts and Embeds* below).
Not available	The source is a private thought while private thoughts are hidden, a forgotten thought while forgotten thoughts are hidden, or a thought in a different brain — only thoughts in the same brain can be embedded.

Private Thoughts and Embeds

You can embed the note of a **private** thought, and what viewers see depends on whether they have access to that thought:

- **Logged in with access** — When you, or anyone on the brain's access list, view the note in the brain while logged in, the embed shows the private thought's note just like any other embed.
- **Not logged in, or no access** — When someone without access to the private thought views the note, such as a visitor to a **public** or **unlisted** brain, the private content is not displayed. In its place the embed shows **Missing thought:** followed by the thought's name.

A **shared thought page** has rules of its own: an embed there can show **Missing thought:** even to viewers who have access to the brain, and a private note can show only on a page set to **Requires Login**. See *How Links in Notes Behave on Shared Pages* in Shared Thought Pages.

This lets you keep a private thought's note in one place and still embed it in notes you share, knowing the private content only appears for people who are allowed to see it. See Private Thoughts, Brain Access and Sharing, and Shared Thought Pages.

Embeds in Backlinks

When a note embeds a thought's note, the source thought lists that note in its backlinks area under an **Embeds** heading (**Embed** when there's just one), separately from ordinary **Backlinks**. Turn the backlinks display on with **Backlinks** in the **View Options** menu — see Links in Notes.

Exporting and Printing

Export Notes, printing, and the export preview show embedded notes expanded in place, following the same depth and privacy rules as the editor; the corner control is left out. For **PDF** and **HTML** exports the dialog offers **Side bars on embeds**, under **Options**, which marks each embedded note with a bar down its left. It starts off, so the embedded content flows as if it had been typed in place. In those files a link to a thought that the document embeds goes to its embedded note, even from inside another embedded note, unless you turn off **Links go to embeds**, also under **Options**. **Markdown** and **Text** exports keep each embed as a link to its source thought rather than expanding it.

- Spellcheck, find and replace, and mention detection don't reach inside embedded content — they apply to the source note when you edit it there.
- Search matches text in the thought that owns the note, not text that only appears there through an embed.
- Embedding works in both note formats — standard Markdown and TheBrain's deprecated dialect. In the note's Markdown an embed is a single line that refers to the source thought, so the note itself stays plain text.

Related Topics

- Writing and Formatting Notes
- Exporting Brains
- Private Thoughts
- Brain Access and Sharing
- Forgetting and Deleting Thoughts
- Keyboard Shortcuts

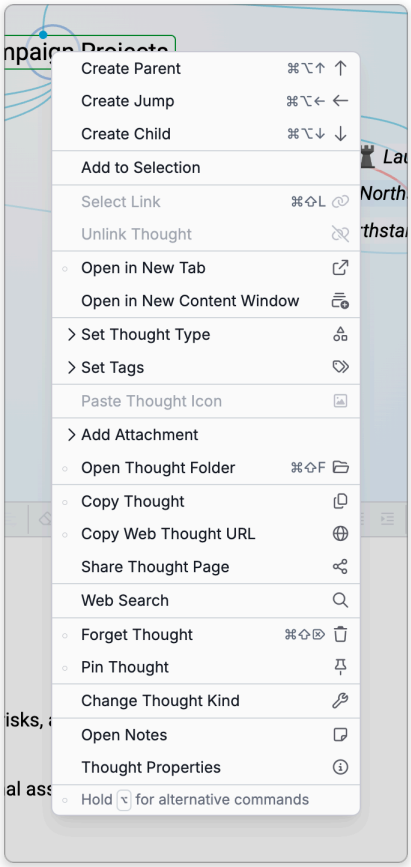
4.3.3 Copy Thought Links

Overview

Every thought can be linked to from outside itself. The **share button** next to a thought's name copies a link you can paste elsewhere — a **web** link for sharing and opening in a browser, or a **local** `brain://` link for opening straight in the desktop app. This is how you point someone (or another note, document, or app) at a specific thought.

The Two Link Types

From the share button's menu:



- **Copy Web Thought URL** — Copies a web link to the thought. Opening it loads the thought in TheBrain's web app; the person opening it needs access to the brain to see it. In the mobile app, if the brain isn't in the cloud yet, TheBrain offers to upload it first so the link will work; the desktop app doesn't offer the web link for such a brain (see below).
- **Copy Local Thought URL** — Copies a `brain://` link that opens the thought directly in the desktop app on a device that has the brain. This command exists only in the desktop app, and for a brain that is in the cloud it is hidden until you hold a key (see *Finding Copy Local Thought URL* below).

Copying the **web** link shows a confirmation notification (*Web thought URL copied to clipboard*); the local link is copied without a notification.

Finding Copy Local Thought URL

In the desktop app the share menu shows only one of the two commands at a time, depending on the brain:

- **A brain that is in the cloud** — the menu shows **Copy Web Thought URL**. Hold `Shift` (`⌥` on Mac) while the menu is open and it is replaced by **Copy Local Thought URL**. The line at the bottom of the menu is the reminder: *Hold Shift for alternative commands*, with `⌥` in place of Shift on a Mac.
- **A brain that exists only on this device** — the menu shows **Copy Local Thought URL** straight away, and doesn't offer the web one.

A thought's right-click menu lists the same two commands and behaves the same way. In the Mac desktop app, the **Thought** menu in the menu bar lists both commands without any key held. Neither command has a default keyboard shortcut.

Related Share-Menu Actions

The same share menu also publishes a thought as a public page and manages those pages:

- **Share Thought Page** / **Remove Shared Page** / **Manage Shared Pages** — see Shared Thought Pages.



- A copied link points at the original thought — it doesn't copy the thought's content. To duplicate a thought instead, see Copying and Duplicating Thoughts.
- To link from a note to a thought in another brain, copy the thought with **Copy Thought** and paste it into the note; it arrives as a link showing the thought's name. See Links in Notes.
- To show a thought to people who don't have access to the brain, share it as a page instead — see Shared Thought Pages.

4.4 Note Format, Versions, and Export

4.4.1 Standard Markdown Notes

Overview

Every note in TheBrain is stored as a Markdown file, which makes your writing portable. Historically that file used TheBrain's own Markdown dialect, with a few markers that only TheBrain understood — so opening the file in another Markdown editor showed some things incorrectly, and editing it there could damage the formatting.

Notes can now be saved as **standard Markdown** instead: GitHub-flavored Markdown, plus a small set of **note-taking extensions**. Those are additions to Markdown that note-taking apps commonly implement — highlighting (`==highlighted==`), callouts (`> [!NOTE]`), and image sizing — the kind of thing you'll find in apps such as Obsidian, Joplin, and Typora, with GitHub rendering the callout form as well. A note saved this way reads correctly in those tools, in VS Code, or in any other Markdown editor — and comes back into TheBrain intact if you edit it there.

Standard Markdown is where TheBrain is heading. **TheBrain's own Markdown dialect is deprecated**, and a future release will stop saving notes in it altogether — every brain will write standard Markdown. Notes already written in the older format will still open and read correctly; what goes away is TheBrain writing new ones that way. Switching a brain now simply gets you there sooner.

Which Brains Use It

- **Brains created by importing use standard Markdown from the start** — imports from Obsidian, Notion, Evernote, a folder of Markdown files, and the other supported formats. (Restoring a brain archive keeps whatever the archived brain used, and a brain created by the **TheBrain 8 Brain** import starts out on TheBrain's dialect.)
- **Brains you create fresh, and existing brains, keep TheBrain's dialect until you switch them.** A brain you make with **New Brain** does not start out in standard Markdown. Nothing changes until you choose to.
- **Importing into a brain you already have doesn't change that brain's format.** Only an import that creates a new brain sets it.

To see which one a brain uses, open **Settings > Brain > Content Settings** and pick the **Note Format** tab. A brain that saves standard Markdown says **Notes in this brain are saved as standard Markdown.** there; a brain still on TheBrain's dialect shows the **Switch to Standard Markdown…** button instead.

How to Switch an Existing Brain

1. Open **Settings > Brain > Content Settings** and pick the **Note Format** tab.
2. Choose **Switch to Standard Markdown…**.
3. Read the confirmation and tick both acknowledgements — **I understand this change is permanent for this brain**, and that you will update all of your devices, including mobile devices, to the version the dialog names — then choose **Switch**.

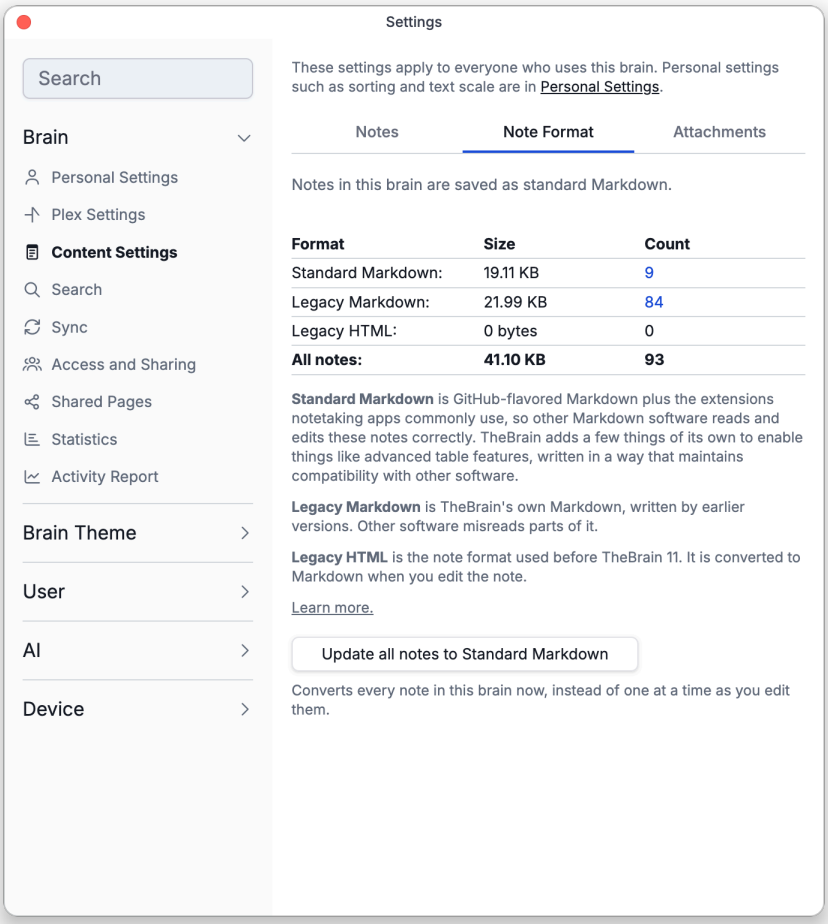
Once switched, the tab shows a plain statement that the brain saves standard Markdown — there's no toggle, because the change can't be undone. (If you got here from **Enable Footnotes and Diagrams…** in the **Insert** submenu of the note's right-click menu, it lands on this same tab.)

What Happens After You Switch

- **Notes convert one at a time, as you edit them.** A note you never touch stays exactly as it is. A note is converted when you edit and save it in the rich editor, or when you edit it in **Text** or **Split** view, which show it converted as soon as you open them.
- **Older versions of TheBrain can't open the brain afterwards.** The switch stamps the brain with a minimum app version, and a device on an older version is told to update. This is why the switch asks for confirmation, and why it's permanent.

The Note Format Tab

The tab shows a table of the brain's notes by format — **Standard Markdown**, **Legacy Markdown**, **Legacy HTML**, and an **All notes** total — with each format's size and count. Click a non-zero count to list the thoughts holding notes in that format; from the list you can jump to a thought or **Add All to Selection**.



While the brain still holds legacy notes, an **Update all notes to Standard Markdown** button offers to convert every note now instead of one at a time as you edit; it becomes available once the brain has switched. Its confirmation is headed **Not Recommended** — converting everything at once rewrites, re-indexes, and re-syncs every note, which is normally unnecessary; the only reason to do it is compatibility with external editors. It can't be undone, and it runs in the background with a progress notification that keeps going after you close Settings.

What Changes in the File

The note looks the same in the editor — only the file's syntax changes. If you read your notes as text, these are the differences you'll see:

In the editor	TheBrain Markdown	Standard Markdown
Bullet	`*`	`-`
Unchecked box	`-`	`- [ ]`
Checked box	`+`	`- [x]`
Underline	`_{text}_`	`<u>text</u>`
Strikethrough	`-{text}-`	`~~text~~`
Superscript / subscript	`^text^` / `~text~`	`<sup>text</sup>` / `<sub>text</sub>`
Text color, background, font	`:{text:(style="…"):}:`	`<span style="…">text</span>`
Inline math	`$$x$$`	`$x$`
Table	no separator row	a separator row of dashes below the header
Table of contents	`[/toc/]`	a real list of links between `<!-- toc -->` and `<!-- tocstop -->`
Image size	a suffix on the image address	the size after the alt text, separated by a bar
Line alignment	`:-:` and similar at the start of a line	an invisible `<!--tb:block align:center-->` comment

Written out, a table's separator row looks like `| --- | --- |`, and an image shown at 55% of its size looks like `![alt|55%](…)`.

Highlights (`==highlighted==`) and **callouts** (`> [!NOTE]`) are already written the common note-taking way and don't change.

A few things have no standard equivalent, so they're preserved in ways other tools still handle sensibly. A table with a cell containing a list, a heading, a quote, or a code block is written as an HTML table, which keeps its structure visible everywhere; several lines of ordinary text in a cell stay in the plain pipe table, joined by `<br>`. Column widths and table colors ride in an invisible comment above the table, so other editors ignore them and TheBrain still reads them back.

Those invisible comments all look like `<!--tb:block align:center-->` — a kind, then a list of properties that is a CSS declaration list, so anyone writing a tool can parse it with what they already have. Other Markdown applications show nothing for them and preserve them untouched, so a note keeps its alignment and table colors even after a round trip through another editor. They are used only where writing real HTML would cost something: an HTML wrapper around a paragraph would stop the Markdown inside it from working, and writing a

styled table as HTML would take away the plain pipe table that other editors let you edit by hand.

Reference-Style Links

A reference-style link is written `[text][label]`, with a line such as `[label]: https://example.com` elsewhere in the note. In a brain that saves standard Markdown, these show as ordinary links (images written `![alt][label]` show as images), and saving writes them back the same way. TheBrain writes all of those address lines together at the end of the note, so one you placed elsewhere moves there. An address line that no link uses stays as visible text.

Links you create in TheBrain are written inline, as `[text](address)`. A reference-style link is also written inline once you change it with **Edit Link** or paste an address over it; other links that share its label keep the address line. TheBrain's own Markdown dialect has no reference-style links, so in a brain that hasn't switched they show as plain text.

Working With Notes as Text

In a brain that uses standard Markdown, **Text** view and **Split** view always show standard Markdown. If the note was still stored in the older format, opening it as text shows it converted, and editing it there saves it converted — so what you read and edit is what other tools will see.

How to Find a Note's File on Your Computer

In the desktop app, a brain stored on your computer keeps each thought's files in a folder of its own. The thought's note is the file named `Notes.md` at the top of that folder, beside the thought's attachments. The folder is named with the thought's internal ID, not its name, so the practical way to reach it is from the thought:

1. Right-click the thought and choose **Open Thought Folder** — the default shortcut is `Ctrl+Shift+F` (`⇧⌘F` on Mac).
2. The folder opens in your file manager. Open `Notes.md` from there in Obsidian, VS Code, or any other editor.

Hold `Shift` (`⌥` on Mac) while the menu is open and the command becomes **Copy Folder Path**, which copies the folder's location instead of opening it.

- Images pasted into a note are kept in a hidden `.data/md-images` folder inside the same thought folder.
- In a brain that hasn't switched to standard Markdown, `Notes.md` holds TheBrain's own dialect, which other Markdown apps don't fully understand.
- The web app and the phone and tablet apps have no **Open Thought Folder** command.
- **Settings > Device > Storage** shows the folder that holds all of your brain data (see Storage Location), and **Settings > Brain > Statistics** shows which folder inside it belongs to the brain (see Brain Statistics).

Markdown Files Attached to a Thought

You can attach `.md` files to a thought as well as writing the thought's own note. Older attached files were often written in TheBrain's Markdown. When you open one in a brain that uses standard Markdown and it looks like the older format, TheBrain offers to convert it. Decline and the file is left untouched; the offer returns next time you open it.

Copying, Importing, and Exporting

- **Copy as Markdown** always copies standard Markdown, whatever the brain uses, so what you paste elsewhere is portable. **Copy as Plain Text** still copies unformatted text.
- **Importing** keeps the syntax the source was written in. An Obsidian vault, Notion export, or folder of Markdown files imports with its task lists, emphasis, and tables intact rather than being rewritten. The one exception is hard-wrapped files, whose paragraphs are broken into lines of a fixed width: depending on **Wrapped lines** in **Settings > User > Markdown Files**, their paragraphs are joined as they're imported (see Markdown Files Settings).
- **Exporting** a brain as **Markdown Files** writes each note in the format it is stored in. Notes saved as standard Markdown export as standard Markdown; notes still in the older format export in that format unless you tick **Convert to CommonMark** in the export dialog (see Exporting Brains).



- Your note's **properties** (the `---` block some tools write at the top of a file, also called frontmatter) are preserved untouched. TheBrain doesn't create or edit them, so properties you set in Obsidian survive editing the note in TheBrain.

- One difference from strict Markdown is deliberate: a single line break stays a line break, the way it looks in the editor. This matches what note-taking apps normally do. In a strict Markdown viewer such as GitHub's file preview, the lines of a paragraph may run together. Markdown files written in other apps are often hard-wrapped the other way, with each paragraph broken into short lines; for those, see *Wrapped Lines* in Markdown Files Settings.
- To edit a Markdown file that isn't in a brain, open it in a window of its own in the desktop app (see Markdown File Windows).

Related Topics

- Writing and Formatting Notes
- Tables in Notes
- Footnotes
- Markdown Files Settings

4.4.2 Note Versions

Overview

TheBrain keeps earlier versions of each note, so text you deleted or rewrote isn't gone for good. The **Note Versions** dialog lists them, newest first, and shows any one of them read-only, with its changes marked, so you can see what the note said then and copy what you need back into the note.

Versions are kept automatically — there's nothing to turn on (see *Which Saves Become Versions*). TheBrain keeps up to 20 of the versions saved at syncs and up to 20 of those kept before editing.

Versions are kept only for a thought's own note, so there is nothing to show for a thought that has no note. A Markdown (`.md`) file attached to a thought has no version history, even though it opens in the notes editor, and **Note Versions** always shows the versions of the thought's note, never of an attached file.

How to Open Note Versions

Open the thought whose note you want, then do any of these:

1. Click the **clock** button at the right end of the notes **status bar**, under the note (when the status bar is showing — it isn't shown on phones).
2. Or right-click in the note and choose **Note Versions...** at the end of the menu.
3. Or, in the thought's properties, open the **More Actions** menu — the **…** (ellipsis) button — and choose **Note Versions...**.

On the desktop app the dialog opens in a window of its own beside the note, so you can keep it open while you edit and copy passages across. It closes with the tab it was opened from. On a phone it fills the screen: tap a version to open it, use **Versions** to go back to the list, and **Older** and **Newer** to step between versions.

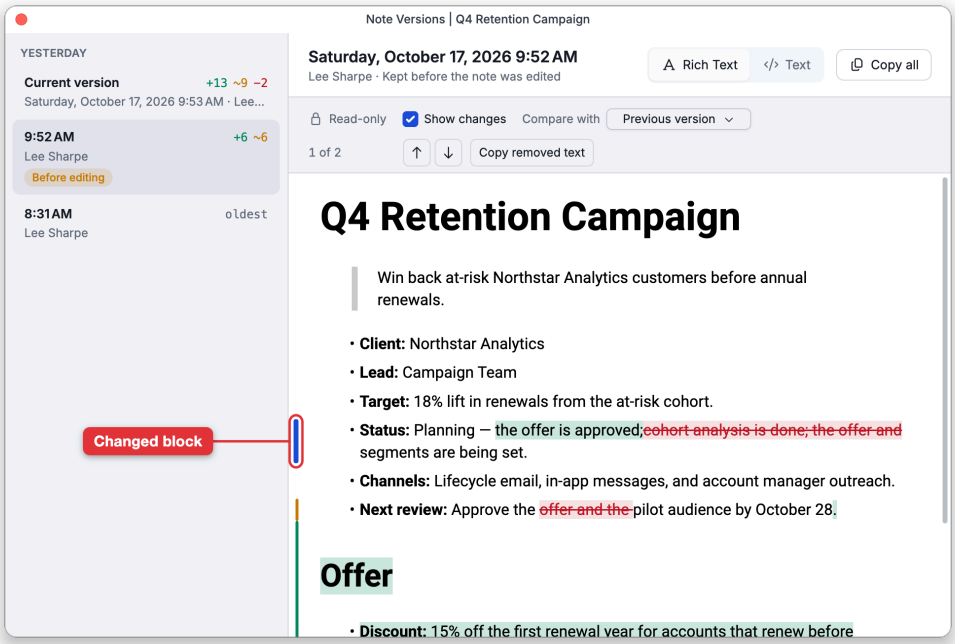
Reading the List

The list starts with the **Current version** — the note as it is now — followed by the earlier versions grouped under **Today**, **Yesterday**, and then the month and year. Each version shows when it was edited and, where TheBrain knows it, who edited it. Some are tagged:

- **Before editing** — Kept just before the note was edited, so it's the note as it was before that editing session.
- **Merged** — The result of a sync combining this note with changes made elsewhere (see Working Offline and Sync Recovery). When a sync merge changes the note, both versions it combined are kept in the list too — the note as it was here and the version that arrived — so you can compare either one with the merged result.

Each version also shows how many lines it added, changed, and removed compared with the version below it — for example **+3 ~1 −2**; hover over the numbers for the words. The oldest version, with nothing below it to compare with, is marked **oldest**.

If the note has no earlier versions yet, the dialog says so. The list reloads after the note is saved, so a dialog left open stays up to date.



Viewing a Version

Select a version to show it. Switch between **Rich Text**, which shows it formatted with your notes theme, and **Text**, which shows its Markdown source.

A version is **read-only**: you can't edit it in place or put it back in place of the note, but you can select any part of it and copy it, or click **Copy all** to copy the whole version. **Copy all** copies the version's Markdown source exactly as it's stored — the same text the **Text** view shows — whichever view you're in. In a brain that uses TheBrain's own note format, that source is in TheBrain's format rather than standard Markdown.

Showing Changes

Show changes is on when the dialog opens. In **Rich Text** view, text the version added is highlighted in green, text it removed is shown struck through in red where it used to be, and a bar in the margin marks each changed block. In **Text** view you see a line-by-line comparison with the line numbers of both versions.

Use **Compare with** to choose what the version is compared against:

- **Previous version** — The version below it in the list, so you see what that version itself changed.

- **Current note** — The note as it is now. Struck-through text is then what the note has lost since that version — handy for finding something that has since been deleted.

Step through the changes with the **Previous change** and **Next change** arrows; the counter shows which change you're on, such as **2 of 7**. **Copy removed text** copies the text the current change removed, ready to paste back into the note. Selecting only struck-through text and copying it works too; if your selection mixes kept and removed text, only the kept text is copied.

Turn **Show changes** off to read the version plainly.

Which Saves Become Versions

A note is saved many times while you write, and most of those saves don't get a version of their own. That's why the list doesn't show every save. A sync adds versions of its own when it brings in changes made somewhere else. For your own edits, TheBrain decides at each save whether to keep the text that the save is about to replace:

- **The brain has synced since the note was last saved** — The text is always kept, because it is the version the sync saw. In a brain that syncs, this gives you a version each time you edit a note that a sync has already seen.
- **The note was last saved an hour or more ago** — The text is kept, so each new editing session starts with a version.
- **The save is a large change** — The text is kept when the save changes more than ten lines, adds more than ten, or removes more than ten, or when it adds or removes more than half as many lines as the note had. These are lines of the note's Markdown text as the **Text** view shows them, so a long paragraph usually counts as one line. Each save is measured on its own, so text typed a little at a time doesn't add up to a large change, while a big paste or deletion is one.
- **The note's format changes** — The text in the old format is always kept.

A smaller edit made within the hour, with no sync in between, is saved into the note without a version.

If You Delete Everything in a Note

A note with nothing left in it isn't kept as an empty note. When you delete everything in a note, TheBrain removes the note from the thought, and **Note Versions** then shows **This thought has**

no note. instead of a list.

In the desktop and mobile apps, removing a note this way also deletes the earlier versions kept for it on that device. Note Versions can't give the text back there.

To get the text back, use **Undo** right away (see Undo and Redo). Undo brings back the note's text. It doesn't bring back earlier versions that were deleted with the note.

If you want to start a note over and keep its history, leave some text in the note instead of clearing all of it. The note then stays, and so do its versions.

- The list can differ from one device to another, and between the apps and the web.
- For recent edits in the current session, **Undo** is quicker (see Undo and Redo). For a record of who changed a thought's name, links, and other properties, see Thought History.

Related Topics

- Writing and Formatting Notes
- Callouts in Notes

4.4.3 Exporting and Printing Notes

Overview

You can take notes out of TheBrain as a document. **Export Notes** saves a thought's note as a PDF, HTML, Markdown, or plain text file, and it can join the notes of several thoughts into one document. **Print** sends the same content to a printer. Both show a preview, so you can see the result before you commit to it.

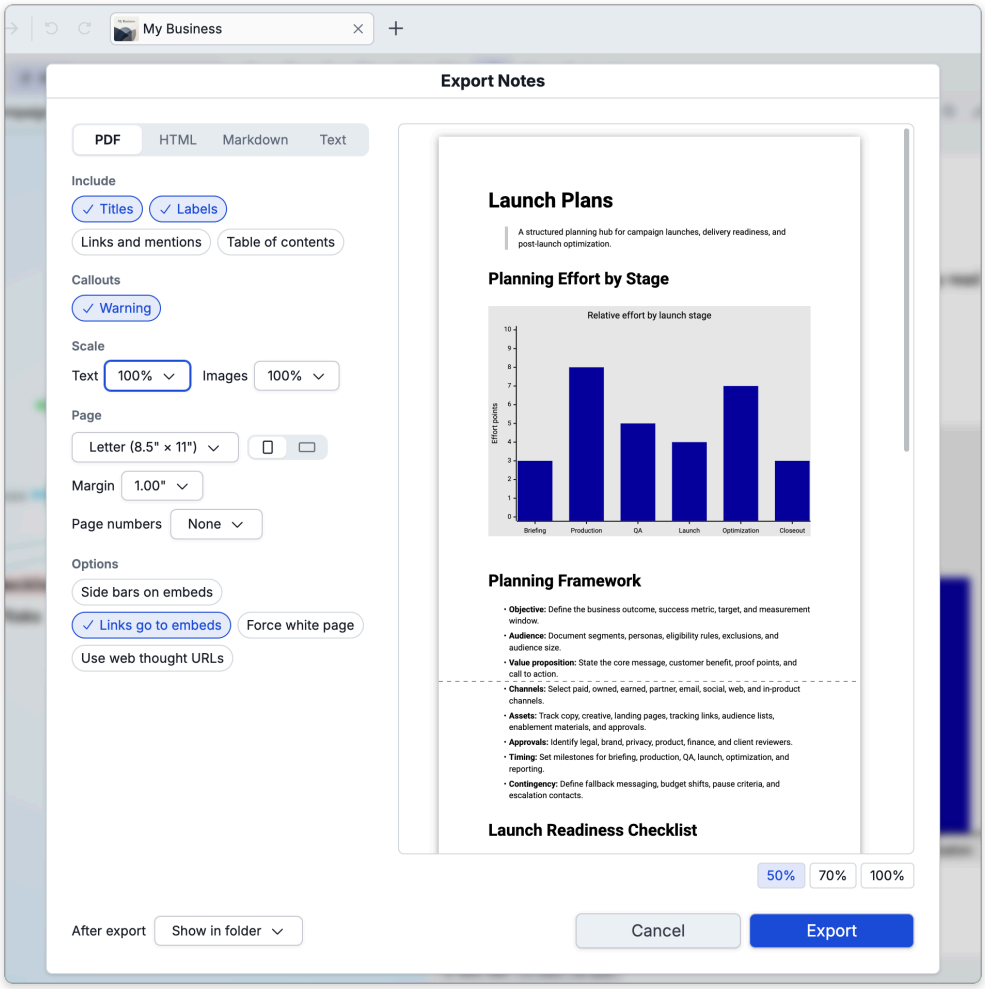
Where each one is available:

- **Export Notes** needs the installed TheBrain app, on a computer, phone, or tablet. In a browser, the notes toolbar's **Export** button tells you to download and install TheBrain, and the selection menu does not offer **Export Notes...**.

- **Print** is offered in the desktop app and in a browser on a computer. It is not offered on phones and tablets.

How to export notes

1. Choose what to export:
    - **The note you're looking at** — Click **Export** on the notes toolbar. When the toolbar is narrow, **Export** is in its **More** (…) menu. If you are viewing a Markdown file attached to the thought, that file is exported instead of the thought's note.
    - **Several thoughts** — Select the thoughts, open the selection menu by right-clicking the selection panel, and choose **Actions > Export Notes...** (see Selecting Multiple Thoughts). The notes are joined in the order you selected the thoughts. With nothing selected, **Export Notes...** exports the active thought's note. In the desktop app on a Mac, **Selection > Export Notes...** in the menu bar does the same.
2. In the **Export Notes** dialog, choose a format with the buttons at the top: **PDF**, **HTML**, **Markdown**, or **Text**. The preview on the right shows the document and updates as you change the options. The buttons under it zoom the preview.
3. Set the options you want. They are listed below.
4. Choose what happens once the file is saved in **After export**, next to the **Export** button: **Do nothing**, **Show in folder**, or **Open file**. **Show in folder** is not offered on phones and tablets.
5. Click **Export** and choose where to save the file.



The dialog remembers most of the options as you last left them, whether you exported or closed it with **Cancel**. **Table of contents** and **Side bars on embeds** are not remembered.

Export options

Which options you see depends on the format and on what you are exporting. Under **Include**, **Callouts**, and **Options**, each option is a button that shows a check mark while it is on. Click it to turn it off, and click it again to turn it back on.

Option	What it does	Offered for
Include > Titles	Puts each thought's name above its note as a heading.	All formats
Include > Labels	Adds each thought's label under its name.	All formats
Include > Links and mentions	Adds the thought's links and mentions after its note.	PDF, HTML, Markdown
Include > Table of contents	Puts a table of contents at the start of the document. In a PDF made in the desktop app, each entry also gives the page its heading is on. When the notes have no headings for it to list, the document has no table of contents.	PDF, HTML, Markdown. For PDF it is not offered on iPhone or iPad
Include > Lines between thoughts	Draws a line between one thought's note and the next.	PDF, HTML, Markdown, when exporting more than one thought
Callouts	Shows a button for each callout type found in the notes. Turn a type off to leave all callouts of that type out of the document.	All formats, when the notes contain callouts
Scale > Text	Makes the text smaller or larger, from 50% to 140%. The images keep their size.	PDF, HTML
Scale > Images	Makes the images smaller or larger, from 25% to 150% of their size in the notes, and leaves the text as it is. An image never gets wider than the text.	PDF, HTML

When you export an attached Markdown file, the **Include** options are not shown, because they are about thoughts.

PDF adds a **Page** section:

- A page size: Letter, A4, Legal, A3, A5, or Tabloid, and next to it a button for an upright page (portrait) and one for a page turned sideways (landscape).
- **Margin** — Sets the margin on all four sides.
- **Page numbers** — **None**, **Bottom Center**, **Bottom Alternating Corner**, **Bottom Right**, **Top Center**, or **Top Alternating Corner**. Page numbers are offered in the desktop app only.
- **New page for each thought** — Starts each thought's note on a new page. It is shown when you export more than one thought. Turning it on turns **Lines between thoughts** off,

and the other way round.

Other options

The **Options** section has the rest of the options.

Option	What it does	Offered for
Options > Side bars on embeds	Draws a bar down the left of each embedded note. It starts off, so embedded content flows as if it had been typed in place.	PDF, HTML
Options > Links go to embeds	Makes a link to a thought that the document embeds go to that embedded note in the document, even a link inside another embedded note. On by default.	PDF, HTML
Options > Force white page	Uses a white page with black text instead of the colors of your notes theme.	PDF, HTML
Options > Use web thought URLs	Writes links to thoughts as web addresses instead of links that open in the TheBrain app.	PDF, HTML, Markdown, when exporting thoughts
Options > Convert to CommonMark	Writes the file in CommonMark, the standard form of Markdown.	Markdown

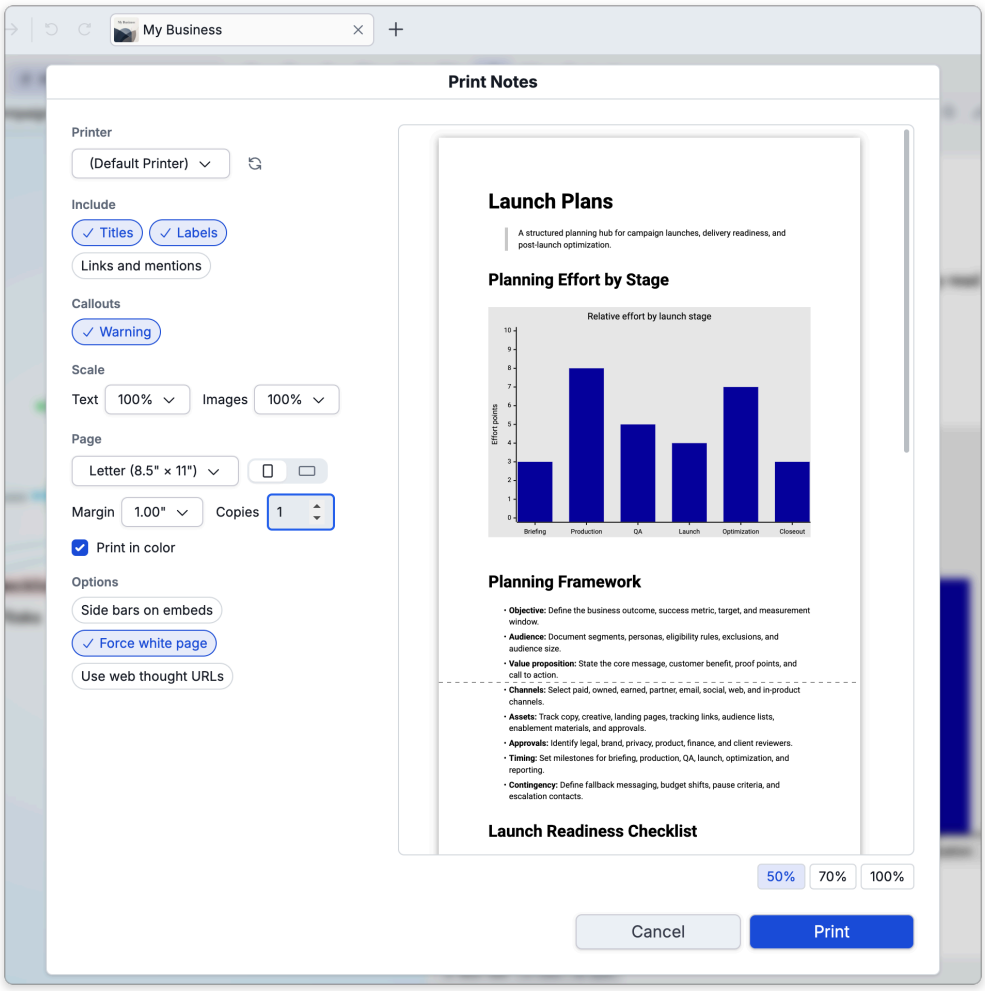
How to print notes

1. Start printing in one of these ways:
    - Click **Print** on the notes toolbar to print the note you're looking at, or the attached Markdown file you are viewing. When the toolbar is narrow, **Print** is in its **More** (…) menu.
    - Select thoughts and choose **Actions > Print...** in the selection menu.
    - Press the default shortcut, `Ctrl+P` (`⌘P` on Mac). In the desktop app on a Mac you can also choose **File > Print...** from the menu bar.

    The selection menu, the shortcut, and the Mac menu bar print the notes of the selected thoughts, joined in the order you selected them. With nothing selected, they print the active thought's note.
1. In the desktop app, the **Print Notes** dialog opens with a preview. Choose a **Printer**, or leave **(Default Printer)**. **Include**, **Callouts**, **Scale**, and **Options** work as they do for an

export, except that **Table of contents** isn't offered. The **Page** section has a page size, the portrait and landscape buttons, **Margin**, the number of **Copies**, and **Print in color**. When you print more than one thought, **New page for each thought** is offered too. **Force white page**, under **Options**, starts turned on for printing.

2. Click **Print**.



In a browser on a computer there is no **Print Notes** dialog. TheBrain hands the notes straight to the browser's own print dialog, where you choose the printer and page settings.

- Footnotes are gathered at the end of the document, under a rule, wherever they sit in the notes themselves (see Footnotes).
- An HTML export saves the notes' images in an `md-images` folder next to the HTML file, so keep the two together when you move or share the file.
- The **Text** format always leaves out callout markers and keeps the callouts' titles and body text (see Callouts in Notes).

- To export a whole brain rather than the notes of chosen thoughts, see Exporting Brains.

Related Topics

- Writing and Formatting Notes
- Callouts in Notes
- Embedded Notes
- Footnotes
- Diagrams in Notes

4.4.4 Brain Content Settings

Overview

Content Settings (under **Settings > Brain**) holds the options that shape notes and attachments in a brain. The page has three tabs: **Notes**, **Note Format**, and **Attachments**.

These are brain settings, so each brain has its own values. They are saved with the brain rather than with your personal view of it, so in a shared brain a change made by anyone with write access applies to everyone who uses the brain, as a note at the top of the page says. Settings that are yours alone, such as sorting and the text scales, are in *Personal Settings*.

How to Change the Spacing of Notes

1. Open **Settings** (the default shortcut is `Ctrl+,`, `⌘,` on Mac) and choose **Brain > Content Settings**.
2. Pick the **Notes** tab.
3. Set **Line spacing** and **Line gap**. Their values and defaults are listed under *The Notes Tab*.

The note you have open updates right away, and so do the brain's notes wherever they're shown: in previews and cards, in **Note Versions**, and in notes you export or print.

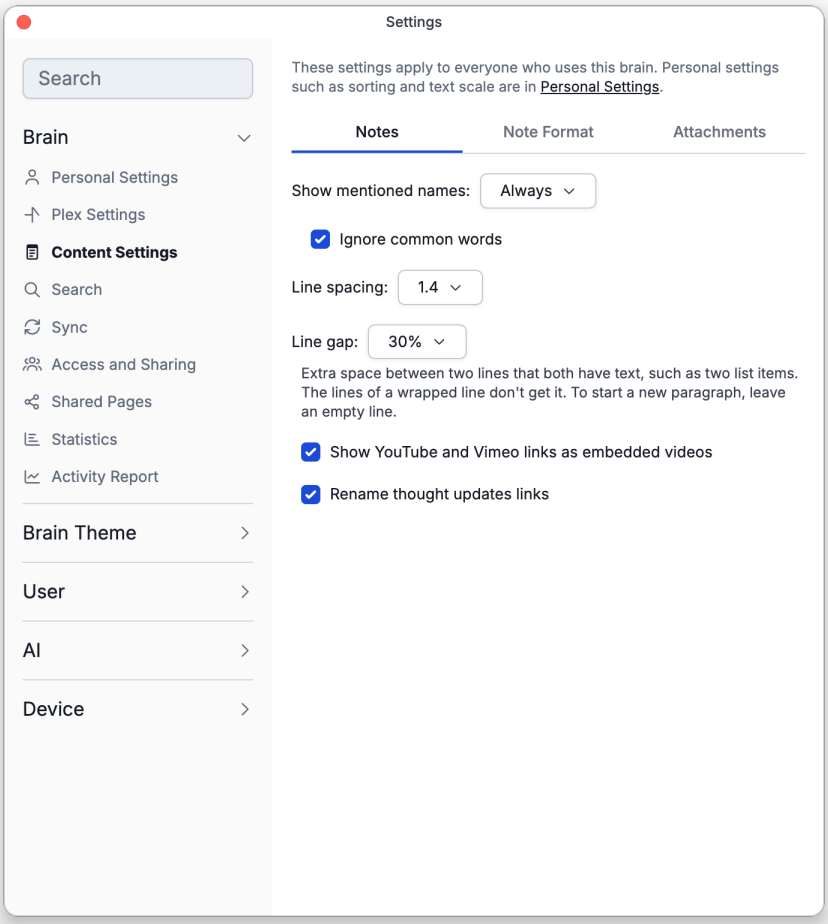
Line spacing (also called line height) is the space between the lines of text, including the lines that a long paragraph wraps into. **Line gap** adds extra space between two lines that both have text, such as two list items, or two lines you separated with `Enter`:

- The lines that a long line wraps into don't get the gap, and neither does a line break made with `Shift+Enter` (`⇧Enter` on Mac), so those lines sit closer together.
- An empty line gets no gap and is one line tall. To start a new paragraph, leave an empty line, as you would in a word processor. The gap always stays well under an empty line, so a new line never looks like a new paragraph.
- A heading gets half a line of extra space above it, whatever the gap, so it sits closer to the text it introduces.
- Code blocks, horizontal rules, tables, diagrams, videos and embedded notes are spaced like lines of text. With **Line gap** at **0%**, headings and these blocks keep the spacing the content theme gives them.

Neither setting is part of the content theme: **Customize Content** under **Settings > Brain Theme** sets the colors, fonts, and heading styles of notes, but not the space between lines. To make note text larger or smaller instead, use **Note text scale** in *Personal Settings*.

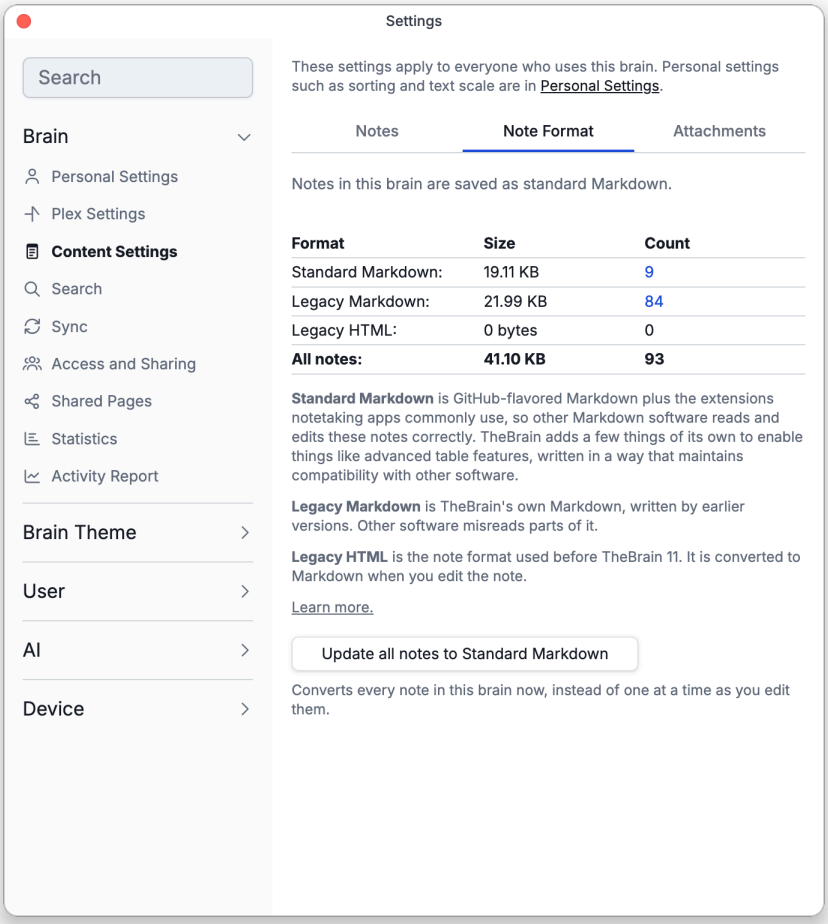
The Notes Tab

- **Show mentioned names** — Whether TheBrain recognizes the names of other thoughts in a note's text as mentions: **Always** (the default), **Full matches only**, or **Never**. **Full matches only** recognizes a thought only where its whole name appears. See Links in Notes for what mentions are and how to turn one into a link.
- **Ignore common words** — Shown unless **Show mentioned names** is **Never** (on by default). With it on, a thought whose name is a single common English word is not picked up as a mention.
- **Line spacing** — The space between the lines of note text: **1.2**, **1.4**, **1.6**, **1.8**, or **2.0** (the default is **1.4**).
- **Line gap** — Extra space between two lines that both have text: **0%**, **10%**, **20%**, **30%**, or **40%** of a line (the default is **30%**).
- **Show YouTube and Vimeo links as embedded videos** — On by default. See Video Embeds in Notes.
- **Rename thought updates links** — On by default: renaming a thought also updates the note links whose text was its old name. See Links in Notes.

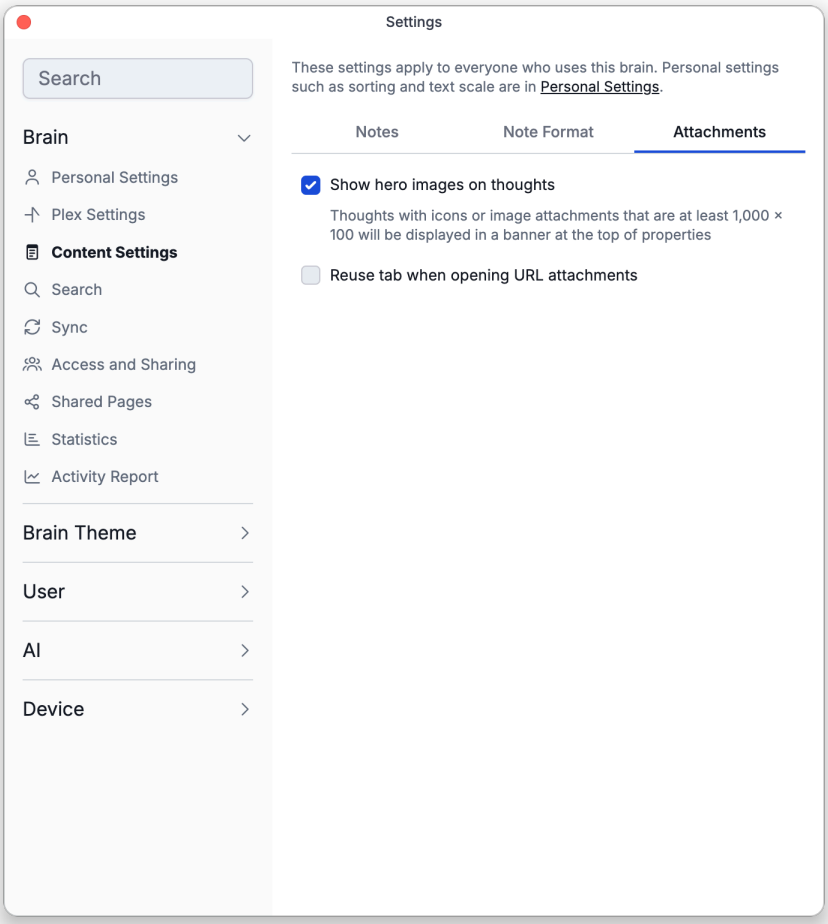


The Note Format Tab

This tab lists the brain's notes by format, and it is where you switch the brain to standard Markdown with **Switch to Standard Markdown…**. See Standard Markdown Notes.



The Attachments Tab



- **Show hero images on thoughts** — On by default. When a thought's icon or image attachment is a large enough picture, it is shown as a banner at the top of the thought's properties in the content area.
- **Reuse tab when opening URL attachments** — Off by default, and not shown on phones and tablets. It works only in the web app: with it on, the URL attachments and the web links in notes, backlinks and mentions that you open there go to one browser tab that is reused, instead of a new tab each time. The desktop app shows the option but doesn't use it, because it has its own setting for where web pages open (see Content Area Settings).

- The options for the sections below a note (mapped links, backlinks, and unlinked mentions) and for the attachment layout are not on this page. They are in *Personal Settings*.
- Options for the notes editor itself, such as spellcheck, pasting, and outlining, are personal and are in *Notes Settings*.

Related Topics

- Settings Overview
- Notes Settings
- Content Area Settings

4.5 Attachments and Files

4.5.1 Linking to External Files and Folders

Overview

On the desktop app, a file or folder attached to a thought can be kept in one of two ways. An **internal** file is copied into the brain, so it travels with the brain and syncs to your other devices. An **external** file or folder is only **linked**: it stays exactly where it is on your computer, and the thought holds a pointer to that location. Opening the attachment opens the original. Linking is only in the desktop app: on the web and mobile apps, **Upload File** always stores the file in the brain.

How to Link by Dragging and Dropping

Drag a file or folder from Finder or File Explorer into TheBrain, and hold a modifier key as you drop it to make a link instead of a copy:

To…	Windows	Mac
Link to the file where it is	Hold `Alt`	Hold `^`
Copy it into the brain	Hold `Ctrl`	Hold `⌥`
Move it into the brain	Hold `Shift`	Hold `⇧`

Where you drop decides which thought gets the link:

- **On the content area** — the link is added to the thought shown there.

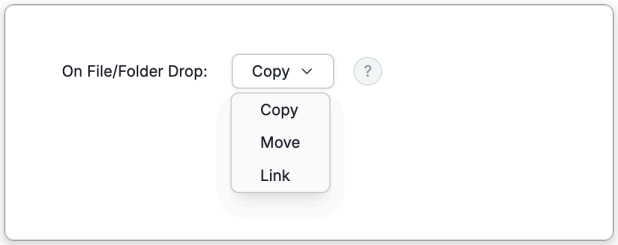
- **On a thought in the plex** — the link is added to that thought.
- **On a drop zone around the active thought** — the parent, child, and jump zones each create a new thought, named after the file or folder, with the link attached to it.

You can drop several files and folders at once.

How to Make Linking the Default for Drops

With no modifier key held, a drop does whatever **On File/Folder Drop** is set to, which is **Copy** to begin with. To link by default:

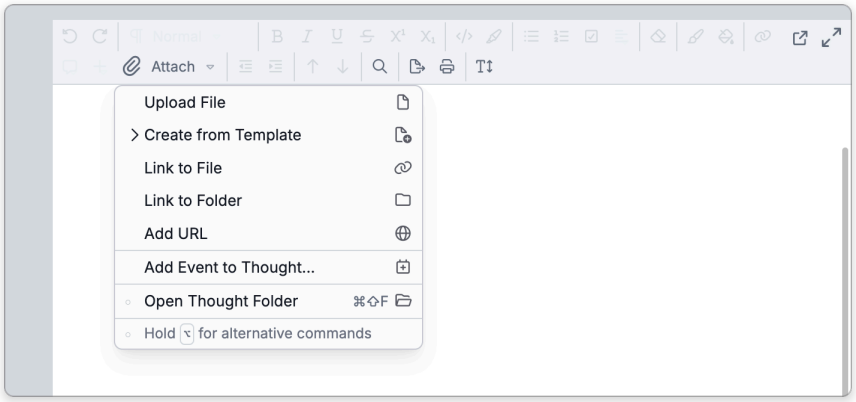
1. Open **Settings > User > General**.
2. Set **On File/Folder Drop** to **Link**.



Every plain drop now creates a link. You can still hold the modifier keys in the table to copy or move a particular drop instead. On Linux the modifier keys have no effect while dragging, so this setting is the way to choose what a drop does.

How to Link from the Add Attachment Menu

1. Open the **Add Attachment** menu — the paperclip (**Attach**) button on the notes toolbar — or right-click a thought and choose **Add Attachment**.
2. Choose **Link to File** or **Link to Folder**.
3. Pick the file or folder. **Link to File** lets you pick several files at once.



Each one is attached as a link, and the originals are left where they are.

How to Turn an Attached File into a Link

A file or folder already stored inside the brain can be moved out and left linked:

1. Right-click the attachment and choose **Move File out of Brain** (**Move Folder out of Brain** for a folder).
2. Pick the folder on your computer to move it to.

The file is moved to that folder and the attachment becomes a link to it, so it no longer uses space in the brain. If the destination already has an item with that name, you're asked whether to **Replace** it, **Keep Both**, or **Stop**.

To go the other way, right-click a linked attachment and choose **Move File into Brain**, which moves the original into the brain, or **Copy File into Brain**, which stores a copy and leaves the original in place. Either way the attachment becomes an internal file and starts counting toward storage.

Copy File out of Brain is different: it saves a copy to the folder you pick and leaves the attachment internal, so it does not create a link.

What Counts Toward Storage

- **External files and folders don't count** toward cloud storage, and neither do web links. Only the link is stored in the brain, so a linked file takes up no space in it, however large the file is.

- **Internal files and folders do count**, along with notes and icons.

To see the split for a brain, open **Settings > Brain > Statistics**. **External files** and **External folders** are listed below the **Total storage used** row, outside the total, and the size of the external files is marked *Not included in storage used*. Your overall allowance is under **Settings > User > Cloud Capacity**.

- A link depends on the original staying put. If the file is moved, renamed, or deleted outside TheBrain, or you open the brain on a computer that doesn't have it at that path, opening the attachment shows a **File Not Found** message with the path it expected.
- Renaming a linked attachment inside TheBrain, with **Rename Attachment**, renames the original file or folder on your disk and keeps the link pointing at it — see Managing Attachments.
- After reorganizing folders, you can repair many links at once with **Replace in Brain**, looking in **External attachment paths** — see Find in Brain.
- Because a linked file isn't stored in the brain, it isn't included in a brain archive (`.brz`) backup. Back up linked files yourself.
- Deleting a linked attachment removes only the link. The original file or folder on your disk is untouched.

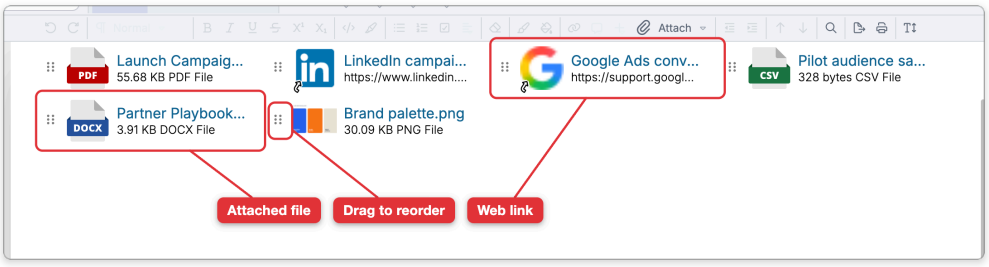
Related Topics

- Brain Statistics
- Find in Brain

4.5.2 Viewing Attachments

Overview

A thought's attachments appear in the **attachments section** of the content area, where you can preview them in place or open them in their own app. You can also change how the section is laid out to suit how many attachments a thought has.



Previewing and Opening

- **View Attachment** previews a supported attachment inline in the content area.
- **Open Attachment** opens the attachment externally — in the app or browser that handles that file type. The default shortcut is `Ctrl+O` (`⌘O` on Mac).

When you view from the thought and it has more than one viewable attachment, TheBrain shows a **Select an attachment to view** picker so you can choose which one.

Which Files Preview Inside TheBrain

On the **desktop app**, clicking one of these opens a preview in the content area:

- **Images** — PNG, JPG/JPEG, GIF, WEBP, BMP, and SVG.
- **PDFs**, **HTML files**, and **web links** — shown in the embedded browser.
- **Markdown (`.md`) files** — opened in the notes editor, where you can edit them (see *Markdown Files* below).
- **Plain-text and code files** — such as `.txt`, `.log`, `.json`, `.xml`, `.ini`, and `.cs`, shown as text.
- **Video and audio** — played in a built-in media player. Video files include MP4, MOV, WEBM, and M4V; audio files include MP3, WAV, M4A, AAC, FLAC, and OGG. If a particular file won't play there, use **Open** to play it in another app.

Other types, such as Word, Excel, or ZIP files, have no preview: clicking one opens it in its default app.

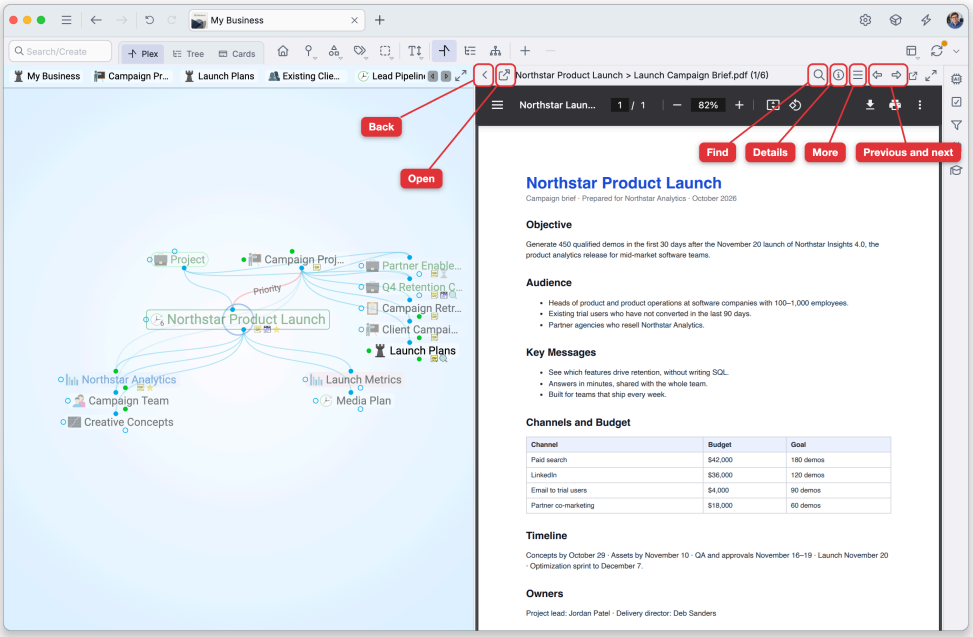
In the **web app**, images, Markdown and `.txt` files, video, and audio preview in the content area, and a PDF opens in a preview window. A web link opens in a new browser tab, and a file such as a Word or Excel document is downloaded instead.

In the **mobile app**, on phones and tablets alike, an image opens in the device's own image viewer rather than in a preview. PDFs, web pages, and HTML files preview in the embedded browser on tablets, as on the desktop app, but on phones they open in another app, and on Android a PDF always opens in the system viewer.

What a click does also follows the **File attachments** and **URL attachments** settings — see Content Area Settings.

The Preview Toolbar

A preview in the content area has a toolbar across its top:



- **Back** (the arrow at the left) — Closes the preview and returns you to the thought's notes and attachments. Changes you made to a previewed Markdown file are saved first.
- **Open** — Opens the attachment in its own app. In the web app this button is **Download**.
- **The title** — Shows the thought and the attachment's name. When the thought has more than one attachment, it also shows where you are among them, such as *(2/5)*.
- **Find** (the magnifying glass) — Shown for PDFs, web pages and HTML files in the desktop app; it opens the preview's find bar (see *Finding Text in a Preview*).
- **Details** — Shows the attachment's name, type, size, and modified and created dates, plus the address or path of a link.

- **More** — A menu with the attachment's other commands, such as **Rename Attachment** and **Delete**.
- **Previous** and **Next** — Move to the thought's previous or next attachment without closing the preview. They wrap around at either end, and are unavailable when the thought has only one attachment. An attachment that can't be previewed shows its details instead.

A web page preview adds a second row with back, forward, and reload buttons and an address field, where you can type an address and press `Enter`.

Editing a File You Opened in Another App

On the **desktop app**, **Open Attachment** opens the brain's own copy of the file in its usual app, such as Word or Excel, so saving there changes the attachment itself. TheBrain notices the changed file, updates the attachment's size and date, and syncs the change like any other. A linked file is the original on your disk, so your edits go straight to it.

If you have only read access to the brain, the change isn't kept in the brain: TheBrain renames your edited copy, adding `_modified_` and the date to its name, and an **Unauthorized File Change** message tells you the change won't be synced.

In the **web app**, a file such as a Word or Excel document is downloaded to your computer, so changes to that download are not in the brain. To update the attachment, attach the edited file to the thought again and choose **Replace** when asked — see Adding Attachments.

Markdown Files

A Markdown (`.md`) file attached to a thought is more than a preview — it opens in the same editor your notes use, and you can edit it in place.

- Everywhere but on phones, its status bar offers the same three views a note has: **Rich Text**, **Text** (the file's raw Markdown), and **Split** (both side by side). Switching to **Rich Text** returns to the file's formatted editor with the preview still open. You need write access to the brain for the switcher to appear.
- The file opens in whichever Markdown format it was written in, so a file written elsewhere reads correctly. Once you edit and save it, it is written back as standard Markdown.
- A file whose paragraphs are hard-wrapped (broken into lines of about the same width) shows each paragraph whole and is wrapped the same way again when saved, as

Wrapped lines in **Settings > User > Markdown Files** decides. **Join Wrapped Lines** in the file's view options changes this for one file, for everyone who uses the brain (see Markdown Files Settings).

- **Print** prints the Markdown file you are looking at, rather than the thought's notes.
- Creating a document from the file — HTML, PDF, CommonMark, or plain text — uses the file's own format, so its styling carries through.

Layout Options

From **View Options** you can set how the attachments section looks:

- **View Attachments as List** — a compact list.
- **View Attachments as Grid** — larger tiles, good for images.
- **Compact Attachments Display** — tighten the section to take less room.

The same choices are in an attachment's right-click menu under **Show attachments as**, labeled **Grid**, **List** and **Compact**, and in **Settings > Brain > Personal Settings** under **Attachments**. The layout is kept for each brain; in a shared brain it's your own choice and doesn't change what others see.

Finding Text in a Preview

On the installed desktop app, previews of PDFs, web pages, and HTML files have their own find bar: press `Ctrl+F` (`⌘F` on Mac) while the preview is open, or click the magnifying-glass button in the preview's header. Type to search — the bar shows a match counter and **Next match** / **Previous match** buttons. Opening a search result that matched inside a file attachment opens that attachment's preview with the find already running.

Searching Inside Attached Files

Search looks inside attachments, not only at their names: for common document types such as PDF, Word (`.docx`), and plain text, TheBrain reads the text of a file that is stored in the brain, and lists the matches under **Notes and Attachments** in the search results. Linked files and files inside an attached folder are found by name only. See Finding and Creating Thoughts for the full list of file types and the limits.

- On the desktop app, if TheBrain isn't allowed to read a linked folder, opening it shows an **Access Denied** message with the folder's path. Check the folder's permissions, or ask its owner or an administrator for read access. On a Mac, you can also give TheBrain access in **System Settings > Privacy & Security > Files and Folders**.

Related Topics

- Personal Settings
- Finding and Creating Thoughts

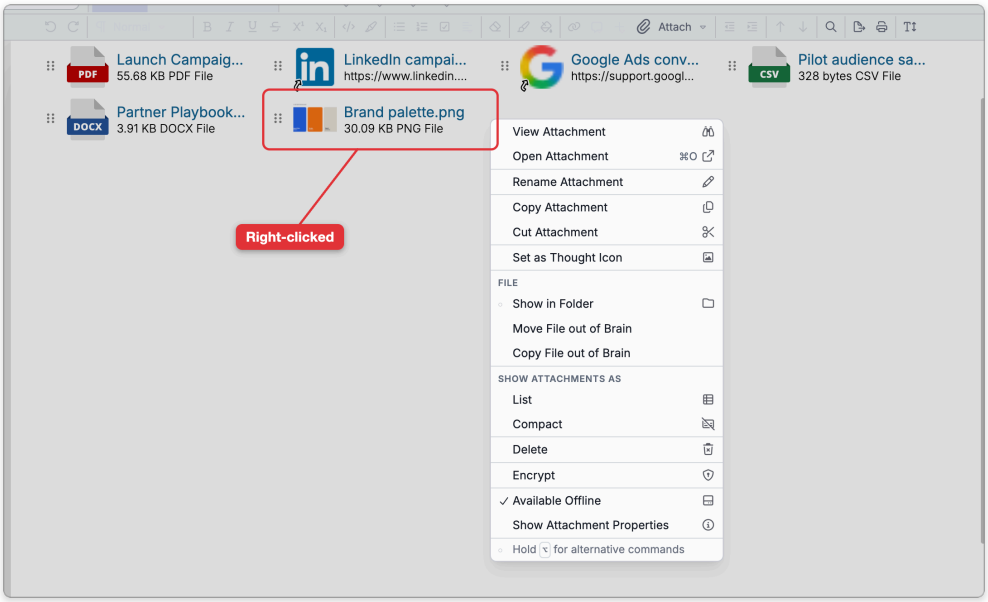
4.5.3 Managing Attachments

Overview

Once a file or link is attached, you can manage it from its right-click menu — rename it, remove it, download a copy, and (on the desktop app) move it between the brain and your computer or turn an image into the thought's icon. Which actions appear depends on your platform, since some file operations only make sense on the desktop.

Everywhere

- **Rename Attachment** — Give the attachment a clearer name. For a file or folder this renames the actual file — see *What Renaming Does to the File* below.
- **Delete** — Remove the attachment from the thought. See *Recovering a Deleted Attachment* below for how to get one back.
- **Edit Location** — For a web-link (URL) attachment, update the address it points to. (This only appears on link attachments.)
- **Download Attachment** — Save a copy of the attachment to your device. This one is on the **web app** only, for file attachments.



Reordering Attachments

When a thought has several attachments, you can **drag** them into a different order — the new order is saved with the thought. This works on both the web and desktop.

- **Desktop app** — Drag an attachment by the dotted **grip handle** at its left edge. The handles appear when a thought has two or more attachments. Dragging the attachment itself does something else there: it drags the file, folder, or link out of TheBrain to another app or folder.
- **Web app** — There is no handle; drag the attachment itself to its new place.

There is no command that sorts attachments by name or date; you arrange them by dragging.

Desktop App

On the desktop app, an attachment's menu also offers:

- **Copy Attachment** / **Cut Attachment** — Put the attachment's file or folder on the clipboard, so you can paste it onto another thought (for a web link, **Copy Attachment** copies its address). Pasting onto a thought always adds a copy and leaves the original attachment where it was, even after **Cut Attachment**, so to move an attachment, paste it and then delete the original. See Adding Attachments for the paste commands.

- **Set as Thought Icon** — Use an image attachment as the thought's icon, or use a web link's site icon (favicon) as the thought icon (see Thought Icons).
- **Move in or out of Brain** / **Copy in or out of Brain** — Move or copy a file or folder between the brain's internal storage and your computer. The menu names the direction for the attachment you clicked, such as **Move File out of Brain** or **Copy Folder into Brain**. Moving a file out of the brain leaves the attachment as a link to the file's new location, and moving or copying a linked file into the brain makes it an internal file. If the thought's note shows the file as an image, or shows images from the folder you move out, the note keeps a copy of each of those images, so they still show in the note. Copying a file out of the brain only saves a copy and leaves the attachment as it was. A folder copied or moved into the brain brings all of its files, but hidden files, temporary and lock files, and other files whose names start with a dot, `~`, or `$` or end with `~lock~` or `.Ignore` aren't listed in it, found by search, or synced — see *Files Left Out of a Folder* in Adding Attachments. TheBrain doesn't copy or move a symbolic link into the brain, or a folder with a link among the files it would list — see *Links* in Adding Attachments. Linked files don't count toward cloud storage — see Linking to External Files and Folders.
- **Show in Folder**, **Copy File Path**, and **Show Attachment Properties** — Work with the underlying file on disk. A few of these items, such as **Copy File Path**, appear only while you hold the alternate-commands key, `Shift` (`⌥` on Mac), with the menu open.

What Renaming Does to the File

Rename Attachment changes the real item, not just a label in TheBrain:

- **A file or folder stored in the brain** — the copy inside the brain is renamed. If the thought's note shows the file as an image, or shows images from the folder, the note's paths to them are changed to the new name, so the images keep showing. **Undo** reverses this in two steps: first the note's paths, then the name.
- **A linked file or folder** (desktop app) — the original on your disk is renamed. It stays in the same folder, and the link follows the new name.
- **A web link** — only the name shown in TheBrain changes; the address stays the same.

If you delete a file's extension while renaming it, TheBrain asks whether to **Keep Extension** or **Remove Extension**. A rename can be reversed with **Undo**, which puts the old file name back. In the web app, a folder or a linked file or folder can't be renamed.

Recovering a Deleted Attachment

Deleting an attachment removes it from the thought right away, with no confirmation, unless the thought's note shows it as an image. Then TheBrain asks first, because the note would show a missing image in its place; the same goes for a folder whose images the note shows. **Cancel** is the choice when you press `Enter`. To get it back, use **Undo**: choose **Main Menu > Edit > Undo**, or press `Ctrl+Z` (`⌘Z` on Mac). The undo history lasts as long as the brain stays open on that device — syncing doesn't clear it — so undo before you close the brain (see Undo and Redo). This works on the web app too.

On the **desktop app**, a file or folder that was stored inside the brain gets a second safety net: when you delete it, a copy is also placed in your computer's trash — the Finder **Trash** on Mac, the **Recycle Bin** on Windows, or the trash on Linux — under the attachment's own file name. You can restore it from there like any other file, even after the brain has closed and the undo history is gone. This applies only to files and folders kept inside the brain that you delete yourself; on the web and mobile apps, undo is the only way back.

A *linked* external file or folder is never moved: deleting the attachment only removes the link, and the original on your disk is untouched.

Conflict Copies

A file whose name starts with `[Conflict]` — for example `[Conflict] report (Ada Lovelace 2026-09-20 1405 UTC).txt` or `[Conflict] Notes (…).md` — is a version TheBrain saved so it wouldn't be lost: the same file was edited on two devices before they synced, or **Undo Anyway** put a note or file back over a change that had arrived in the meantime. (A note edited on two devices is merged instead, with any clash shown inside the note as a pair of **Conflict** callouts, so sync makes no copy for it.) The name gives whose version it was and when that edit was made (in UTC). It's an ordinary attachment, so open it and compare it with the note or file that won. Once you're satisfied that the current version has everything it should — or you've merged in what was missing — delete the conflict copy; it has served its purpose. If you'd rather keep it as a document in its own right, rename it without the prefix. See Working Offline and Sync Recovery for the rules behind these copies.



- Encryption is covered separately — see Encrypting Attachments.

Related Topics

- Undo and Redo
- Working Offline and Sync Recovery

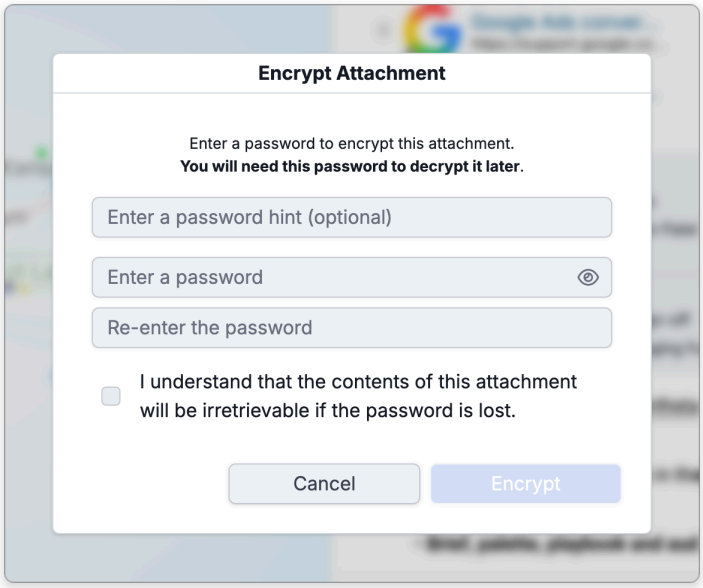
4.5.4 Encrypting Attachments

Overview

For sensitive files, the desktop app can **encrypt** an attachment with a password so its contents can't be read without that password, even by others who can see the thought in a shared brain. You choose a password when you encrypt, and you'll need that same password to open or decrypt the file later.

Encrypting

1. Right-click the attachment and choose **Encrypt**.
2. Enter a password twice — the dialog has a **Re-enter the password** field and won't proceed until both entries match. Optionally add a **password hint** to jog your memory later. The hint is shown in the decrypt dialog before any password is entered, so anyone who can open the attachment can read it; never put the password itself in the hint. *You'll need this password to decrypt the file* — TheBrain can't recover it for you.
3. Acknowledge that the contents will be irretrievable if the password is lost, then confirm. The attachment is replaced with its encrypted form.



The encrypted attachment keeps its name with `.brenc` added to the end — `report.pdf` becomes `report.pdf.brenc` — and the unencrypted file is removed. A `.brenc` file is simply a file TheBrain has encrypted. Only a file stored in the brain can be encrypted, not a linked file, a folder, a web link, or a note.

Opening an Encrypted Attachment

On the desktop app, click the encrypted attachment, or right-click it and choose **Decrypt**. TheBrain asks for the password, makes a **temporary decrypted copy**, and shows that copy in its folder in Finder or File Explorer so you can open it in another app. The encrypted attachment itself stays as it is.

- **Changes to the temporary copy are not saved back** to the encrypted attachment. The first time you decrypt this way after starting TheBrain, you tick a box to confirm you understand that.
- Temporary decrypted copies are deleted automatically when you quit TheBrain. To remove them sooner, choose **Main Menu > File > Remove Decrypted File Copies** (the command appears while a copy exists).
- While a temporary copy is still there and the encrypted file hasn't changed, opening the attachment again shows the same copy **without asking for the password**. If you share the computer, remove the copies when you're done.

Editing an Encrypted File

Because edits to the temporary copy are discarded, change an encrypted file this way:

1. Right-click it and choose **Decrypt Permanently**, then enter the password. This replaces the encrypted file with the decrypted file, so it's no longer protected.
2. Open and edit the file as usual.
3. Right-click it and choose **Encrypt** to protect it again.

On the Mobile App and the Web App

An encrypted attachment syncs to your other devices still encrypted.

- **Mobile app** — Tap the encrypted attachment and enter its password (the hint is shown). TheBrain then hands a temporary decrypted copy to your device to open, in its file viewer or another app. Changes made there are not saved back to the encrypted attachment. The **Encrypt**, **Decrypt**, and **Decrypt Permanently** commands aren't on the mobile app.
- **Web app** — The web app can't decrypt. An encrypted attachment can only be downloaded there in its encrypted `.brenc` form; to read it, open the brain in the desktop or mobile app.



- Encrypting or decrypting needs the file's bytes on this device. On a light-synced brain where the file hasn't downloaded yet, you'll see **Attachment Not Available** — connect to the internet and try again.
- Encrypted attachments show a distinctive padlock file icon, are never shown as image thumbnails, and can't be used as a thought icon while encrypted.
- To keep whole *thoughts* out of shared and AI access, see Private Thoughts.

4.5.5 Offline Attachments and Light Sync

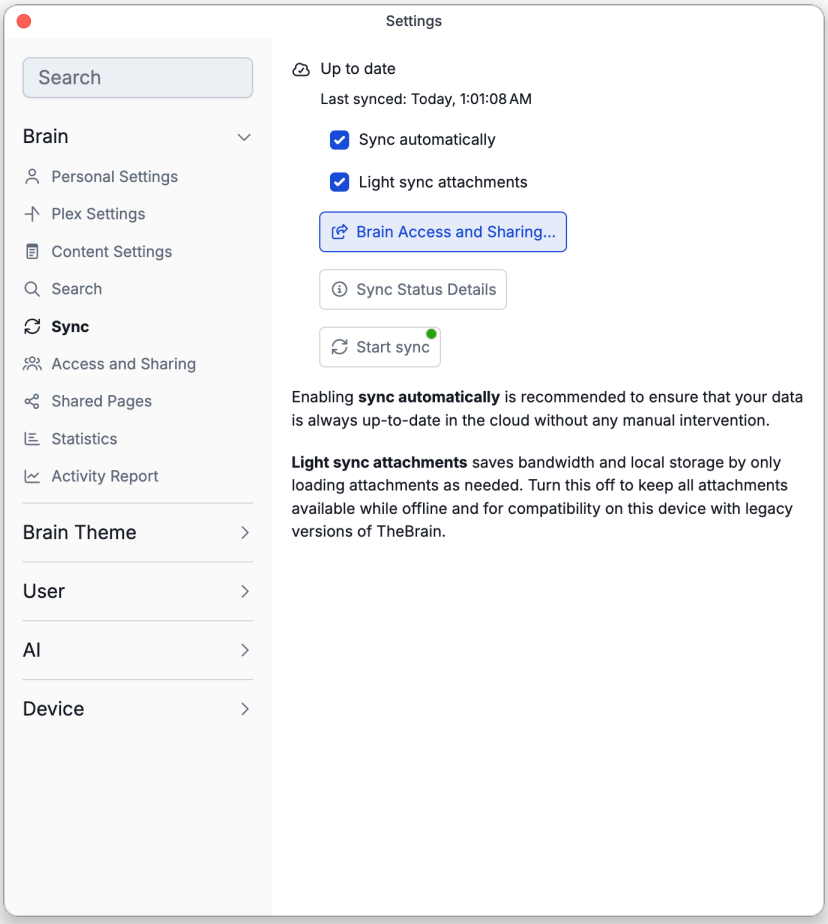
Overview

When a brain syncs to the cloud, its attachments can take up a lot of space and bandwidth. **Light sync** keeps a brain lean by downloading attachments only when you actually open them, rather than pulling every file onto your device. If you want particular files available without a

connection, you mark them **Available Offline** so they're kept locally. These are desktop and mobile features.

Light Sync (Whole Brain)

Light sync attachments is a per-brain setting. Turn it off to keep *all* attachments downloaded and available offline (full sync). See Light-Sync Attachments for the full setting.

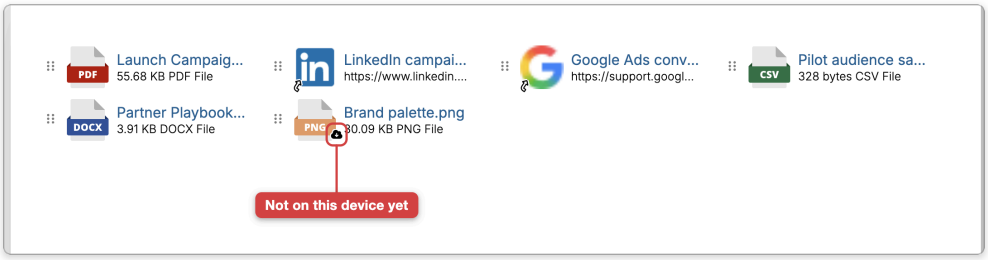


- **It is on by default.** Every synced brain uses light sync until you turn it off. A brain that exists only on one device, and has never been synced to the cloud, keeps all of its files there; the setting becomes available once the brain is synced.
- **It is kept separately on each device.** The choice is not part of the brain or of your account, so turning light sync off on your desktop does not change it on your laptop or phone. Set it on each device under **Settings > Brain > Sync**, or right-click the brain in the brains list and choose **Light sync attachments**.
- **Turning it off** first downloads every attachment that is not on the device yet.

- **Turning it back on** removes nothing. Files already on the device stay there; to free space, turn off **Available Offline** for individual files.

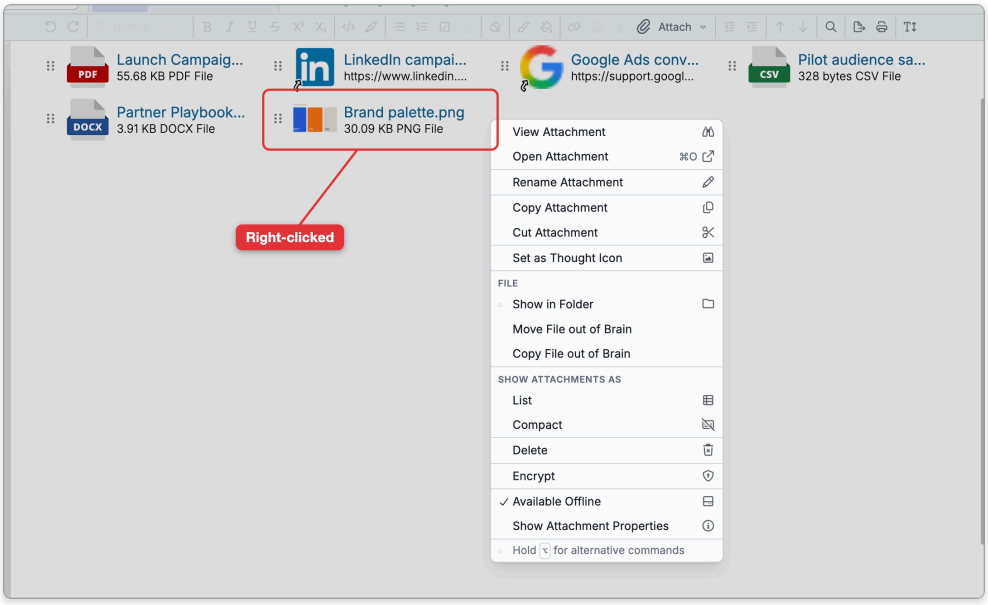
The Cloud Badge on an Attachment

An attachment whose file is not on this device yet shows a small **cloud badge** — a cloud with a download arrow — on its icon. Click the attachment to download the file: the percentage is shown beside its name while it downloads, and then it opens or previews as usual. Once the file is on the device, the badge is gone.



Available Offline (Single File)

For a light-synced brain, you can keep individual files on your device:



- Right-click a file attachment and toggle **Available Offline** on to download and keep it locally, or off to remove the local copy (the file stays in the cloud).

When a brain is fully synced, every attachment is already available offline, so **Available Offline** shows checked and can't be changed.

Some files come down with every sync even in a light-synced brain, including Markdown (`.md`) and plain-text (`.txt`) file attachments. For these, **Available Offline** also shows checked and can't be changed while the file on your device is up to date. If such a file is missing from your device or out of date, the toggle is available so you can download it.

Turning **Available Offline** on needs a connection to the cloud. Turning it off is only possible once the cloud has everything the file on your device contains — if you've just added or edited the file, the toggle stays unavailable until those changes have synced, so a local copy with unsynced changes is never removed.



- Some actions warn you when they involve light-synced (not-yet-downloaded) attachments — for example, merging thoughts, backing up to a brain archive, or deleting a cloud brain.

5 Calendar, Reminders, and To-Dos

5.1 Timeline and Calendar

Overview

The **Timeline** is TheBrain's calendar view. It comes in two presentations: the **Timeline Bar**, a horizontal strip of your events along the bottom of the brain page, and the **Day Navigator**, a side panel with a scrollable list of your events grouped by day and an optional mini month **calendar** at the top. It's where you see what's coming up and jump to any date.

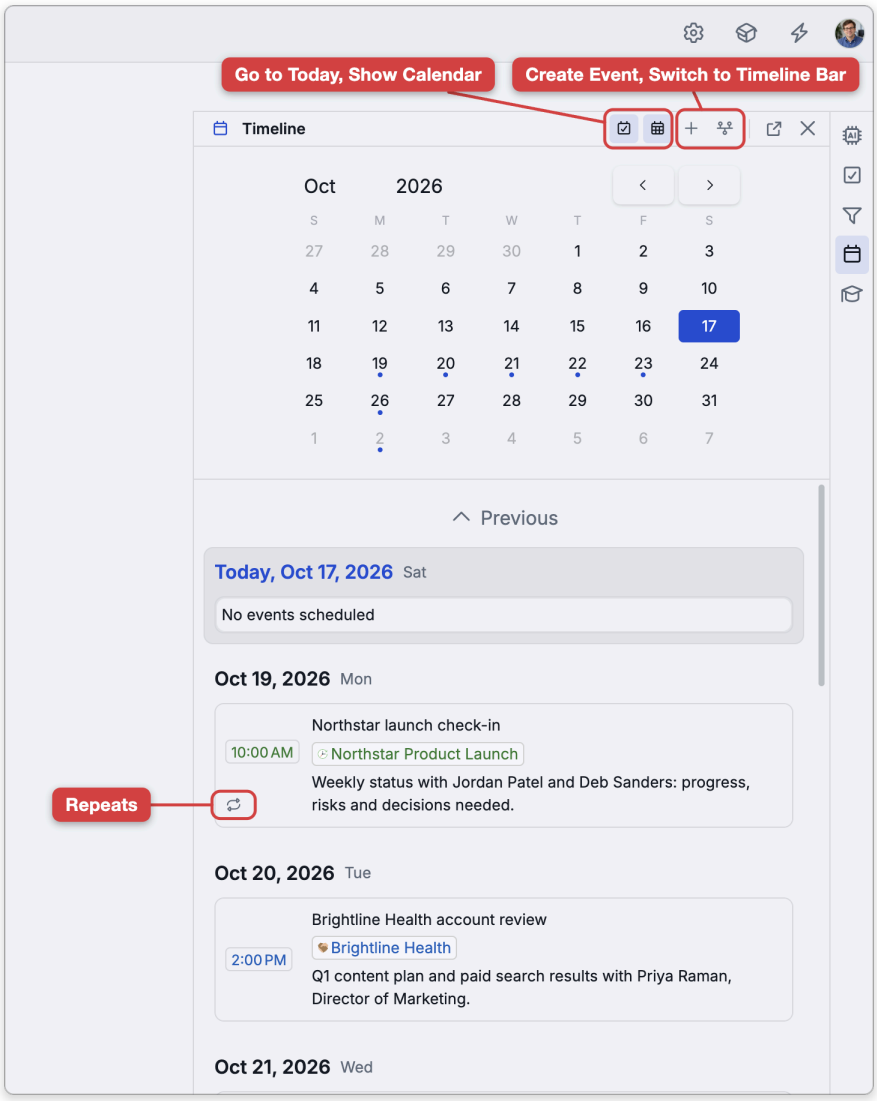
Opening the Timeline

Click the **Timeline** button in the tools panel, alongside the other side panels (AI Chat, To Do List, and Report). By default it opens the **Timeline Bar**, a strip along the bottom of the brain page — not the side panel.

To get the panel with the calendar and the day-by-day list instead, click **Switch to Day Navigator** in the bar. In the Day Navigator, **Switch to Timeline Bar** in the header takes you back to the bar.

Whichever one you switch to becomes the one the **Timeline** button opens from then on. The same choice is the **Timeline style** setting under **Settings > User > Options**, which offers **Timeline bar** (the default) and **Day navigator panel**. Changing the setting while the Timeline is open swaps it on the spot. See Options Settings.

The Day Navigator panel shows:



- A **mini calendar** at the top (toggle it with **Show Calendar**), marking days that have events. The mini calendar, the first day of the week (**Auto**, **Monday**, or **Sunday**) and week numbers are also set under **Settings > User > Options** (see Options Settings).
- A **day-grouped list** of events below, which you scroll through by date.

Moving Around

In the Day Navigator:

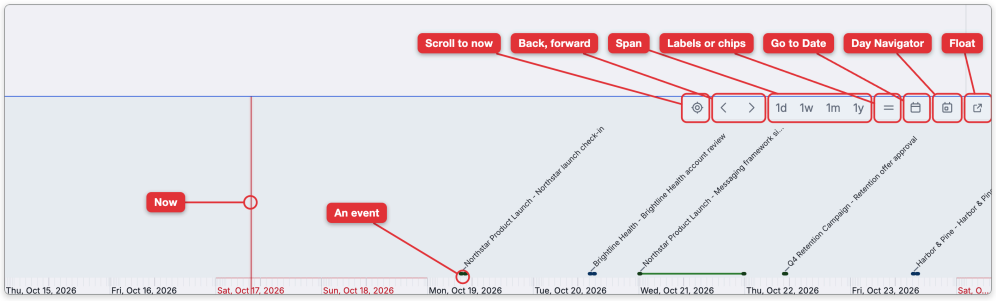
- **Go to Today** jumps the list and calendar back to the current day.
- Click a day in the mini calendar to focus the list on that date.
- Days with nothing scheduled show *No events scheduled*.

When the Timeline is wide enough — for example in a wide floating window — the calendar sits on the left and the days scroll beside it, instead of the days appearing below the calendar.

The Timeline Bar

The **Timeline Bar** is a horizontal strip of your events along the bottom of the brain page, which you can make taller or shorter by dragging its top edge. The date and time scale runs along the bottom of the bar, and your events are drawn above it. The buttons in the bar's top-right corner, from left to right:

- **Scroll to Now** — Brings the current time into view.
- **Scroll Back** and **Scroll Forward** — Move through time.
- **1d**, **1w**, **1m** and **1y** — Show a day, a week, a month or a year across the bar.
- **Switch to Event Chips** / **Switch to Flag Labels** — Draws each event as a chip along the scale, as long as the event lasts, or as a slanted flag with its thought's name and its summary (the default). On a phone the bar always uses chips.
- **Go to Date...** — Opens a calendar for jumping to a day.
- **Switch to Day Navigator** — Changes to the side panel.
- **Open in separate window** — Floats the Timeline (see *Floating the Timeline* below).



On phones the bar isn't docked along the bottom of the brain page; the same horizontal timeline opens in a sheet instead, as described under The Timeline on Phones below.

Creating, Moving, and Zooming in the Timeline Bar

The Timeline Bar has no **Create Event** button. You work on the bar directly:

- **Create an event** — Click the date and time scale along the bottom of the bar to start a new event at that time, or drag along the scale to cover a range of time. The event dialog opens with those times filled in. A click starts a one-hour event; when the bar is zoomed out so far that it works in whole days, it starts an all-day event.
- **Go to an event's thought** — Click an event. If the event has no thought, or its thought is already the active thought, the event dialog opens instead.
- **Move an event to another time** — Drag it left or right. For a repeating event, only the occurrence you drag is moved.
- **Edit, set a reminder, or delete** — Right-click an event and choose **Edit Event**, **Set Reminder**, or **Delete Event**.
- **Zoom** — Roll the mouse wheel, or drag up or down in the bar with the mouse.
- **Scroll through time** — Drag left or right on an empty part of the area above the scale, or scroll sideways.
- **On a touch screen** — Drag to scroll and pinch to zoom. To move an event, press and hold it and then drag; press and hold and then let go to open its menu.

When you zoom out very far, events are no longer shown; zoom in again to see them.

The Timeline on Phones

On a phone there are two ways to see the Timeline:

- **The sidebar's Timeline tab** shows the Day Navigator — the mini calendar and the day-by-day list.
- **More Actions > Timeline** on the action bar opens the horizontal timeline in a sheet titled **Timeline**. You can pin **Timeline** to the action bar like any other button.

In the sheet, drag to scroll through time and pinch to zoom. Tap an event for a card with **Go to Thought** (when the event has a thought) and **Edit**; going to the thought closes the sheet. Press and hold an event and then drag to move it, or let go to open its menu. Tap the date scale to start a new event.

Floating the Timeline

The Timeline can float instead of staying in the sidebar: click **Open in separate window** in its header, or in the Timeline Bar's top-right corner. It floats as one tool, so switching between the

Day Navigator and the Timeline Bar keeps it floating; when the Timeline Bar floats, its buttons move into the window's header. See Floating Tools Panels.

- To create and edit the events shown here, see Events; to be alerted before one, see Reminders.

Related Topics

- Using TheBrain on a Phone

5.2 Events

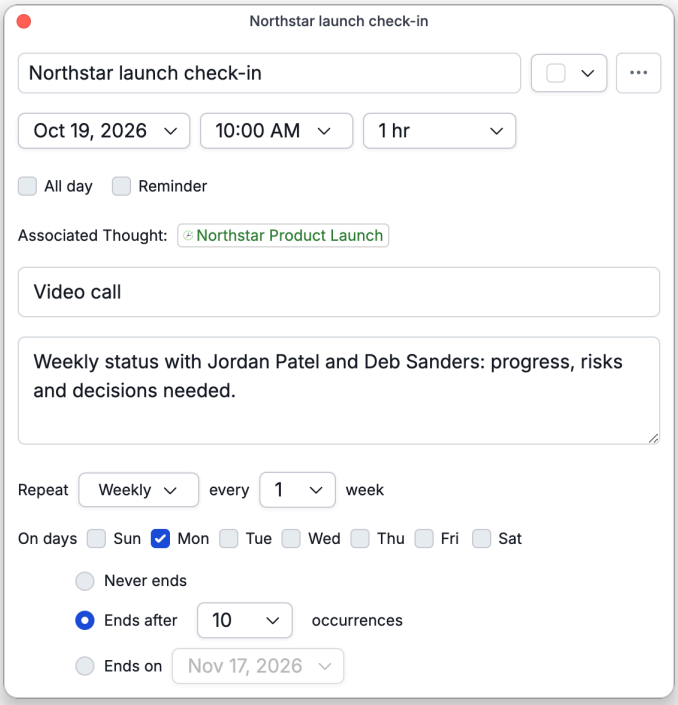
Overview

An **event** is something scheduled — a meeting, a deadline, an appointment — with a date and time, shown in the Timeline. Events can stand on their own or be tied to a **thought**, so a project's milestones live with the project. They can also repeat on a schedule.

Creating an Event

- From the Timeline — in the Day Navigator panel, choose **Create Event** to make one on the selected day; in the Timeline Bar, click the date and time scale along the bottom of the bar. See Timeline and Calendar.
- From a thought, choose **Add Event to Thought...** to create an event already linked to it; the steps are under Adding an Event to a Thought below.

In the event dialog you set the **summary**, **start date** and **time**, and **duration** — or mark it **All day** (an all-day event can span multiple days with an **end date**). You can also optionally set a **location**, **description**, **color**, an **associated thought**, and a **reminder** (see Reminders). The associated-thought picker can create a thought on the spot — type a name that doesn't exist yet and choose to create it; you stay in the event dialog.



The event dialog has no Save button: whatever you changed is saved when you close it, however you close it. A new event with neither a summary nor an associated thought is simply discarded. If you changed an occurrence of a recurring event, closing the dialog first asks which occurrences the change applies to; choosing **Cancel** there takes you back to editing.

On the desktop app, the event dialog opens in a window of its own beside the brain window, and you can keep working in the brain while it is open. Each event gets its own window, so you can have several events open at once; opening an event that is already open brings its window to the front. The window closes, saving your changes, when you close its tab or switch to another tab; for a recurring event, the change then applies only to the occurrence you were editing.

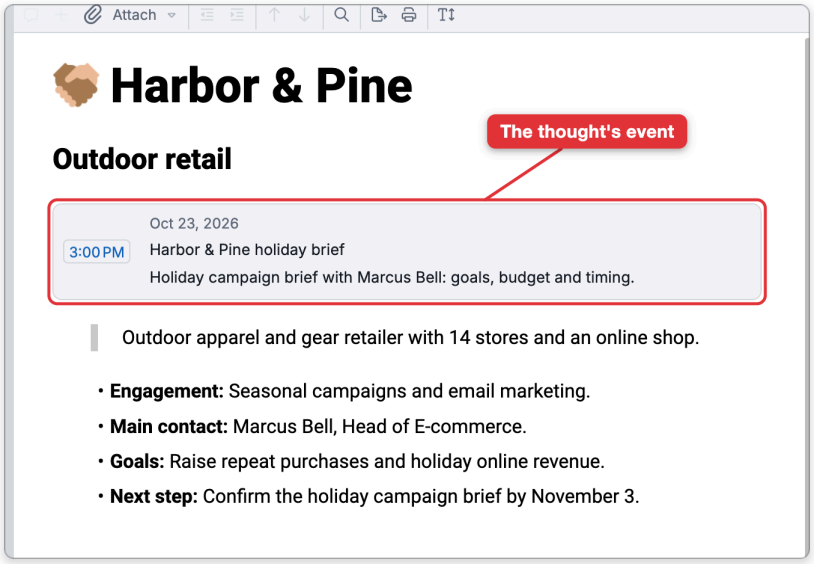
Adding an Event to a Thought

To put a date, a deadline, or an appointment on a thought, create the event from the thought itself:

1. Right-click the thought and choose **Add Attachment > Add Event to Thought...**. The paperclip (**Attach**) button on the notes toolbar, in the thought's content area, opens a menu with the same command.

2. The event dialog opens with that thought already set as the **associated thought**. Set the date and time and any other details.
3. Close the dialog to save the event.

The thought's events are then listed in its content area, below its attachments, in date order, and they appear in the Timeline. Click an event in that list to open it. Adding an event needs a brain you can edit.



Repeating Events

Set **Repeat** to make an event recurring — **Daily**, **Weekly**, **Monthly**, or **Yearly**, with an interval (e.g. every 2 weeks), specific days of the week (for weekly repeats), and an end condition (never, after a number of occurrences, or on a date).

Editing and Deleting

- **Edit Event** changes its details; **Delete Event** removes it. Both are in an event's right-click menu, along with **Set Reminder**; **Delete Event** is also under the **Actions** (three-dot) button in the event dialog.
- **Delete Event** removes a one-time event right away, without asking you to confirm. A recurring event asks first when you delete one of its occurrences in the Timeline, as described next. In a thought's content area a recurring event is listed once, and **Delete Event** there deletes the whole series right away, without asking.

- For an occurrence of a **recurring** event, TheBrain asks whether a change or deletion applies to **only this** occurrence, **all the following**, or **all in the series**. (When you edit a recurring event and shift its start date or time, that change can only apply to the single occurrence you moved.)

Undoing an Event Change or Deletion

Creating, editing, and deleting events are all recorded in the brain's undo history. If you deleted or changed an event by mistake, choose **Main Menu > Edit > Undo** to bring the event back or reverse the change — the default shortcut is `Ctrl+Z` (`⌘Z` on Mac). This works as long as the brain hasn't been closed since; see Undo and Redo.

- Permanently deleting a thought also deletes the events tied to it.

Related Topics

- Adding Attachments
- Undo and Redo

5.3 Reminders

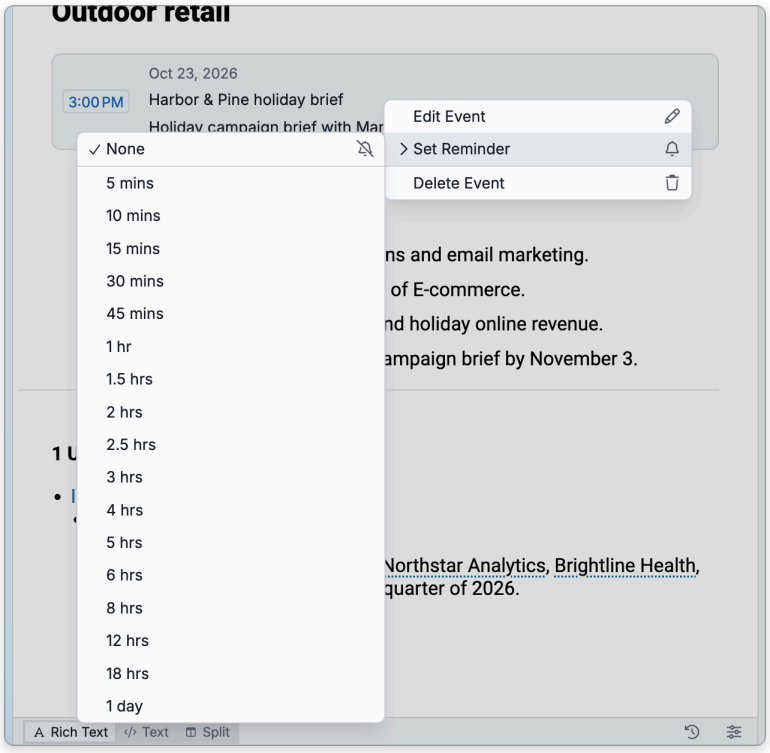
Overview

A **reminder** nudges you before an event so it doesn't slip by. You set how far ahead — up to 4 weeks before — and when that time arrives, TheBrain shows a reminder you can act on, snooze, or dismiss.

Setting a Reminder

Set a reminder on an event (see Events) by right-clicking the event, for example in its thought's content area, and choosing **Set Reminder**, or by ticking **Reminder** in the event dialog. Choose how far ahead of the event to be reminded, or clear it:

- **The Set Reminder menu** offers 5 minutes to 18 hours, and **1 day**, before the event. Choose **None** to clear the reminder.
- **The event dialog** keeps the reminder as you set it, whether there or in the **Set Reminder** menu. The list in the box beside **Reminder** goes up to 24 hours; for any other time, type a value in minutes, hours or days, such as `20min`, `2h` or `3 days`. Anything over 4 weeks becomes 4 weeks. Untick **Reminder** to clear it.



For an occurrence of a recurring event, setting a reminder asks whether it applies to **only this** occurrence, **all the following**, or **all in the series**.

When a Reminder Is Due

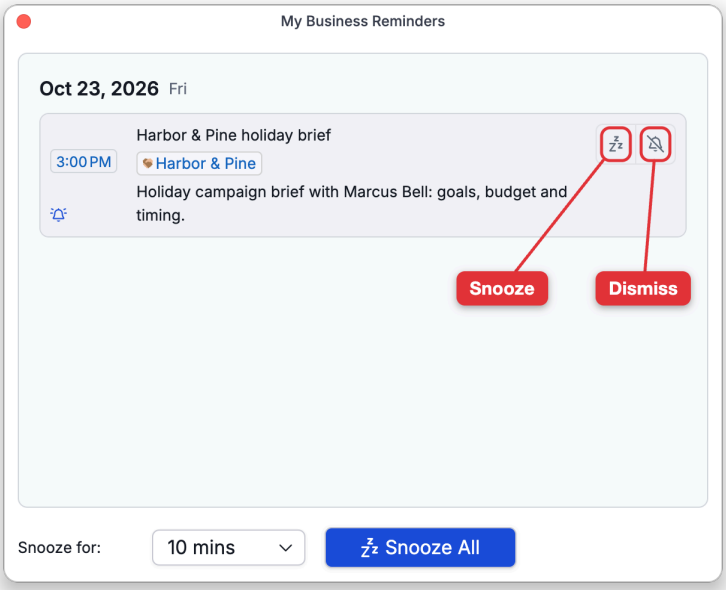
An all-day event counts as starting at midnight at the start of its day, in your time zone, so its reminder comes due that long before midnight: a 1-hour reminder comes due at 11 PM the evening before.

When reminders come due, TheBrain shows a reminders dialog listing them. From there you can:

- **Snooze** a reminder (or **Snooze All**) for a chosen amount of time — the **Snooze for** picker ranges from 1 minute up to 24 hours — to be reminded again later. The picker starts at 10

minutes and then offers the length you last picked, until you restart the app (or reload the page in the web app).

- **Dismiss** a reminder once you've dealt with it.



Snoozing and dismissing reach your other devices differently:

- **A snooze stays on the device where you snoozed** (in the web app, in that browser). It survives closing the brain and restarting the app there, but it is not synced, so your other devices still show the reminder.
- **A dismissal is saved on the event itself**, so it syncs with the brain: once the brain has synced, the reminder is dismissed on your other devices too.

A reminder you neither snooze nor dismiss stays due: it is listed again each time the reminders dialog comes up, until its event is more than four weeks in the past.

If you close the reminders dialog while reminders are still due, it stays closed for at least five minutes before it comes back, unless another reminder comes due in the meantime.

On the desktop app, the reminders dialog opens in a window of its own beside the brain window, one for each brain window, and you can keep working in the brain while it is open.

Reminders for a Brain That Isn't Open

Where a reminder shows up depends on which app you are using:

- **Desktop app** — While the desktop app is running, it checks the reminders of every brain stored on that computer, whether or not the brain is open. The brain in the tab you are looking at shows the reminders dialog. A brain that isn't open shows a system notification instead, with the event's name, the brain's name, and the event's start time (and its location, if it has one); click the notification to open that brain. A brain that is open in another tab shows its reminders dialog when you switch to that tab.
- **Mobile app** — While the app is running, it hands the upcoming reminders of the brains stored on the device to your phone or tablet as system notifications, so a reminder doesn't depend on that brain being open. The app asks for permission to show notifications.
- **Web app** — There is no system notification. A reminder appears only as the reminders dialog, in a browser tab that has that brain open, as soon as it comes due and without a reload, so keep the brain open in a tab to receive its reminders.

5.4 To-Do List

Overview

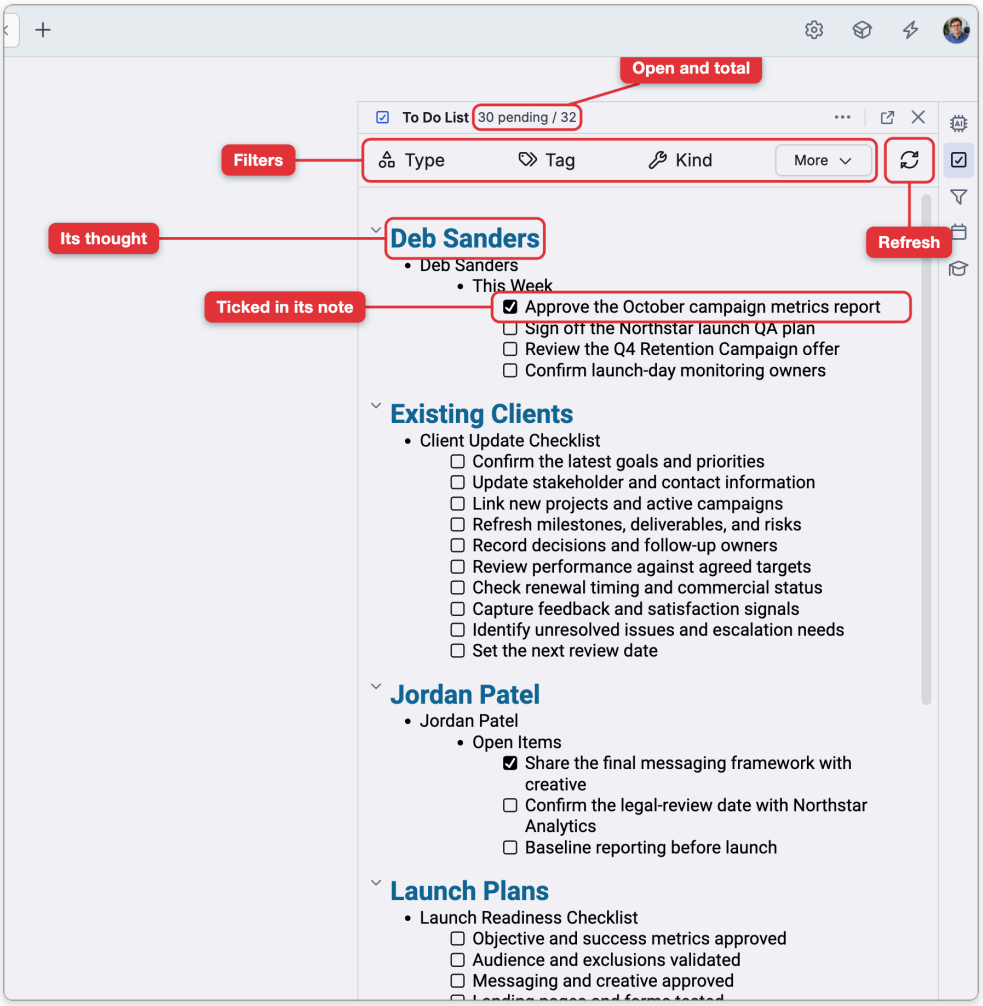
The **To-Do List** panel collects every checkbox you've written across all your notes into a single list, so your tasks aren't scattered through the brain. It's the brain-wide view of everything left to do.

Where Tasks Come From

To-do items are the **checkboxes in your notes** — there's no separate task type. Add a checkbox in any note (see Writing and Formatting Notes) and it appears in the To-Do List. Checking an item in the panel ticks the same checkbox in its note, and vice versa. The list is built from the brain's search index, so while a brain is indexing, some items may be missing until it finishes (see Rebuilding the Search Index).

Using the Panel

Open the **To Do List** panel from the tools panel or with **Main Menu > View > To Do List** (in the Mac menu bar, **View > Panels > To-Do List**). Opening it requires **admin rights** on the brain: on your own brains you're the admin, but on a brain shared with you the panel may be unavailable. It shows your pending and total counts, and lets you:



- **Sort** by name or date modified.
- **Expand** or **collapse** all groups.
- **Filter** by type, tag, kind, access, and dates (created and modified) to narrow the list.
- **Add to Selection** or **Remove from Selection** to work with the listed thoughts elsewhere.
- **Refresh** the list, and **Print** it (on a computer, in the desktop app or a browser; not on phones and tablets).

When a Thought Leaves the List

The list shows a thought only while its note still has at least one unchecked box. Boxes you've already ticked stay visible beside the open ones of the same thought, and the header counts both: it reads, for example, **3 pending / 5**. When you tick a thought's last open box, the whole thought drops off the list. Nothing is lost — the completed items are still in the thought's note, with their boxes ticked, and that is where to look for them.

Two kinds of checkbox aren't gathered at all: those in the notes of **links** (only the notes of thoughts are scanned), and those in the notes of **forgotten** thoughts.



- To turn the To-Do List off for a brain, tick **Disable to do list** on the **Search** page of the brain's settings (**Settings > Brain > Search**), below the **Show search results from other brains** and **Show search results from public brains** checkboxes. The setting is not under Content Settings. While it's ticked, the To-Do List doesn't appear for that brain; untick it to bring the list back. It is a brain setting, so in a shared brain it applies to everyone who uses the brain.

Related Topics

- Outline Lists — Indent, Outdent, and Move

6 Cerebro AI Assistant

6.1 Cerebro — TheBrain's AI Assistant

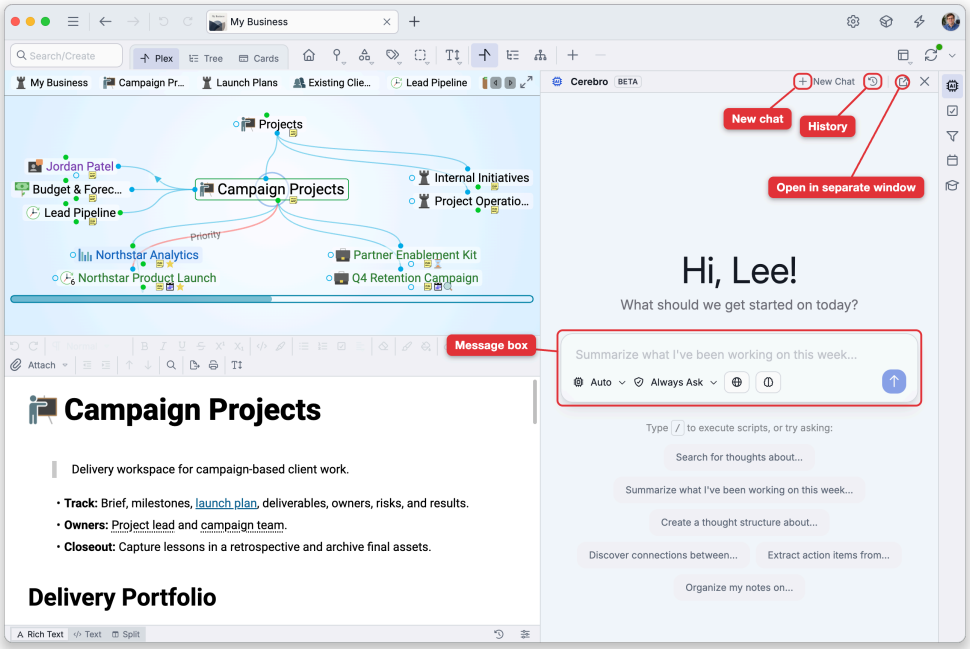
Overview

Cerebro is the AI assistant built into TheBrain. You chat with it in plain language, and it can do two kinds of things: **answer questions**, and **act on your brain** for you — creating and linking thoughts, restructuring and tidying part of a brain, reading, summarizing and drafting notes, and more. You can undo the changes it makes, so you stay in control.

Where to Find Cerebro

Open the **AI Chat** panel from the right-hand tools panel of the brain page, or via the **View** menu > **AI Chat**. To keep it open while you work, click **Open in separate window** in its header: the chat floats in a window of its own in the desktop app, or over the page on the web (see Floating Tools Panels).

In the chat's header, **New Chat** starts a fresh conversation and **History** lists your earlier ones — see Cerebro Chat History.



How to Use It

1. Open the AI Chat panel.
2. Type your request in the message box ("Ask Cerebro anything…") and send it.
3. Cerebro replies, and where appropriate it uses **tools** to carry out actions in your brain.
4. When it changes your brain, it shows a summary — for example, "Cerebro made 5 changes to your brain" — with an **Undo All** button to reverse everything it just did (and a **Redo All** button to reapply them).

Because Cerebro can take real actions, you control which actions it may take on its own and which require your approval — see Cerebro Tools and Permissions. Deleting is a category of its own: in **Ask on Write** and **Always Ask** (the default), Cerebro asks before it deletes anything, but in **Always Allow**, or when a delete tool is on your **Allowed Tools** list, it deletes without asking.

What It Can Do

Cerebro works through a set of tools, including creating and finding thoughts, reading and writing notes, and reading file attachments, among others. What the tools cover and how to permit or restrict each one is covered in *Cerebro Tools and Permissions*. Searching the web is separate from those tools: you switch it on with the **Web Search** button in the chat, as described in the next section.

Cerebro also powers a related feature that has its own entry:

- **AI Scripts** — save reusable instructions and run them as one-click buttons. See AI Scripts.

Web Search

Cerebro searches the web only while **Web Search** is switched on in the chat.

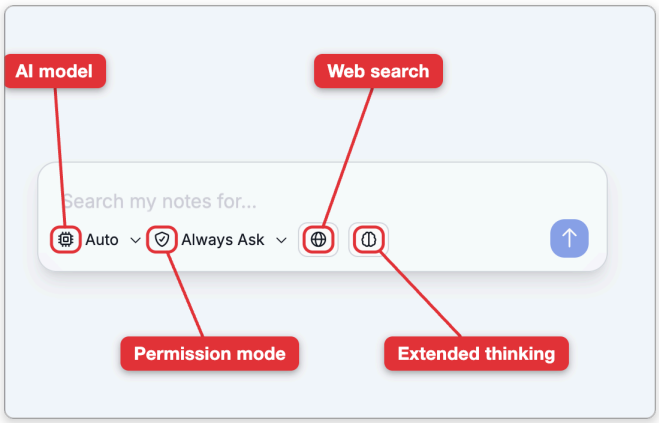
1. In the row of buttons under the message box, click the globe button (**Web Search**).
2. Send your message. The button stays highlighted while web search is on; click it again to turn it off.

Web search is off to begin with. Once you turn it on, it stays on for the chat in that brain tab, including after **New Chat**. It isn't saved, though, so it is off again in a new tab or after you restart the app. When Cerebro has searched the web, the pages it used are listed under **Sources** below its reply.

Web search is not one of the tools in **AI Tool Permissions**. Cerebro never asks for approval before searching the web, and web search has no **Allow** or **Block** entry, so the globe button is its only switch. The button is shown only for AI models that support web search, so it isn't there while a local model is selected. An AI Script that has its own **Web Search** option on turns web search on in the chat when you run it.

Extended Thinking

For AI models that can reason through a request before they answer, the row of buttons under the message box has an **Extended Thinking** button (the brain icon). Click it to turn extended thinking on, and click it again (**Disable Extended Thinking**) to turn it off. The button is shown only for models that support it, and a model that always thinks can't have it turned off.



Stopping and Continuing a Response

While Cerebro is responding, the send button under the message box becomes a stop button (a square). Click it to stop the response. What Cerebro had already written stays in the chat, and so do the changes it had already made to your brain; the **Undo All** banner is still shown for them. Sending a new message while Cerebro is still responding (type it and press `Enter`) also stops the current response, and Cerebro starts on the new message.

Cerebro works on a request in rounds of thinking and using tools, and one request can run for at most 100 rounds. From round 70 the chat shows a line such as **Iteration 70/100** with **Approaching limit**. At 100, Cerebro stops and shows **Iteration Limit Reached** with a **Continue** button. Click **Continue** and Cerebro carries on from where it left off, with a new allowance of rounds.

This limit is not your AI usage limit. It only keeps a single request from running on and on; your hourly, daily and weekly usage is a separate matter, covered in *AI Usage Limits*.

When Undo All Isn't Available

Undo All belongs to Cerebro's most recent response. Its banner goes away when you send another message, click **Continue**, edit a message or use **Try again**, use **Branch conversation**, start a **New Chat**, or click **Dismiss**. Editing or retrying a message does not reverse what the earlier response changed.

The changes the banner counted are still in the brain's undo history after the banner has gone, so you can reverse them one at a time with the normal **Undo** command (see Undo and Redo).

If you change something in the brain yourself after Cerebro finishes, **Undo All** is grayed out and the banner says "AI Undo is unavailable because newer changes are on top of the undo stack. Undo your newer changes to re-enable AI Undo." Undo your own newer changes first, and **Undo All** works again. In the same way, if you make a new change after using **Undo All**, **Redo All** is no longer available, because the new change replaces the redo history.

Privacy, Plans, and Limits

- **Private thoughts** — By default Cerebro does not read your private thoughts. You can allow access in **Settings > AI** if you want it to include them. See AI Settings.
- **Plans** — Cloud AI comes with a free allowance, and a TheBrain subscription raises your limits; if AI features are unavailable, the chat panel explains why. See AI Usage Limits.
- **Usage limits** — AI usage is metered with hourly, daily, and weekly limits shown as usage bars in **Settings > AI**. When you hit a limit, the chat panel tells you and when it resets. See AI Usage Limits.
- **Your own endpoint** — You can point TheBrain at your own OpenAI API key or a local/offline AI endpoint instead of the built-in service. See AI Settings.

Related Topics

- Undo and Redo

6.2 Cerebro Tools and Permissions

Overview

Cerebro doesn't just talk — it acts on your brain through **tools**. Each tool is one capability, like creating a thought, reading or writing a note, searching your thoughts, reading a file attachment, or searching TheBrain's own documentation. Because some tools only read while others change or delete things, you stay in control of which tools Cerebro may run on its own and which need your approval. See Cerebro — TheBrain's AI Assistant for the assistant itself.

What the Tools Cover

- **Thoughts and links** — create thoughts; change a thought's name, label, aliases and colors; link thoughts; move many thoughts under a new parent at once; and delete or forget thoughts and delete links.
- **Finding and reading** — search thoughts by name, search inside notes, list what is above, below or related to a thought, look up the brain's modification history for a range of dates, and make a thought the active thought.
- **Notes** — read and write the notes of a thought or link.
- **Tags, types and icons** — set and remove tags, set a thought's type, give a thought a stock icon, and remove a thought's icon.
- **Attachments** — list the attachments of a thought or link, read and search the text of file attachments (described below), add a web link attachment, change a web link's address, and rename or delete attachments.
- **Pins** — list, add, remove and reorder pinned thoughts.
- **BrainBox and Quick Thoughts** — list your BrainBox items and file one onto an existing thought or into a new thought; and, where Quick Thoughts is available, list, read, search and file your quick thoughts.

Cerebro works in the brain whose tab its chat is in. Its tools don't open, search or change your other brains. None of them picks up a file from your computer to attach it, either: to have Cerebro attach a file, add the file to BrainBox first and ask Cerebro to file that BrainBox item.

Reading File Attachments

Cerebro can read the text of file attachments in these formats: PDF, Word (`.docx`), PowerPoint (`.pptx`), Excel (`.xlsx`), HTML, and plain-text or Markdown files (`.txt`, `.log`, `.md`, `.org`). It can also search for text inside attachments across the whole brain, and find every place a word or phrase occurs in one attachment. It reads a long file a section at a time.

- Attachment reading includes no text recognition (OCR), so an image, or a scanned PDF that has no text layer, gives Cerebro no text to read.
- The older Office formats (`.doc`, `.xls`, `.ppt`) are not on that list.
- A web link attachment is not read as a file. Cerebro sees the link's address, not the page behind it.
- The attachments of a private thought are off limits unless **Allow AI to access private thoughts** is on in **Settings > AI**. See AI Settings.

Tool Categories

Every tool falls into one of three categories, which is how the permission system reasons about risk:

- **Read** — only looks at data (search thoughts, read notes, get details). Never changes anything.
- **Write** — creates or modifies data (create a thought, write a note, set a tag or type).
- **Delete** — removes data: deleting or forgetting thoughts, and deleting links and attachments. Cerebro shows these as **Deletion** when it asks. In **Ask on Write** and **Always Ask** it asks before every delete, but in **Always Allow**, or when a delete tool is on your **Allowed Tools** list, it deletes without asking.

On a **read-only brain** (where you have Reader access), Cerebro is only offered read tools: write and delete actions are blocked before any prompt.

Permission Modes

The **Permission Mode** sets how cautious Cerebro is overall:

- **Always Allow** — every tool runs automatically. Fastest, least safe.
- **Ask on Write** — read-only tools run freely, but Cerebro asks before anything that creates, changes, or deletes. A balanced middle option.
- **Always Ask** — Cerebro asks before *every* tool, including reads. Most cautious, and the **default** for a new account.

You can change the mode in two places:

- **In the chat** — click the permission button in the row under the message box. It shows a shield and the name of the current mode (for example **Always Ask**); on phones and tablets it shows the shield only. Choose a mode from the **Permission Mode** menu. **Manage**, at the bottom of that menu, opens the full permissions page in Settings.
- **In Settings** — go to **Settings > AI > AI Tool Permissions**.

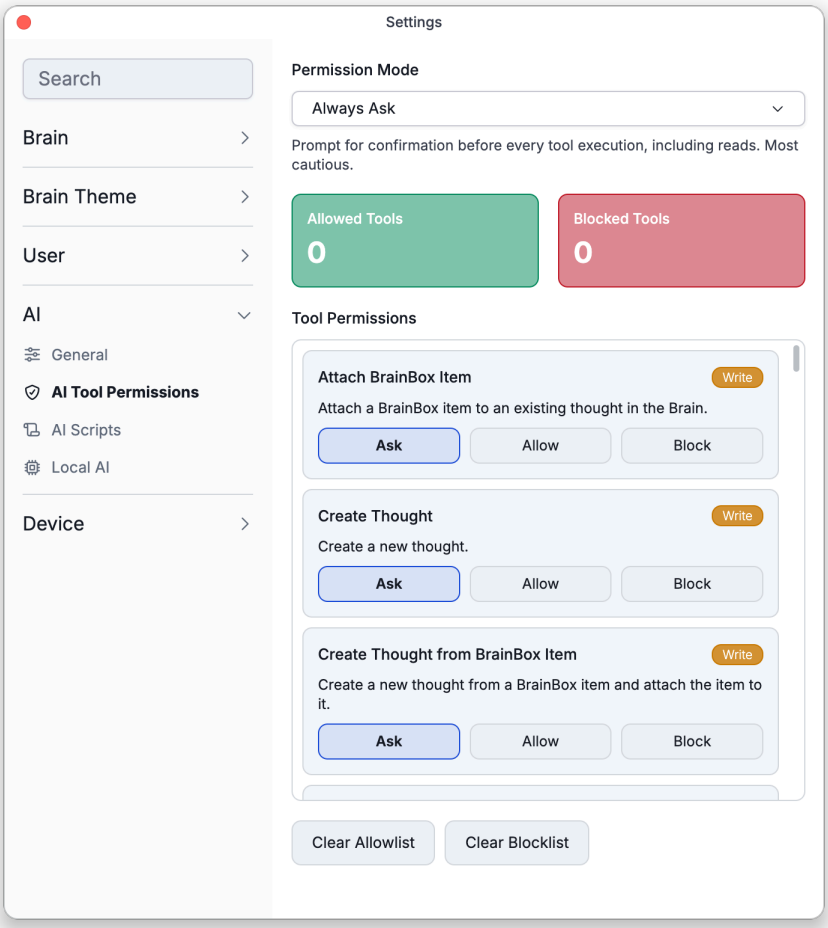
The mode, and your Allowed Tools and Blocked Tools lists, are your own user settings rather than settings of a brain. They are not per brain: the same mode and lists apply in every brain you open.

Allowing or Blocking Individual Tools

Beyond the overall mode, the AI Tool Permissions list shows every tool with its category, and you can set each one individually to **Ask**, **Allow**, or **Block**:

- **Allow** adds the tool to your **Allowed Tools** — it always runs without asking.
- **Block** adds it to your **Blocked Tools** — it never runs, whatever the mode.
- **Ask** leaves the tool governed by the overall mode above.

You can **Clear Allowlist** or **Clear Blocklist** to empty that list, so the tools that were on it go back to following the permission mode.



When Cerebro Asks

When a tool needs approval, Cerebro shows a prompt describing the tool and its category (read-only, write access, or deletion), with **Allow** and **Deny** buttons and a **"Remember my choice for this tool"** checkbox. The checkbox decides whether your answer sticks:

- **Allow** (checkbox off) — let it run this one time.
- **Allow** with **Remember** — always allow it (adds it to your Allowed Tools).
- **Deny** (checkbox off) — refuse just this request.
- **Deny** with **Remember** — always block it (adds it to your Blocked Tools).



- Searching TheBrain's own documentation is an exception to the modes and lists above. It only looks up help articles and never touches your brain, so Cerebro never asks before using it, it can't be blocked, and it isn't shown in the AI Tool Permissions list.
- Web search is not governed by the modes and lists either. It isn't shown in the AI Tool Permissions list and Cerebro never asks before searching the web; you switch it on and off with the **Web Search** button under the chat's message box. See Cerebro — TheBrain's AI Assistant.

Related Topics

- Private Thoughts
- BrainBox
- Quick Thoughts

6.3 Cerebro Chat History

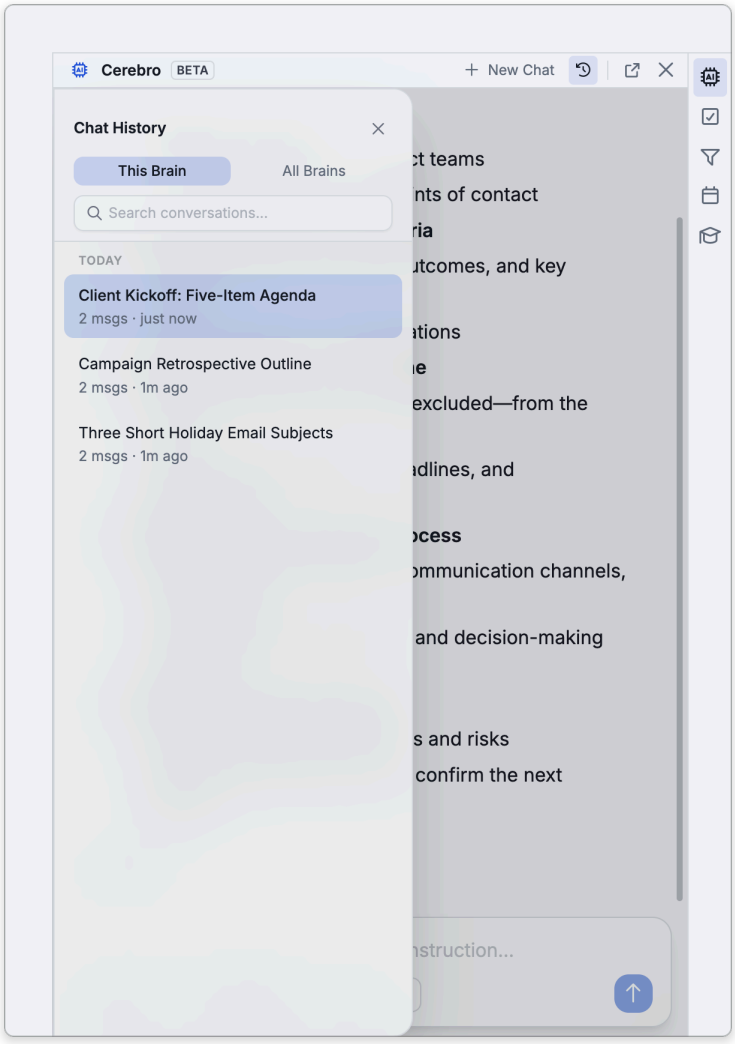
Overview

Cerebro keeps your conversations. Each one is saved automatically as you chat, so you can start a new conversation and come back to an earlier one later, to reread it or to carry on where

you left off. Conversations are kept separately from the content of your brains, though each one remembers which brain it was started in.

How to Open an Earlier Conversation

1. Open AI Chat and click **History** (the clock icon) in the chat's header. When the panel is too narrow to show the button, it moves into the header's **More actions** (⋯) menu.
2. The **Chat History** list opens, with the most recently used conversations first, grouped under **Today**, **Yesterday**, **This week**, **This month** and **Older**.
3. The list starts on **This Brain**, which shows the conversations started in the brain you're in. Choose **All Brains** to list all of them, each with its brain's name.
4. To find a conversation, type in the **Search conversations...** box. The search looks at conversation titles and at the text of the messages.
5. Click a conversation. Its messages come back into the chat and you can carry on from there.



How to Start a New Conversation

Click **New Chat** in the chat's header. The chat clears, and your next message starts a new conversation. The conversation you were in stays in History.

How to Rename or Delete a Conversation

1. Open **History**.
2. Click the ⋯ button on the conversation's row (with a mouse, it appears when you point at the row), or right-click the row.
3. Choose **Rename**, type the new title and press `Enter` (`Esc` cancels). Or choose **Delete**, then click **Delete** on the row to confirm, or **Cancel** to keep the conversation.

TheBrain gives every conversation a title automatically, and renaming replaces it. Deleting removes the conversation for good. It is not a brain edit, so **Undo** does not bring it back.

Where Conversations Are Stored

- **Saved online with your account** — A conversation is normally saved on the server you're signed in to, under your TheBrain account. You'll find it in **History** on your other devices and in a browser when you sign in with the same account. This is also true of conversations you have while using your own OpenAI key.
- **Stored on this device only** — A conversation that you start while a local model is selected is saved on that computer, not online. In the list it has an icon whose tooltip reads **Stored locally on this device**, and it doesn't appear on your other devices. See AI Settings for local models.

Where a conversation is stored is settled when it is first saved, by the model selected at that moment, and it doesn't move afterwards. A conversation that began with one of the online models stays online even if you switch to a local model part way through, and one that began with a local model stays on the device. To have a conversation kept on the device, select the local model first and then click **New Chat**.



- A conversation is saved after each of Cerebro's replies, including a reply you stopped part way through.
- Old conversations may be removed automatically after a long time without changes.
- **Branch conversation**, under one of Cerebro's earlier replies, starts a new conversation that keeps everything up to that reply. The original conversation stays in History. The branch is a new conversation, so where it is stored depends on the model selected when you branch.
- Editing one of your earlier messages, or using **Try again** on a reply, replaces that part of the conversation. The saved conversation drops everything from that point on and continues with the new reply.

6.4 AI Scripts

Overview

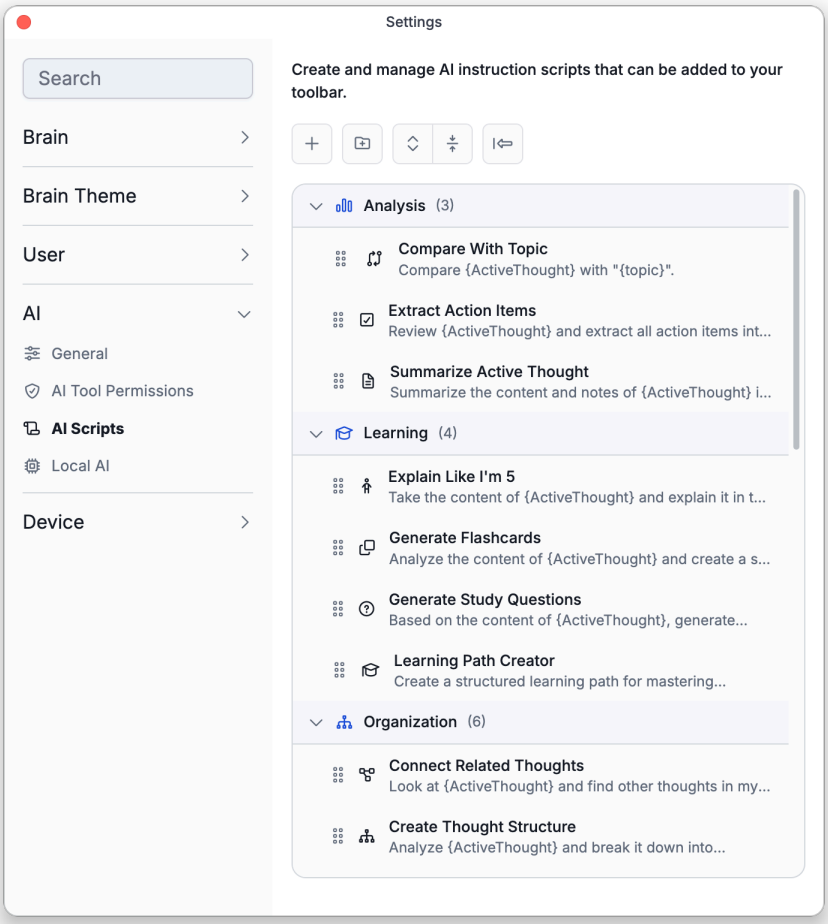
An **AI Script** is a saved set of AI instructions you can run again and again without retyping them. If you find yourself asking Cerebro to do the same kind of thing often — summarize a thought, draft a reply, restructure children a certain way — turn it into a script once and run it in a step from then on. Scripts can take **parameters** so one script handles many variations.

Creating and Managing Scripts

Scripts live in **Settings > AI > AI Scripts**, where you can **Create Script**, edit existing ones, organize them into categories, and reset to the built-in examples. A script editor lets you write the instruction in a visual or code mode and define:

- **Base Instruction** — what the AI should do.
- **Parameters** — inputs you fill in when you run it, either free text or a choice from preset options.
- **Conditions** — different behavior depending on a parameter's value.
- **Web Search** and **Extended Reasoning** — switches in the script editor. When **Web Search** is on, running the script turns on web search in the chat, where it stays on until you turn it off (see Cerebro — TheBrain's AI Assistant). When **Extended Reasoning** is on, running the script turns on extended thinking in the chat.

You can insert **variables** (such as the active thought) into a script's instruction so it works against whatever you're looking at.



Running a Script

There are three ways to run a script:

- **From the AI Chat** — type `/` in the message box to bring up your scripts, then pick one.
- **From a toolbar button** — add a script to a toolbar and run it with a single click. See Customizing Toolbars.
- **With a keyboard shortcut** — give the script a shortcut in the **AI Scripts** group of **Settings > User > Keyboard**.

If the script has parameters, you fill them in first, and it then runs as a Cerebro instruction, using its tools just like a normal request and obeying the same tool permissions (see Cerebro Tools and Permissions).

- The built-in example scripts are a good starting point; copy and adapt them.

6.5 AI Settings

Overview

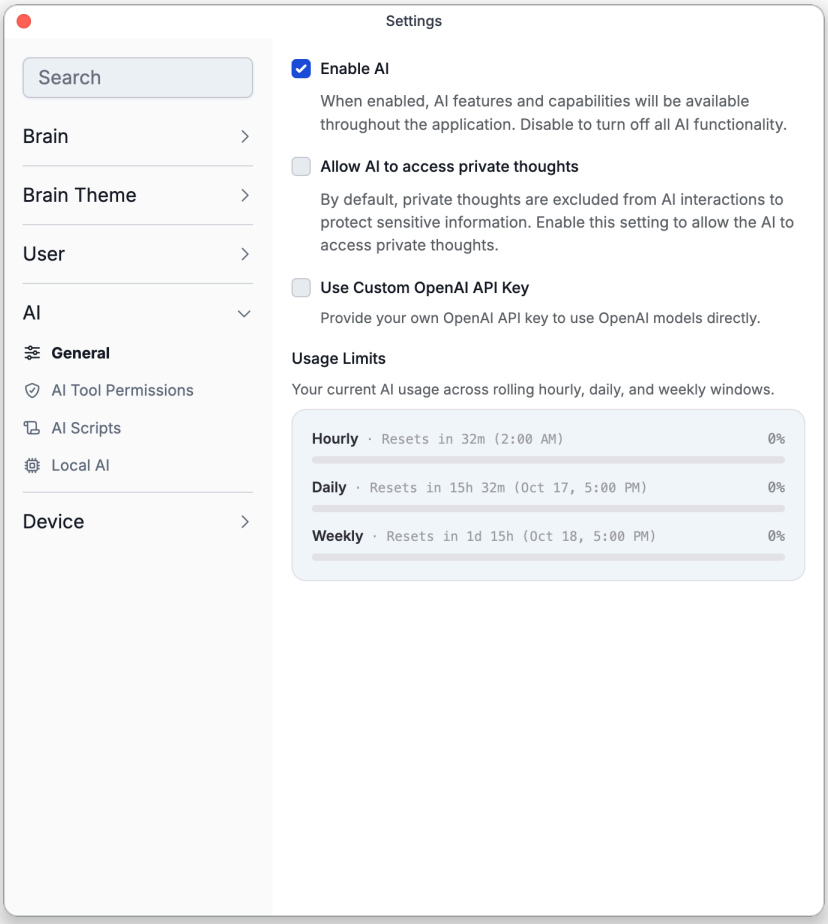
Settings > AI is where you control Cerebro: whether AI features are on at all, how much of your brain it can see, and — if you'd rather not use the built-in service — how to point TheBrain at your own AI instead.

General

- **Enable AI** — Turns AI features on across the app. AI Chat, where Cerebro answers and AI Scripts run, is offered only while it is on. Disable it to switch all AI functionality off.
- **Allow AI to access private thoughts** — Off by default. By default, private thoughts are excluded from AI interactions to protect sensitive information; enabling this lets Cerebro see and work with private thoughts, which means that data is sent to the AI service. See Private Thoughts.

AI also needs a signed-in account: in the desktop app's guest mode, the **AI** section of Settings (including **Local AI**), Cerebro and AI Scripts are not shown. See Guest Mode.

There is no setting here for whether AI Chat opens in the sidebar or in a window of its own. To have the chat in its own window, click **Open in separate window** in the chat's header, or choose **Main Menu > View > Float Panel** while the chat is showing in the sidebar. AI Chat then opens floating in that brain on that device until you click **Dock to sidebar**. Tools don't float on phones. See Floating Tools Panels.



Using Your Own OpenAI Key

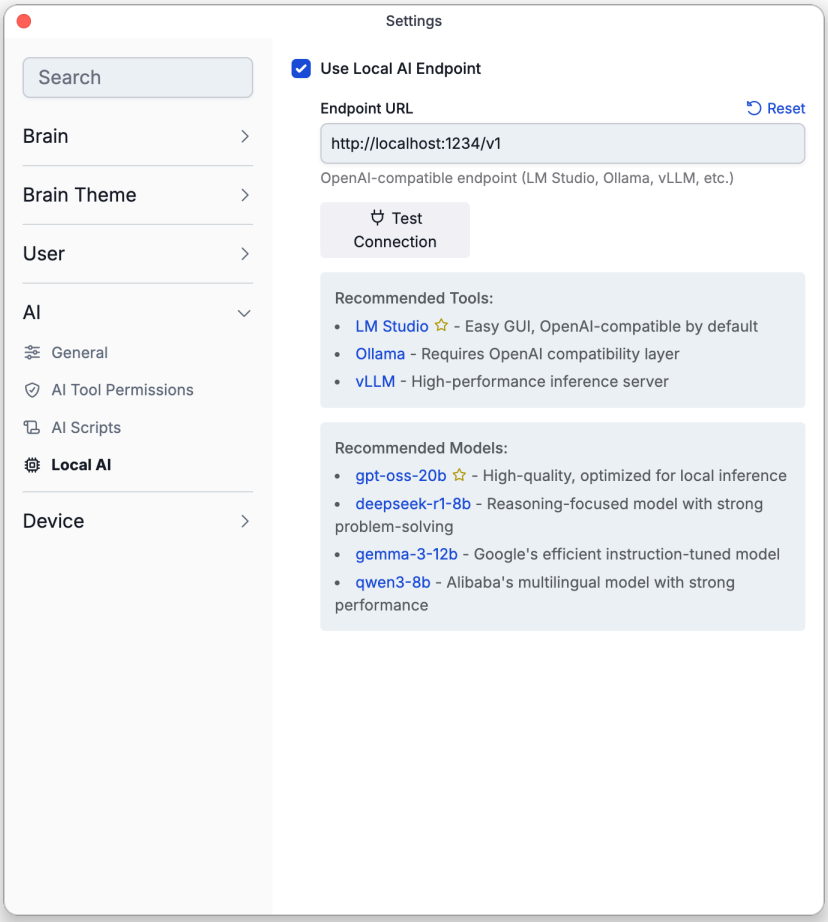
Use Custom OpenAI API Key lets you supply your own OpenAI API key so requests use OpenAI directly. When you do, those requests go straight to OpenAI and aren't counted against your TheBrain AI quota — OpenAI bills you instead. See AI Usage Limits.

Local AI

Use Local AI Endpoint, on **Settings > AI > Local AI**, points TheBrain at an OpenAI-compatible endpoint running on your own machine or network — for example LM Studio, Ollama, or vLLM. You set the endpoint URL, test the connection, and select a model (TheBrain can auto-discover available models or you can enter one by name). This keeps AI processing local.

The **Endpoint URL** starts out as `http://localhost:1234/v1`, and **Reset** puts that default address back. **Test Connection** shows whether TheBrain reached your server and how many

models it offers.



Local AI is available in the **desktop app only** — the **Local AI** page does not appear in the web app or on phones and tablets, so a local model can't be used there. A local endpoint doesn't use TheBrain's AI service.

How to Use a Local Model in the Chat

Turning on **Use Local AI Endpoint** does not switch Cerebro to your local model by itself. You choose the local model in the chat:

1. In **Settings > AI > Local AI**, turn on **Use Local AI Endpoint** and check the server with **Test Connection**.
2. Open AI Chat and click the **AI Model** button under the message box.
3. Choose one of the models listed under **Local**.

Cerebro then uses that model for the messages you send from that brain tab. Until you choose a local model there, the chat keeps using the AI service it was already using. The choice isn't saved, so choose the local model again in another brain tab or after you restart the app.

The chat lists the models your server reports. The **Model** you pick on the **Local AI** settings page does not decide which model the chat uses. If the menu has no **Local** group, TheBrain could not reach your server or the server reported no models; check it with **Test Connection**.

A conversation that you start with a local model selected is stored on that device only. See Cerebro Chat History.

- Private-thought access and your choice of built-in vs. custom vs. local AI are independent settings — set each to match your privacy and cost preferences.

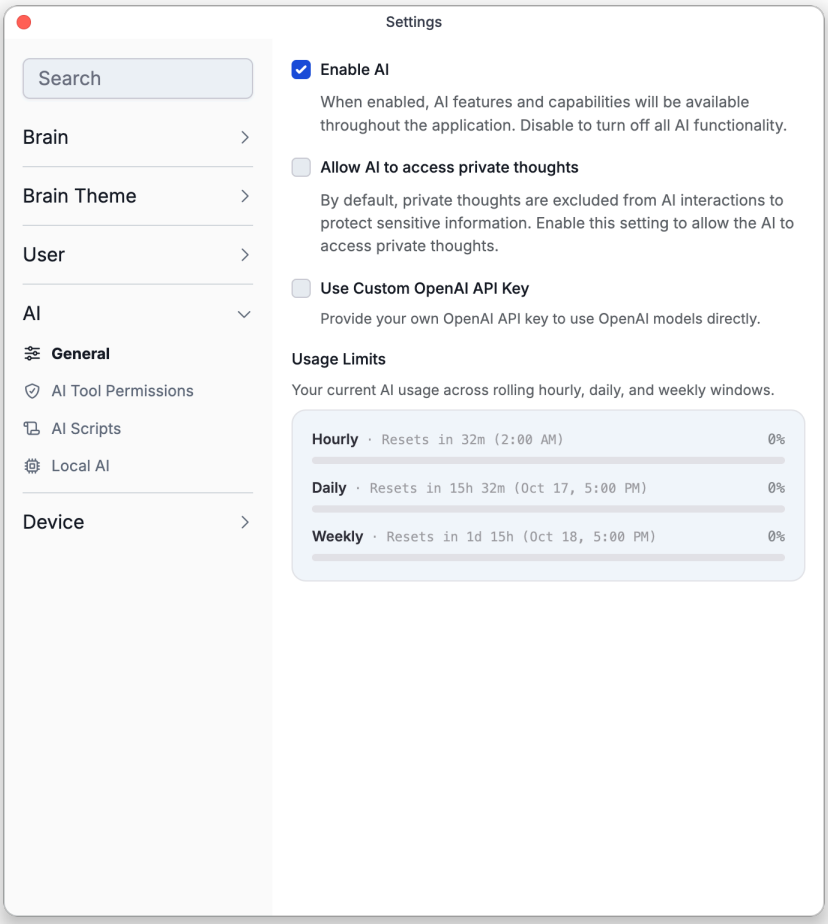
6.6 AI Usage Limits

Overview

Cerebro's built-in cloud AI is a metered service, so usage is capped to keep it fair and sustainable. Your usage is tracked across **hourly**, **daily**, and **weekly** windows, shown as **usage bars** so you can see how much you've used, and your allowance returns as the windows roll forward.

Usage Bars

Usage Limits in **Settings > AI > General** shows usage bars for your hourly, daily, and weekly windows, each with how much is used and when it resets. The bars aren't shown there while you use your own OpenAI key. Each window has its own limit, so reaching the hourly limit doesn't mean you're out for the day. As you approach a limit, the AI chat panel shows how much of that window's limit you've used.



When You Hit a Limit

If you reach a limit, the chat panel shows a message naming the limit you reached, along with when it resets and the usage bars. You can click **Refresh Status** to check again and, if you don't have a paid plan, choose **Upgrade for Higher Limits**.

AI can also be unavailable for reasons unrelated to your usage. If the service is temporarily disabled, the panel shows the notice *AI Temporarily Unavailable*.

Plans

Cloud AI comes with a free allowance, and a TheBrain subscription raises your limits. See Plans and Cloud Services.

Using Your Own Key

If you connect your own OpenAI API key, those requests go directly to OpenAI and **aren't counted against your TheBrain AI quota** — you're billed by OpenAI instead. See AI Settings.

- **Iteration Limit Reached** in the chat is not a usage limit. It means a single request has used up its allowance of working rounds; click **Continue** to let Cerebro carry on. See Cerebro — TheBrain's AI Assistant.

7 Syncing and Sharing

7.1 Syncing and Working Offline

7.1.1 Syncing Brains

Overview

On the desktop and mobile apps, a brain has a copy on your device and a copy in the cloud. **Syncing** reconciles the two so your work is backed up and available on every device you use. (The web app is always working against the cloud directly, so syncing is a desktop/mobile concern.)

Syncing a Brain

Sync from the **Sync** button in the brain toolbar. The button also doubles as a status indicator — its icon shows a sync running, finished or failed, and a colored dot on it shows whether changes are waiting (see *Sync Status* below). What happens when you sync depends on the brain's state:

- A **local** brain (not yet in the cloud) asks *Do you want to upload this local brain?*, then syncs.
- A **remote** brain (in the cloud but not downloaded) asks to download it.
- A **synced** brain reconciles changes both ways.

Auto-Sync

With **Sync automatically** turned on for a brain, TheBrain syncs it for you as you work, so you don't have to click **Sync**. TheBrain turns it on for you the first time a brain is uploaded to the cloud or downloaded to a device, so most synced brains already have it.

When an Automatic Sync Happens

Automatic sync runs while the app is running, and it covers every brain on this device that is synced and has **Sync automatically** on. A brain does not have to be open: the brains you have closed are synced too. When several accounts are signed in on this device, only the brains and BrainBox of the account you are using sync automatically, and those of the other accounts wait until you switch back to them (see Managing Your Account). TheBrain starts a sync of a brain when all of these are true:

- **A few minutes have passed since the brain last synced successfully** — whether that sync was automatic or one you started. A brain that hasn't synced since you started the app doesn't wait for its first sync.
- **The brain hasn't been changed for a little while** — TheBrain waits for a pause instead of syncing while you are in the middle of editing. If you keep making changes, the sync waits until you stop.
- **The cloud can be reached** — while you are offline, automatic sync waits, and it picks up again when the connection returns.

In practice each of these brains syncs every few minutes, or a little later when you are editing it steadily. Each automatic sync works in both directions: it sends your changes and brings down changes made on other devices or by other people. Your changes are not sent the instant you make them, so click **Sync** when you want them in the cloud right away.

When You Switch Away from TheBrain

Those regular syncs are not the only trigger. On the desktop app, TheBrain also asks for an automatic sync when the TheBrain window you are working in loses focus — for example when you switch to another application. That request covers the same brains — every synced brain of the account you are using that has **Sync automatically** on, open or not — and it doesn't wait for the usual interval. The other conditions still apply: the cloud has to be reachable, and a brain you changed very recently is skipped. So an edit you made just before switching away is not sent at that moment; it goes up with a later automatic sync, or when you click **Sync**.

On phones and tablets, the app makes the same request as it leaves the foreground, though the system may pause the app before a sync finishes.

On iPhone and iPad, TheBrain also tries to sync the brains you have open as you leave the app.

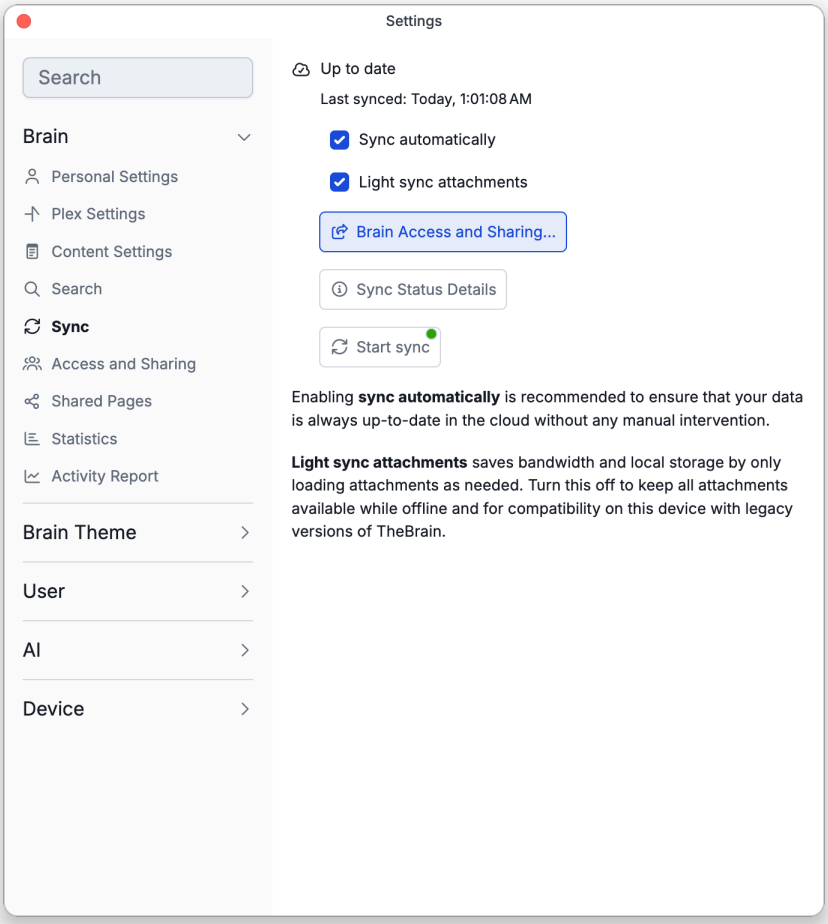
When It Doesn't Run

- **The app isn't running** — TheBrain has to be running for automatic sync to happen. Syncing picks up again the next time you start it.
- **The brain isn't synced yet** — a brain that is only on this device has to be uploaded with **Sync** first, and a brain that is only in the cloud has to be downloaded before it can sync here.
- **You canceled a sync** — automatic sync leaves that brain alone until you start a sync of it yourself or restart TheBrain.
- **Syncs keep failing** — after repeated failed syncs, TheBrain shows *Skipping auto-sync due to previous errors.* and the regular automatic syncs of that brain stop, though a sync is still requested when you switch away from TheBrain. Click **Sync** to try again; once a sync succeeds, automatic sync resumes.
- **You are over a cloud capacity limit** — automatic sync tries less often until a sync succeeds. See Cloud Capacity.

How to Turn Automatic Sync On or Off

1. Click the arrow beside the **Sync** button in the brain toolbar (**Sync status and settings**).
2. Tick or clear **Sync automatically**.

The same checkbox is in **Settings > Brain > Sync**, and on the Mac desktop app it is also **Brain > Sync Automatically** in the menu bar. Some menus label it **Auto Sync**. The checkbox appears once the brain is synced.

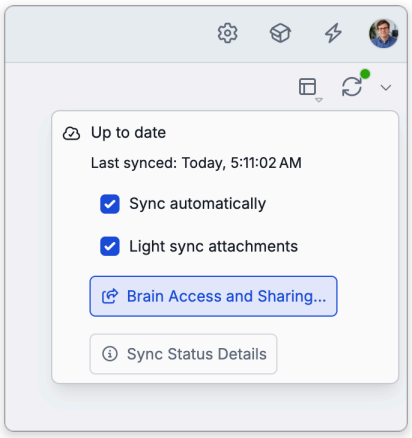


The setting is kept per brain on each device, so a brain can sync automatically on your computer and only when you ask on your phone. Leaving it on is recommended for brains you change often.

Sync Status

TheBrain shows where a brain stands — for example *Up to date*, *Local changes*, *Remote changes*, *Local and remote changes*, *Checking for changes…*, *Syncing…*, or *Last synced* with a time. Click the arrow beside the **Sync** button (**Sync status and settings**) to read the brain's current status; **Settings > Brain > Sync** shows the same thing. In the brains list, each synced brain carries a badge instead, such as *Synced*, *Unsynced changes*, *Update available*, or *Sync blocked*. For a full picture, the **Sync Status Details** view (opened from **Active Syncs: N** in the account menu, where N is the number of syncs running; on the desktop app it opens in a window of its own) lists **Active Syncs**, **Pending Syncs** and **Recent Syncs** — handy when several brains are syncing at once. When two devices or people sync the same brain at the same

moment, the server takes them one at a time, and the waiting sync shows *Waiting for another sync of this brain to finish...* until its turn comes.



The Dot on the Sync Button

For a synced brain that is not syncing at the moment, the **Sync** button in the brain toolbar carries a small colored dot:

- **Green** — nothing was waiting at the last check: the brain is up to date.
- **Orange** — changes are waiting: yours that have not been sent, changes from elsewhere that have not been received, or both.
- **Red** — sync is blocked: the cloud is refusing to sync this brain until something is fixed.

TheBrain rechecks regularly, and the dot turns orange as soon as you change something. The check needs the cloud: when TheBrain can't reach it, the dot doesn't turn red, and it is not a reliable sign that your changes have been sent.

When Sync Is Blocked

When the dot is red, or the brains list shows *Sync blocked*, click the arrow beside the **Sync** button (or open **Settings > Brain > Sync**) and read the first line. It gives the reason — for example a cloud capacity limit, a device clock that is set wrong, a brain that cannot be synced without TeamBrain Services, or a brain that needs a newer version of TheBrain. Deal with that, then sync again.

If a brain won't sync with the message *This brain cannot be synced without TeamBrain Services*, it has more than one **Writer/Admin** — co-editing a brain requires TeamBrain, and each Writer or

Admin needs TeamBrain on their own account. Either get that person TeamBrain (a seat in a TeamBrain subscription, or a TeamBrain or Max plan of their own, since Max includes TeamBrain) or reduce Writer/Admin access to a single user. See Brain Access and Sharing.

If another device upgraded the brain to a format this copy of the app can't read (for example by switching it to standard Markdown, or by adding the brain's first thought alias), this copy is told which version it needs — sync is refused with **This brain requires TheBrain … or later. Update TheBrain software before syncing.**, and an open brain closes with **This brain needs a newer version of TheBrain**. Update the app and open it again.

How to Cancel a Sync

1. Open **Sync Status Details**: click the **Sync** button while that brain is syncing, or click the arrow beside it and choose **Sync Status Details**, or choose **Active Syncs: N** in the account menu (it is also in **Main Menu > File**, and on a phone on the **Actions** tab of the brain's side panel).
2. Click the **X** beside the sync, under **Active Syncs** or **Pending Syncs**.

A sync that was running shows *Aborting sync...* and then appears under **Recent Syncs** marked *Canceled*. A sync that was still waiting for its turn is simply taken out of the queue. To run a canceled sync again, click its *Canceled* entry or click **Sync**; TheBrain offers to **Resume** it or **Start Over**. Until you start a sync of that brain yourself or restart TheBrain, automatic sync leaves it alone.

On the desktop app, the **X** on the sync progress banner near the top of the window only hides the banner. It does not cancel the sync.

- If a sync is interrupted, TheBrain offers to **Resume** it (or **Start Over**) the next time you sync. An automatic sync resumes it without asking.
- BrainBox is synced separately from your brains, frequently while you are signed in.
- To save space and bandwidth on large brains, see Light-Sync Attachments; for working without a connection, see Working Offline and Sync Recovery.

Related Topics

- Opening a Brain

- BrainBox
- Standard Markdown Notes
- Thought Aliases

7.1.2 Working Offline and Sync Recovery

Overview

You don't need a connection to use TheBrain on the desktop or mobile apps — you can keep creating and editing in a local brain offline, and sync those changes once you're back online. When you do sync, TheBrain reconciles what changed on each device so your brain ends up consistent everywhere, and when a note or file was edited in both places it keeps both versions, so working in two places never costs you work.

Working Offline

Changes you make offline are saved locally and stay there until the next sync, which uploads them to the cloud and brings down anything that changed elsewhere. To keep a brain's attachments available without a connection, turn off light sync (full sync) for that brain — see Light-Sync Attachments. To use TheBrain entirely without an account, see Guest Mode.

When a Sync Is Interrupted

If a sync is cut off partway, TheBrain notices and, the next time you sync manually, offers to **Resume** it — continuing where it left off — or to **Start Over**. If a sync hits an error, TheBrain reports it and can send an error report to help diagnose the problem.

If the sync service itself restarts while it's processing your upload, the sync is set aside with the message *The sync service restarted while it was processing your changes, so this sync was set aside. Sync again to send them.* Nothing is lost — just sync again.

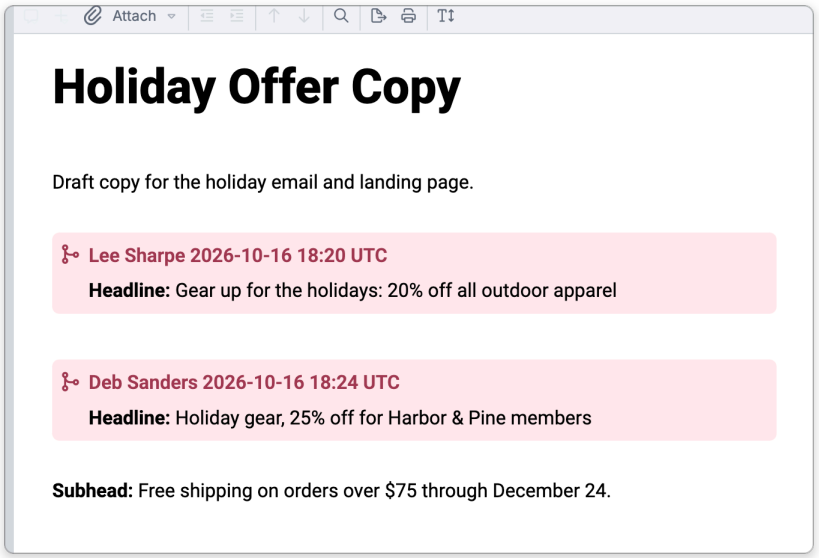
How Conflicting Changes Are Resolved

If the same brain is edited on two devices — or on a device and in the web app — before they sync, TheBrain reconciles the differences **automatically**. There's no conflict prompt or "choose a version" screen to step through; instead a few rules decide what wins, and anything that could lose work is kept.

- **The later edit wins, item by item.** For any single thought, link, or attachment record that changed in both places — a name, a label, a type, a color, a link's direction — the version with the more recent edit time is kept everywhere. Items that changed in only one place simply merge.
- **A note edited in both places is merged.** TheBrain combines the two versions line by line, comparing each with the version both sides started from. Lines changed on only one side take that side's change, so two people editing different paragraphs — or neighboring bullets of the same list — both keep their edits, and a change both sides made the same way appears once. Two versions that read the same are not a conflict either, and TheBrain keeps one side's lines instead: when they differ only in spacing, or in a web address written plainly on one side and as a link showing that same address on the other, it keeps the version with fewer blank lines, or the later one; when they differ only in backslashes before punctuation, the version with fewer backslashes; and when they have the same words and differ only in formatting — a heading or list marker, a code fence, bold or italic — the later version. Where both sides changed the same lines differently, the note shows the two versions one after the other as a pair of red **Conflict** callouts, each titled with the time of that version's edit in UTC, after the name of the person who made it when TheBrain knows it — for example `Ada Lovelace 2026-09-20 14:05 UTC`. Each callout holds that side's lines with their formatting intact. Clashes only a few lines apart are shown as one pair, with the lines between them repeated in both, so an edit spread over neighboring lines doesn't become a row of conflicts. To resolve a conflict, keep the lines you want, delete the other callout, and remove the callout from the version you kept (click its icon and choose **Remove Callout**). When TheBrain can't tell which version the two sides started from, lines that only one side has are kept, and the parts where the two sides have different lines become conflict pairs. No separate copy is made for a note — both versions are already in its text — and the note's earlier versions can be looked through and copied from in **Note Versions**, where a note a sync merged is tagged **Merged** and both versions the merge combined are kept beside it (see Note Versions).
- **A file edited in both places keeps both versions.** The later edit wins the file itself, and the other version is saved beside it as a separate file attachment on the same thought, named `[Conflict] <name> (<who> <date> <time> UTC).<ext>` — for example `[Conflict] report (Ada Lovelace 2026-09-20 1405 UTC).txt`. The name gives the person whose version lost, when TheBrain knows who that was (otherwise just the time), and the time of that edit in UTC. Open the copy to recover what you need, merge it into the file by hand, then delete it — or rename it without the `[Conflict]` prefix to keep it as a regular file. The

copy syncs to every device and the web app like any other attachment. A copy is made only when work would otherwise be lost: renaming or reordering a file on one side while its content is edited on the other makes no copy. A file inside an attached folder gets its copy inside that same folder.

- **Renaming a file that someone else edits keeps both files.** If you rename a file on one device while its content is edited on another, the renamed file stays as its own attachment, with the content as it was when you renamed it, and the edited file keeps its original name. Keep the one you want and delete the other.
- **Two different files attached under one name stay two files.** If each device attaches its own file with the same name to the same thought, the later one is renamed `name (1).ext` so neither overwrites the other.
- **An edit beats a deletion.** If a thought, link, or attachment is deleted on one device and changed on another before they sync, the change wins: the item comes back everywhere, whole — a thought returns with its links, attachments, and field values. A deleted thought that was only linked to the changed item comes back just far enough to hold that link, so one edit can't revive a whole deleted branch.
- **Two first notes on the same thought.** If a thought had no note yet and each side writes its first note before syncing, there is no earlier version to compare with, so the thought ends up with one note: lines both texts share are kept once, lines only one of them adds are kept, and where the texts have different lines they show as a pair of **Conflict** callouts.



Because this all happens automatically, the practical advice is to **sync often** when you work across devices, and to look for **Conflict** callouts in a note, or `[Conflict]` files on a thought, after a sync when you know two people were editing it. A sync that merged a note or kept a copy leaves the other devices one step behind, so TheBrain syncs that brain once more right

away to send them the result. The thought's **history** shows who made each change and when, which helps in deciding which version to keep — see Thought History. Undo is not cleared by a sync, so if a merge didn't go the way you wanted you can still undo your own recent edits; TheBrain asks first before undoing over a change that arrived from elsewhere — see Undo and Redo.

- A brain with **more than one Writer or Admin** can't sync without **TeamBrain services**, because co-editing a brain requires TeamBrain. If you don't have them, limit Writer and Admin access to a single user in **Main Menu > Brain > Brain Access and Sharing**; Readers don't count. See Syncing Brains.

Related Topics

- Guest Mode
- Managing Attachments

7.1.3 Light-Sync Attachments

Overview

A brain's attachments can be far larger than its thoughts and notes. **Light sync attachments** keeps a brain lightweight by loading attachments only as needed, rather than downloading every file to your device, which saves bandwidth and storage. It's a per-brain setting on the desktop and mobile apps (the web app has no attachment downloads to manage), and it's the difference between a brain that fits comfortably on a small device and one that doesn't.

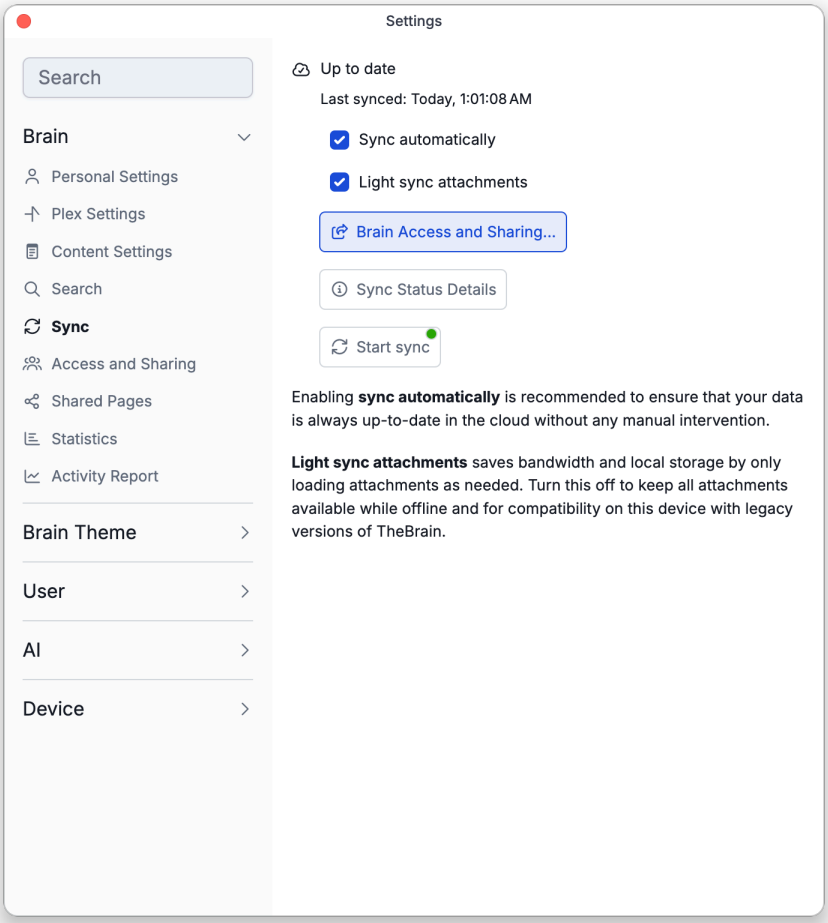
Turning Light Sync On or Off

The **Light sync attachments** setting lives in the brain's sync settings:

- **On** — attachments load on demand; only thoughts, notes, and the files you actually open come down. You can still keep specific files on your device with the per-file **Available Offline** toggle — see Offline Attachments and Light Sync.

- **Off (full sync)** — every attachment is downloaded and kept locally, so the whole brain is available offline. Switching to full sync downloads all the outstanding attachments first.

To change it, open **Settings > Brain > Sync**, or click the arrow beside the **Sync** button in the brain toolbar (**Sync status and settings**), and tick or clear **Light sync attachments**. The same command is in the menu you get by right-clicking the brain in the brains list, and on the Mac desktop app it is also **Brain > Light Sync Attachments** in the menu bar. The checkbox appears once the brain is synced.



The Default, and What It Applies To

- **Light sync is on by default.** Every synced brain starts out light-synced on a device: a brain you download from the cloud, and a brain you upload once it has synced. It stays that way until you turn light sync off for that brain on that device.
- **A brain that is only on this device keeps all its files.** Light sync has nothing to do until the brain is synced, which is why the checkbox isn't offered before then.

- **The setting is kept on each device.** It is stored per brain on the device, like **Sync automatically** — it is not part of the brain or of your account. Turning light sync off on your computer does not change your phone or another computer, so set it on each device where you want something different.
- **Turning light sync back on removes nothing.** Files that are already on the device stay there. To free the space a file takes, remove its local copy with **Available Offline** — see Offline Attachments and Light Sync.



- Light-synced (not-yet-downloaded) attachments are excluded from some operations — for example, they aren't included in a brain archive, and you'll be prompted to download them before merging thoughts or before deleting a cloud brain.

7.2 Sharing and Publishing

7.2.1 Brain Access and Sharing

Overview

Brain Access and Sharing controls who can see and edit an entire brain. You can keep a brain entirely private, share it read-only via a link, publish it for anyone to find, or invite specific people and give each of them a level of access. This is separate from publishing a single thought as a page — see Shared Thought Pages for that.

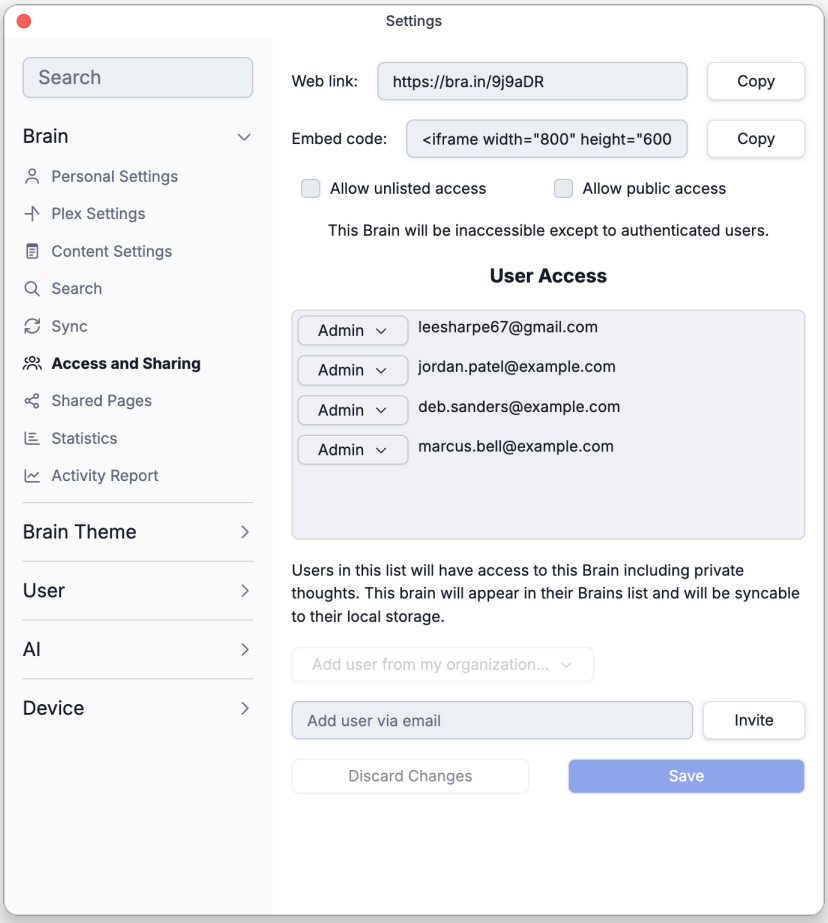
Whole-Brain Visibility

Main Menu > Brain > Brain Access and Sharing... opens these settings, the **Access and Sharing** page of **Settings > Brain**. A brain must be **synced to the cloud** before you can share it: for a local-only brain, **Brain Access and Sharing...** is unavailable, and the page shows an upload prompt instead of the access list. Two checkboxes there control who can reach the whole brain:

- **Allow unlisted access** — Anyone with the brain's **web link** gets **read-only** access, but the brain isn't discoverable.

- **Allow public access** — The brain becomes **discoverable** by others and open to the public, read-only.

Leave both off — the default — to keep the brain **private**, reachable only by the authenticated users you've granted access. The two options are mutually exclusive: turning one on turns the other off.



Unlisted or Public: What Differs

Both options let anyone who has the brain's link read everything in it that isn't private. The difference is whether people can come across the brain without the link:

- With **Allow public access**, the brain's public thoughts can also turn up when other people search public brains (see Searching Other and Public Brains). A brain with **Allow unlisted access** is left out of those searches.

- With **Allow public access**, search engines such as Google can also list the brain's thoughts in their results, using a preview page of each thought that isn't private or forgotten. The page shows the thought's name, its note, the names of its attachments, and links to its parents, children and jumps, under a bar with the brain's name, a **Preview** label and an **Open in TheBrain** button that opens the thought in the brain itself. An unlisted brain is kept out of search engines. When you make a thought private, its preview page goes away, and when you turn public access off, all of the brain's preview pages do. A search engine may still list them until it checks them again.
- To keep a public brain out of other people's searches in TheBrain, open **Settings > Brain > Search** for that brain and turn off **Show search results from public brains**. The setting works in both directions: it also stops public-brain results from appearing in searches made in that brain. It doesn't keep the brain out of search engines; to do that, use **Allow unlisted access** instead.

The brains list uses different words from this dialog. Each cloud brain there has a visibility icon whose hint reads **Private** (a closed lock) when both boxes are off, **Public** (an open lock) when **Allow unlisted access** is on, and **Discoverable** (a globe) when **Allow public access** is on. So an unlisted brain labeled **Public** in the brains list is expected — it has not become searchable. Clicking the icon opens **Brain Access and Sharing** for that brain. A brain that exists only on your device has no visibility icon.

Whenever a brain is unlisted or public, **private thoughts are not available** to viewers — they stay hidden. If a note embeds a private thought's note (see Embedded Notes), viewers who aren't logged in with access see **Missing thought:** followed by the thought's name instead of the private content; you and anyone on the access list see the embedded note as usual. See Private Thoughts. Changing visibility requires **admin** rights on the brain.

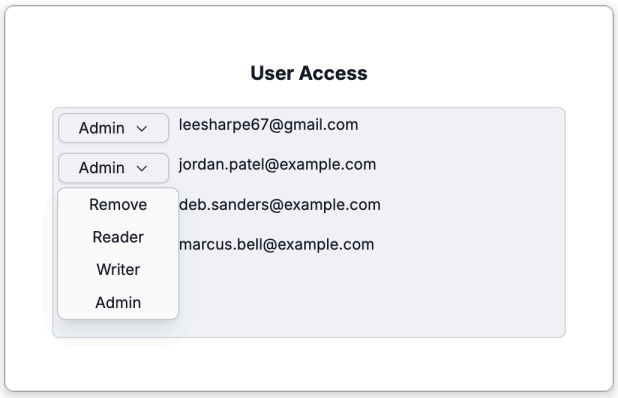
Granting Access to Specific People

The **User Access** list invites named people and sets each one's level:

- **Reader** — view the brain (including its private thoughts).
- **Writer** — make changes.
- **Admin** — full control, including managing access.

Writer and **Admin** are offered only on **TeamBrain** accounts and on company-run servers. Without TeamBrain, the dropdown on each other person's row offers **Reader** and **Remove** —

plus **Make Owner…**, which hands the brain over rather than sharing it. A note under the list points this out: *Want to add another writer or admin?*



Add people with **Add user from my organization…** or by email, then **Invite** them; new people start as **Reader**. Inviting by email isn't offered on every deployment; where it isn't, add people from your organization instead. Someone you add by email who isn't already known to the brain is marked **(Not saved)** until you save, because TheBrain can't tell until then whether that address has an account. Once you save, a person who already has an account gets Reader access straight away, and anyone else is marked **(Invited)** and gets Reader access when they create a TheBrain account from the invitation email they are sent. There is nothing for either of them to accept. To remove someone, set their access to **Remove**. A brain must keep at least one Admin: TheBrain warns *All Admins Removed* and won't let you remove the last one. People in this list have access **including private thoughts**, the brain appears in their own brains list, and they can sync it to their devices.

What the People You Add Receive

TheBrain emails each person you add when you save:

- **Someone who already has an account** gets a message saying you have granted them access, with a link to log in and open the brain.
- **An address with no account** gets an invitation with a button to set up an account. The sign-up form it opens has the address filled in, and the new account gets Reader access as soon as it is created.

The invitation belongs to that exact email address. It is taken up when the person creates their account with the sign-up form that the button opens. An account they create any other way doesn't pick the invitation up, and neither does an account they already have under a different address. So add the address the person actually uses for TheBrain.

No email is sent when you later change someone's level or remove them.

Co-editing a brain requires TeamBrain

Sharing a brain **read-only** works on any account — you can turn on an unlisted or public link, and add as many named **Readers** as you like, for free.

Letting more than one person edit the same brain is a TeamBrain feature. Because the dialog offers **Writer** and **Admin** only with TeamBrain, you can't give a second person edit access without it. Extra **Readers** never count toward this — only Writers and Admins do. See TeamBrain Overview.

Each person who edits needs TeamBrain on their own account, too. Once a brain has more than one Writer or Admin, each of them needs TeamBrain. Without it, TheBrain shows them *This brain cannot be synced without TeamBrain Services*.

To fix that, give the person a seat in a TeamBrain subscription — **Add User** under **TeamBrain License Management** on the TeamBrain Management page, or in **Settings > User > Account > Subscription & License Management** (see Inviting and Managing Members) — or have them subscribe to TeamBrain themselves, or to Max, which includes it.

Transferring a Brain to Someone Else

Make Owner… hands a brain over to another person in one step: they become the brain's **Admin**, and your own access is removed in the same save. TheBrain asks you to confirm under the heading **Transfer Ownership** first, because afterwards only the new Admin can give you access again.

1. Open **Main Menu > Brain > Brain Access and Sharing**.
2. Add the person if they aren't already on the list, and **Invite** them.
3. **Save**. A row marked **(Not saved)** or **(Invited)** only ever offers **Reader** and **Remove**, so you can't hand the brain to someone in either state. Saving clears **(Not saved)**; **(Invited)** clears only once that person creates an account from the invitation email.
4. Open their access dropdown, choose **Make Owner…**, and click **Save**. Confirm at the **Transfer Ownership** prompt to save the change.

The brain then closes — it is no longer yours to have open. **Make Owner…** isn't offered for a group entry or for an account that can only ever read, since neither can act as the brain's administrator.

With TeamBrain, or on a company-run server, the dropdown offers **Writer** and **Admin** instead of **Make Owner…**. To hand a brain over there, set the person to **Admin** and your own row to **Remove**, then click **Save** and confirm at the same **Transfer Ownership** prompt.

Removing Yourself from a Shared Brain

If someone shared a brain with you and you no longer want it, you can take yourself off its access list. You don't need to be an Admin to do this.

1. Open **Brain Access and Sharing** for the brain — **Main Menu > Brain > Brain Access and Sharing** while it is open, or click the brain's visibility icon in the brains list.
2. In the **User Access** list, open the dropdown on your own row. For a Reader or Writer it holds a single choice, **Remove**; the other rows can't be changed.
3. Click **Save**, then confirm at the **Remove Access** prompt.

The brain closes and is no longer shared with you. Only one of the brain's Admins can give you access again.



- Once a brain is shared, each person's view settings (such as sorting, text scale, navigation mode and the sections shown below notes) are their own. When the brain is public or unlisted and you open these settings from inside it, a **Visitor View** section here summarizes the default view visitors get; change it with **Set default** in **Settings > Brain > Personal Settings** (see Personal Settings).
- For copying links to individual thoughts, see Copy Thought Links; for what viewers actually see, see Shared and Embedded Views.

Related Topics

- Inviting and Managing Members
- Cloud Capacity
- Personal Settings

7.2.2 Shared Thought Pages

Overview

Shared Thought Pages allow publishing individual thoughts as clean, standalone web pages that anyone can view with a link. Each shared page displays the thought's name, label, and notes in a readable format — without exposing the rest of the brain. This is the way to share a note with someone who doesn't use TheBrain: they need only the link, not an account.

URL Structure

Each shared page gets a unique URL:

```
https://app.thebrain.com/s/{username}/{slug}
```

- **username** — The sanitized TheBrain username of the link creator.
- **URL path** — An auto-generated URL-friendly identifier based on the thought name. This can be customized.

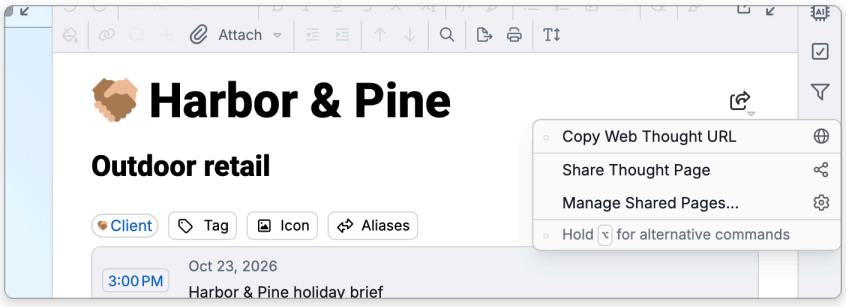
Who Can Create Shared Pages

Creating and removing shared pages requires **brain-admin** access — a Writer can't create them — and a brain that is synced to the cloud: local-only brains can't have shared pages. Anyone with the brain open can view the **Shared Pages** management list, but only a page's owner or a brain admin can change or delete an existing page.

How to Share a Thought

1. Navigate to the thought you want to share.
2. Click the **share button** next to the thought name (the share icon with a dropdown indicator).
3. From the dropdown menu, select **Share Thought Page**.

4. The shared page is created and the URL is copied to your clipboard automatically.
5. A notification confirms the link has been copied.



If a shared page already exists for the thought, selecting "Share Thought Page" again will copy the existing URL to the clipboard without creating a duplicate.

Private thoughts can't be shared: **Share Thought Page** is disabled while the active thought is private. To share a private thought, first make it public.

Share Button Indicator

When a thought has an active shared page, the share button next to the thought name appears in a selected/highlighted state. This serves as a visual reminder that changes to this thought's notes will be visible to anyone with the shared link.

How to Remove a Shared Page

1. Click the share button next to the thought name.
2. Select **Remove Shared Page** from the dropdown menu.
3. Confirm the removal when prompted.

Once removed, the shared URL stops working immediately. Anyone who visits the link will no longer see the content.

Managing Shared Pages

Quick Actions (Share Menu)

The share button dropdown provides quick access to:

- **Copy Web Thought URL** — Copies the standard TheBrain web link for the thought (requires brain access to view).
- **Copy Local Thought URL** — Copies a `brain://` protocol link for opening in the desktop app. It is a desktop-app command, and for a brain that is in the cloud it shows only while you hold `Shift` (`⌥` on Mac) with the menu open — see Copy Thought Links.
- **Share Thought Page** — Creates a shared page or copies the existing shared URL.
- **Remove Shared Page** — Deletes the shared page (only visible when one exists).
- **Manage Shared Pages** — Opens the settings dialog to the Shared Pages management tab.

Settings Dialog

The Shared Pages tab in Settings shows all shared pages for the **currently open brain** across all users. This tab is only visible when a brain is open.

The table view provides:

- **Active toggle** — Enable or disable a shared page without deleting it. Inactive pages return a "not found" response but can be re-enabled later.
- **Thought name** — Click to navigate to the thought in the brain.
- **URL path** — Click to edit the path portion of the URL. Press `Enter` to save or `Esc` to cancel.
- **View count** — How many times the shared page has been viewed.
- **Created date** — When the shared page was first created.
- **Public/Login toggle** — Toggle between public access (globe icon) and requiring a TheBrain login (key icon).
- **Context menu** — Copy link, duplicate (create a second shared link to the same thought with a different URL path), or delete.

User Filter

A user filter dropdown at the top of the table lets you show only shared pages from a specific user, or select "All Users" to see everything.

Sorting

Click any column header to sort the table. Click again to reverse the sort direction. The default sort is by creation date (newest first).

How Links in Notes Behave on Shared Pages

When someone views a shared thought page, links to other thoughts within the brain are handled as follows:

- **Links to other shared thoughts** — These are preserved and rewritten to point to the other thought's shared page URL (`/s/{username}/{slug}`), allowing viewers to navigate between shared pages.
- **Links to non-shared thoughts** — These are stripped and appear as plain text. The display text is preserved but the hyperlink is removed, since the viewer cannot access that thought.
- **Public or Unlisted brains** — If the brain's visibility is set to Public or Unlisted, all thought links are preserved as-is, since viewers can open any thought in the brain that isn't private.
- **Unlinked mentions** — Thought names that TheBrain marks in the text without a link follow the same rules as linked thoughts: mentions of shared thoughts become navigable links, while mentions of non-shared thoughts appear as plain text.
- **External links** — Links to websites, emails, and other non-brain URLs are always preserved.
- **Embedded notes** — A note that embeds another thought's note (see Embedded Notes) shows the embedded content on the shared page only when viewers of the page can reach that thought. In a brain that isn't public or unlisted, that means the embedded thought has a shared page of its own; any other embed shows **Missing thought:** followed by the thought's name, even to viewers who have access to the brain. In a public or unlisted brain, an embedded **private** note shows **Missing thought:** in the same way, unless the page is set to **Requires Login** and the viewer has access to the brain.

Read-Only Experience

Shared thought pages are strictly read-only. Viewers see the thought's name, label, notes, and attachments — but they cannot navigate to related thoughts, types, or tags. The brain's graph structure is not exposed.

No toolbar is shown on a shared page. A small **TheBrain logo** on the page acts as a credit: clicking it shows **Created by** followed by the username of the person who shared the page, and a **Made with TheBrain** link. The username is the one in the page's address, and it is shown automatically.

If you want viewers to explore the brain — navigating between thoughts, browsing types and tags, etc. — make the brain Public or Unlisted instead and share the standard web link.

When a Shared Page Is Out of Date

A shared page is served from the copy of the brain in TheBrain's cloud, so it shows the thought as the cloud has it. Changes to the thought's name or notes reach the page without sharing it again:

- **Edits made in the web app** change the cloud copy directly, so they are on the page the next time it is loaded.
- **Edits made in the desktop or mobile app** change the copy on your device first, and reach the page once the brain has synced.

If the thought itself hasn't reached the cloud yet — for example, a thought you created and shared in the desktop app before the brain synced — visitors see **Content Not Yet Available** instead of the page.

In either case the fix is the same: sync the brain (click **Sync**, or wait for automatic sync), then reload the page. See Syncing Brains.

Access Control

Shared pages offer two access levels, configurable per link:

- **Public** (default) — Anyone with the URL can view the page. No login required.

- **Requires Login** — Viewers must be signed in to a TheBrain account **and** have at least read access to the brain to view the page. This allows sharing within a team or organization while keeping the content private from the general public.



- Shared pages are tied to a user account within a brain. They work across the web client and the installed apps.

Related Topics

- Syncing Brains

7.2.3 Shared and Embedded Views

Overview

When you open a brain up — by making it public or unlisted, or by embedding it — the people who view it get a **read-only** version. They can navigate the brain and read its thoughts, notes, and attachments, but they can't change anything, and your private thoughts stay hidden. You can also **embed** a brain directly into a web page so it appears inline on your own site.

The Read-Only Viewer Experience

Where a note embeds a private thought's note, viewers see **Missing thought:** followed by the thought's name in its place (see Embedded Notes).

What Visitors See at the Top

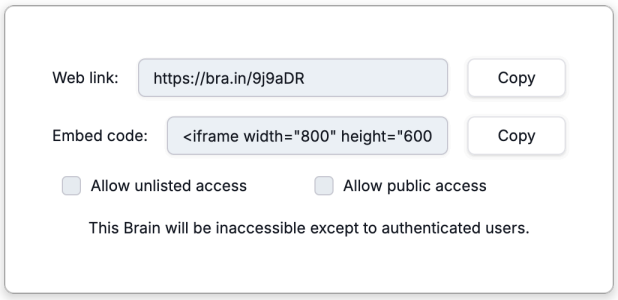
What sits at the top of the page depends on how the brain is opened:

- **The brain's ordinary web link** — the web app's usual top bar stays in place, with the TheBrain logo, the brain's icon and name, and the account button, and the brain toolbar below it. The **Made with TheBrain** credit is not shown here.

- **The embedded view** (an `/embed/` address) — that top bar is dropped, leaving only the brain toolbar. There is no **Made with TheBrain** credit here either.
- **A shared thought page** — no toolbar at all. The credit appears here as a small **TheBrain logo** on the page that, when clicked, shows **Created by** followed by the username of the person who shared the page, and a **Made with TheBrain** link. The username is the one in the page's address, and it is shown automatically. See Shared Thought Pages.
- **A thought's preview page**, which search engines list for a public brain — a bar with the brain's name, a **Preview** label and an **Open in TheBrain** button that opens the thought in the brain itself. The page ends with a **Made with TheBrain** link, and it doesn't name the brain's owner. See *Unlisted or Public: What Differs* in Brain Access and Sharing.

Embedding a Brain

The **Brain Access and Sharing** settings provide an **Embed code** — a ready-made `<iframe>` snippet you can copy and paste into your own web page. It points at the brain's embed address (an `/embed/` URL) and renders the brain inline, without the web app's top bar.



The **Embed code** is available for any cloud (synced) brain, whatever its visibility, but an embedded view shows content to visitors only when the brain is public or unlisted, so make the brain public or unlisted for embedded viewers to see it (see Brain Access and Sharing). A local-only brain shows an "upload to the cloud to enable sharing" prompt instead.



- To publish a single thought as a standalone page rather than the whole brain, see Shared Thought Pages.

7.3 TeamBrain and Administration

7.3.1 TeamBrain Overview

Overview

TeamBrain is TheBrain for groups — an **organization** that ties a team's members and licenses together so people can collaborate and an admin can manage everyone's access from one place. If your account belongs to a TeamBrain organization, you get a management page for it. You reach it in the web app from the **account menu > TeamBrain Management**. Self-hosted enterprise servers don't show it; they manage people through *User Administration* instead.

The TeamBrain Management Page

The management page shows your organization's **name** and **ID** at the top, then lists your **organization members** — each member's **email**, **name**, **role**, and **license status** (Active or Inactive). A **TeamBrain License Management** section below is where license **seats** are assigned. From this page, organization admins invite people, change roles, and remove members. Seats are a separate matter: they can be assigned only by someone who owns the TeamBrain subscription or whose own seat in it is set to **Admin**, whatever their organization role (see Inviting and Managing Members).

Roles

Members have one of two roles:

- **User** — a regular member of the organization.
- **Admin** — can manage the organization: invite and remove members, and change roles.



- TeamBrain organization membership is separate from a *brain's* own access list — for sharing individual brains, see Brain Access and Sharing.

Related Topics

- Managing Your Account

7.3.2 Inviting and Managing Members

Overview

A TeamBrain organization grows by inviting people and managing their access. Organization **admins** send invitations, set each member's role, change roles later, and remove members — all from the TeamBrain management page in the web app. License seats are assigned on the same page, but by whoever owns or administers the TeamBrain subscription rather than by organization role (see *Assigning Licenses*). Regular members can view the page, but the invitation and role controls are disabled for them.

Inviting Members

From **Invite Users**, enter one or more **email addresses** (separated by commas, semicolons, or line breaks), choose the **role to assign** (**User** or **Admin**), and optionally add a custom message. **Send Invitations** emails them. An invited person joins the members list once they **accept** the invitation.

How an Invitation Is Accepted

An invitation is a link emailed to one address, and it is opened in a browser. These rules apply:

- **It expires after seven days.** After that the link shows *This invitation has expired*.
- **It can be accepted once.** A link that has already been accepted shows *This invitation has already been used*.
- **The invited account has to open it.** The person must be signed in to a TheBrain account whose email address is the one you invited (capital letters don't matter); with any other account TheBrain shows *This invitation was sent to a different email address*. Someone who isn't signed in is sent to the login screen first and returned to the invitation afterwards.
- **An account can belong to one organization.** An account that is already in an organization sees *You are already a member of an organization* and can't join.

Accepting gives the person the role you chose in the invitation. It doesn't give them a license seat — that is assigned separately (see *Assigning Licenses* below).

The members list shows only people who have joined, so a pending invitation isn't listed there and can't be withdrawn from the page. To replace an expired or mistyped invitation, send a new one. An address that already belongs to a member isn't invited again; the confirmation counts it as a failed invitation.

Changing Roles and Removing Members

Select one or more members in the members list, then open the menu that appears above the list, which shows how many users are selected. In it, **Change User Role** switches the selected members between User and Admin, and **Remove User from Organization** takes them out. TheBrain asks you to confirm every removal, and a role change only when it steps you yourself down from admin.

Assigning Licenses

A member needs an active **TeamBrain license** to use TeamBrain features. Seats are handed out in the **TeamBrain License Management** section below the members list — but who can do that is decided by the subscription, not by the organization role:

- You can manage a TeamBrain subscription's seats when your account **owns** that subscription, or when your own seat in it is set to **Admin**.
- Anyone else who holds a seat sees just their own seat, marked **Assigned by** and the owner's name, with no controls.
- An organization **Admin** who neither owns the subscription nor has an Admin seat in it gets no seat controls here, even though they can invite and remove members.

When you can manage the seats, the section shows how many are used and lists each seat holder:

- **Add User** — assigns a free seat. Type the person's email address, or pick someone from your organization. When no seat is free the button reads **Purchase Additional Seats** instead.
- The **User** / **Admin** dropdown beside a name — set it to **Admin** to let that person manage this subscription's seats too. They have to hold a seat first.

- The **X** (**Remove User**) beside a name — takes that seat back, after a confirmation.

So if you are an organization Admin and can't give anyone a seat, ask the subscription's owner, or someone whose seat is already set to Admin, to change your seat's dropdown from **User** to **Admin**.

Add User, the **User** / **Admin** dropdown and the **X** are also in **Settings > User > Account > Subscription & License Management** (in the desktop and mobile apps this opens in your browser). There, **Add User** takes an email address only, and it isn't shown when no seat is free. In the members list, a member without an active license shows an **Inactive** license status.

Related Topics

- Brain Access and Sharing

7.3.3 User Administration

Overview

On **self-hosted enterprise deployments**, **User Administration** is where an admin manages the people who can use the system, in the web app. It's a separate, admin-only surface from TeamBrain organization management (see TeamBrain Overview) — aimed at managing user accounts themselves. Administrator accounts only exist on these enterprise deployments, so on the standard TheBrain cloud there's no Manage Users link and this surface isn't reachable.

The User List

Manage Users in the account menu opens the **Users** page (the `/users` page), which lists users with a **Filter users** box to find one, and a **New User** button to create one. Click a user to open a menu where administrators can:

- **Edit User** — change their details and account type.
- **Enable User** — a check mark shows that the account is enabled; choose it to turn the account off or on (you can't disable your own account).
- **Send Password Reset Email** — help a user who's locked out.

- **AI Limits** — set that user's AI usage limits. It is offered when AI is set up on the server.

Bulk and Oversight Tools

- **Import Users** — in the **Actions** menu at the top of the page, add users in bulk from a CSV file (username, first name, last name, email, type).
- **Session Info** — view active user sessions, including who's connected and from where.

8 Personalizing TheBrain

8.1 Settings Overview

Overview

Settings is the one place to configure TheBrain — from how the app looks to how thoughts behave to your account. It's organized into sections down the side, and a search box helps you jump straight to a setting without hunting through tabs.

Opening Settings

Open Settings from the toolbar (gear) or the main menu. The default shortcut is `Ctrl+,` (`⌘,` on Mac). TheBrain remembers the last section you had open.



On the desktop app, Settings opens in a window of its own beside the brain window, and you can keep working in the brain while it is open. It belongs to the tab you opened it from: it closes when you close that tab or switch to another tab.

The Sections

Settings is grouped into:

- **Brain** — settings for the open brain (your personal view of it, content options, sync, statistics, and more). Available when a brain is open. These settings belong to the brain and apply to everyone who uses it, with one exception. Its first page, **Personal Settings**, holds how you view the brain; in a shared brain those choices affect only you (see Personal Settings). **Plex Settings** sets how thoughts are drawn in the Plex (see Plex

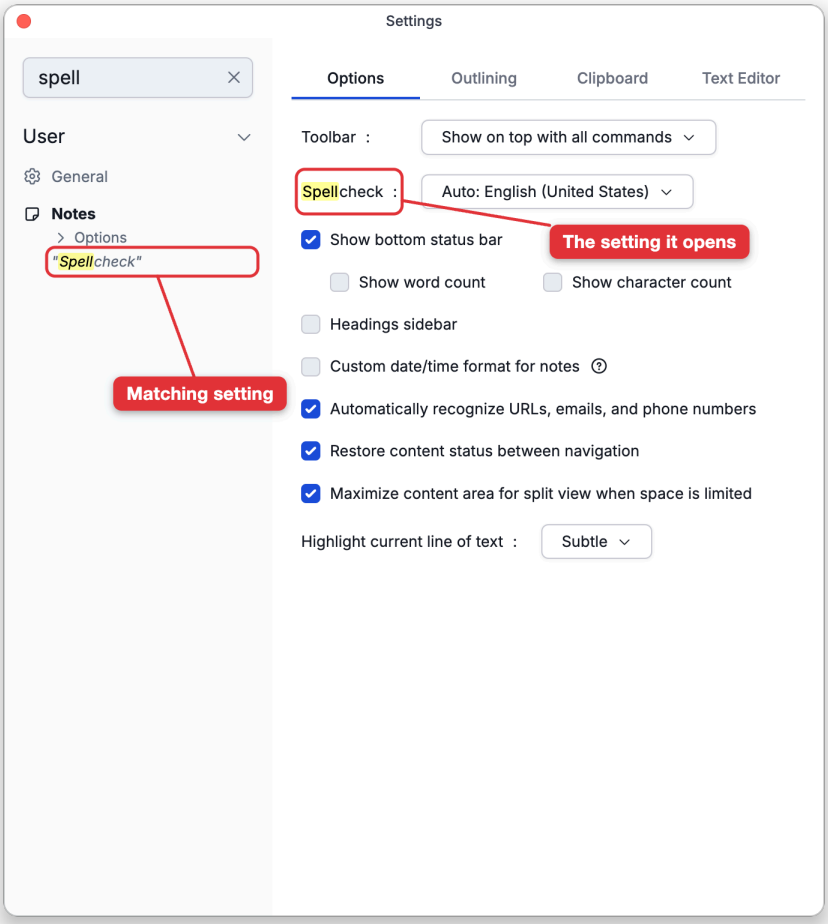
Settings), and **Content Settings** covers the brain's notes, note format, and attachments (see Brain Content Settings).

- **Brain Theme** — the look of the open brain, available when a brain is open. Like the brain's settings, it applies to everyone who uses the brain (see Brain Themes Overview).
- **User** — your personal preferences, which follow your account: General, Options (search, timeline, and calendar preferences; see Options Settings), Content Area, Notes, Markdown Files (see Markdown Files Settings), Keyboard, and Toolbars, plus **Cloud Capacity** and **Account** when you're signed in. The web app also has **API Keys** and **Capture Devices** when you're signed in, and the desktop app has **Local API**. The **Keyboard** tab is hidden in the mobile apps, and **Toolbars** is hidden on phones.
- **AI** — Cerebro settings (see AI Settings).
- **Device** — device-specific settings (on the desktop and mobile apps; most of its pages, such as updates, network, and storage, are on the desktop app only). On the desktop app its pages include **General**, for the tray icon and starting at login (see Tray Icon, Quitting, and Starting at Login); **Network**, for a proxy server (see Network and Proxy Settings); **Storage** (see Storage Location); and, on the desktop and mobile apps, **Performance**, whose **Tab pool size** sets how many tabs stay active in the background for faster switching (not on phones), and **Servers**, the list of servers the app can sign in to (see Signing In to a Private Server).

Some panes are further divided into sub-tabs — for example **User > Notes** (Options, Outlining, Clipboard, and Text Editor) and **Brain > Content Settings** (Notes, Note Format, and Attachments).

Finding a Setting

Use the **search** box at the top to filter to matching settings. Type a couple of characters and TheBrain narrows the list; picking a match opens the right pane on the right sub-tab.



Related Topics

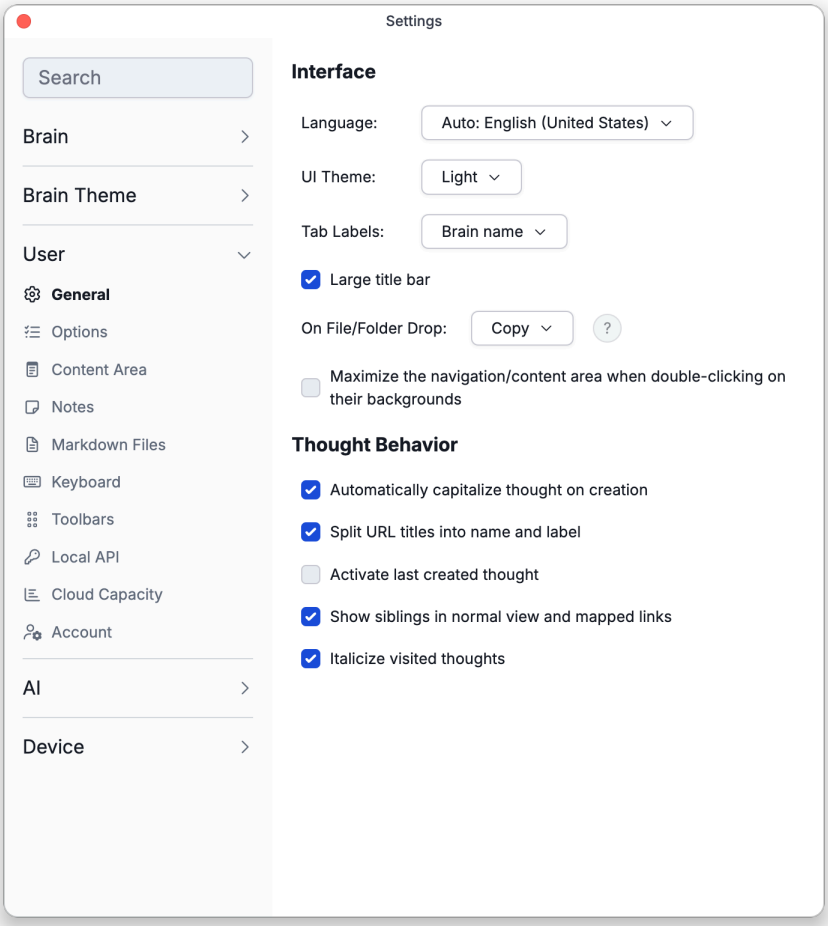
- General and Appearance
- Options Settings
- Notes Settings
- Personal Settings
- Plex Settings
- Brain Content Settings
- Keyboard Shortcuts
- Tray Icon, Quitting, and Starting at Login
- Network and Proxy Settings
- Storage Location
- Brain Themes Overview

8.2 Your Settings

8.2.1 General and Appearance

Overview

The **General** settings (under **Settings > User**) cover the app's overall look and some basic behavior — the interface theme, your language, and small choices about how thoughts behave when you create and visit them. These are personal preferences that follow your account.



Interface

- **UI Theme** — **Follow OS**, **Dark**, **Light**, or **Follow Brain Theme** (the default). **Follow Brain Theme** follows the open brain's *content* theme, not its plex theme: the interface is tinted from the content theme's background and text colors, and it counts as light or dark according to how dark that background is. Changing only the plex theme therefore leaves the interface as it was. To change how the interface looks under this option, change the brain's content theme — pick one under **Settings > Brain Theme > Content Themes**, or set **Background Color** and **Text Color** in the **Body Text** section of **Customize Content** (see Content Theme).
- **Language** — Choose a language, or let TheBrain auto-detect it.
- **Tab Labels** — Show tabs by **brain name** or **thought name** (on larger screens; hidden on phones).
- **On File/Folder Drop** — What happens when you drag a file or folder into a brain on the desktop app: **Copy** it into the brain (the default), **Move** it into the brain, or **Link** to it where it is. The setting has an effect only in the desktop app, and it is hidden on phones and tablets. Except on Linux, you can override it for a single drop by holding a modifier key as you drop: hold `Ctrl` (`⌥` on Mac) to copy, `Shift` (`⇧` on Mac) to move, or `Alt` (`^` on Mac) to link. The **?** beside the setting lists these keys. See Linking to External Files and Folders.
- **Large title bar** — Use a taller window title bar (desktop app only, Windows and macOS).
- **Maximize the navigation/content area when double-clicking on their backgrounds** — double-click an empty spot in the plex or content area to maximize that pane (off by default; hidden on phones).

Thought Behavior

- **Automatically capitalize thought on creation** — capitalizes the names you type yourself. Thoughts created by Cerebro, from BrainBox items, from a web page's title, or through the API keep their own casing.
- **Split URL titles into name and label** — When a thought is created from a web address, it takes the page's title once that has been fetched. With this on (the default), a title such as `Some Article – Wikipedia` is split at the separator: the thought is named **Some Article** and gets the label **Wikipedia**. Turn it off to keep the whole page title as the thought name and add no label.
- **Activate last created thought** — jump to a thought as soon as you make it (off by default). With it off, a new child, parent, or jump is created and linked but does not

become the active thought; see Creating Thoughts and Links.

- **Show siblings in normal view and mapped links** — Siblings are the other children of the active thought's parents. With this on (the default), the plex's **Normal** layout shows them to the right of the active thought; jumps are on the left. Turn it off to hide siblings: the plex redraws at once. Siblings are also left out when the active thought has more than 50 parents.
- **Italicize visited thoughts** — Shows where you've been (on by default). A thought's name is in italics when you have visited the thought in this brain and it was last activated less than a day ago. The active thought is never italic, and a name goes back to normal a day after the thought was last activated. Turn this off to stop italicizing visited thoughts.

The **UI Theme** styles the app's interface; a brain's own colors come from its brain theme (see Brain Themes Overview).

Related Topics

- Settings Overview
- Content Theme
- The Plex
- Creating Thoughts and Links
- Finding and Creating Thoughts

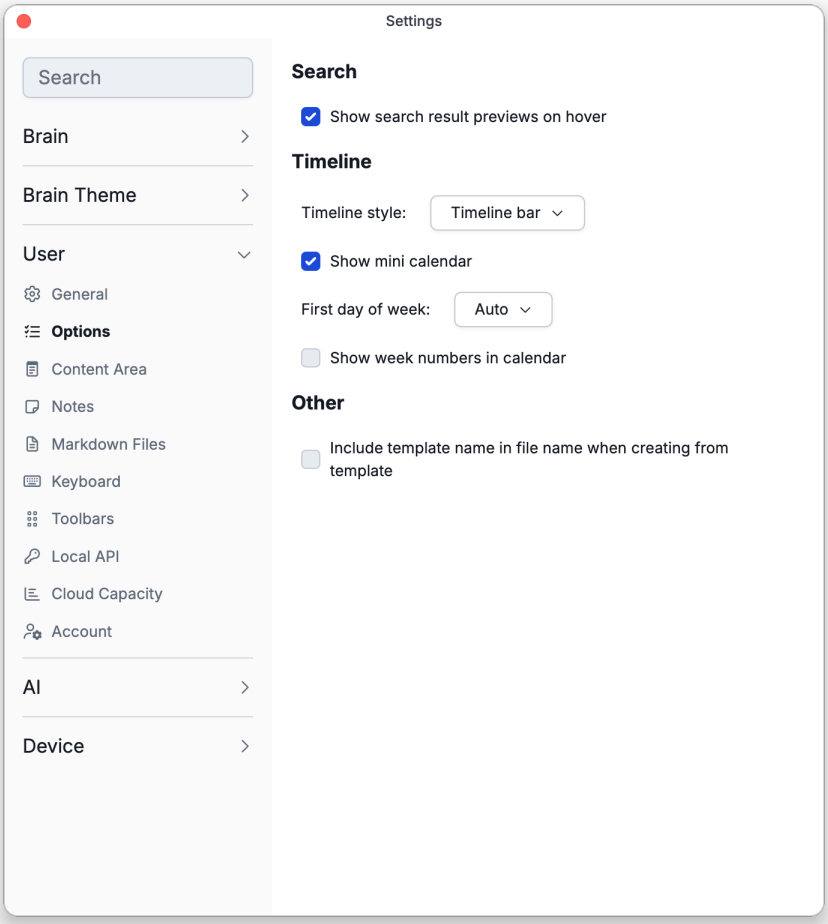
8.2.2 Options Settings

Overview

The **Options** page (under **Settings > User**) gathers a handful of personal preferences for search, the Timeline and its calendar, and attachment templates. Like the other **User** settings, they are yours and follow your account.

How to Open the Options Page

1. Open **Settings** (the default shortcut is `Ctrl+,`, `⌘,` on Mac).
2. Choose **User > Options**.



Search

- **Show search result previews on hover** — On by default. When you rest the mouse on a search result, a preview of that thought, or of the attachment that matched, appears next to it. Turn this off to stop the preview from appearing.

The same switch is in **Search Options** (the gear menu by the search results) as **Show Search Previews on Hover**. Previews need a mouse: they don't appear on phones or tablets, and the **Search** section isn't shown on phones. Results from other brains have no preview.

Timeline

- **Timeline style** — How the Timeline opens: as the **Timeline bar** along the bottom of the brain page (the default), or as the **Day navigator panel** in the sidebar. **Switch to Day Navigator** in the bar and **Switch to Timeline Bar** in the panel change the same setting. On phones the bar isn't docked along the bottom of the brain page; the same timeline opens in a sheet from **More Actions > Timeline** on the action bar instead — see Timeline and Calendar.
- **Show mini calendar** — On by default. Shows the month calendar in the Day navigator panel. This is the same setting as **Show Calendar** in the panel's header.
- **First day of week** — **Auto** (the default), **Monday**, or **Sunday**. With **Auto**, the desktop and mobile apps take the first day of the week from your device's regional settings.
- **Show week numbers in calendar** — Off by default. Adds a column of week numbers to the calendar.

First day of week and **Show week numbers in calendar** apply to the mini calendar in the Day navigator panel and to the calendars you pick dates from in the **Created** and **Modified** filters of reports and the To-Do list.

Week numbers count weeks that start on Monday, so the two settings are linked: turning week numbers on sets **First day of week** to **Monday**, and choosing **Auto** or **Sunday** turns week numbers off.

See Timeline and Calendar for the Timeline itself.

Other

- **Include template name in file name when creating from template** — Off by default. When you create an attachment from a template, TheBrain suggests the thought's name as the file name. With this on, a template of your own adds its name after it, as in "Thought Name, Template Name". See Adding Attachments.

How to Start the Calendar Week on Monday

1. Open **Settings** and choose **User > Options**.
2. Under **Timeline**, set **First day of week** to **Monday**.
3. To see week numbers too, turn on **Show week numbers in calendar**.

How to Turn Off Search Result Previews

1. Open **Settings** and choose **User > Options**.
2. Under **Search**, turn off **Show search result previews on hover**.

> • Settings for how new thoughts behave, the language and the interface theme are on the **General** page; see General and Appearance.

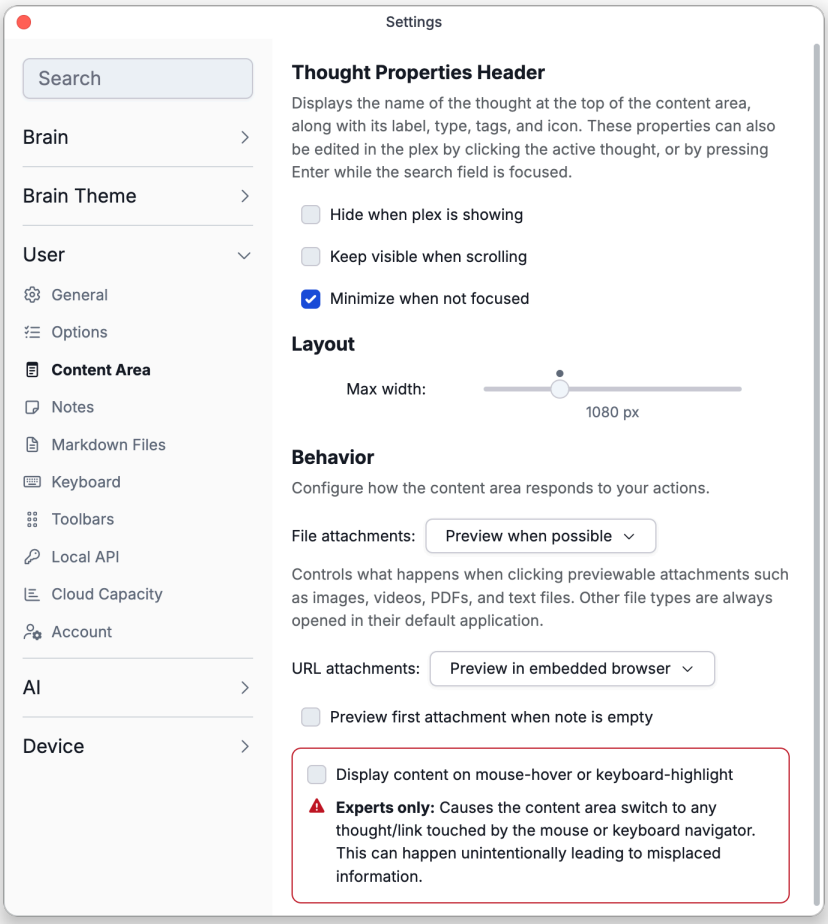
Related Topics

- Settings Overview
- Finding and Creating Thoughts
- Searching Other and Public Brains
- Adding Attachments

8.2.3 Content Area Settings

Overview

The **Content Area** settings (under **Settings > User**) control how the open thought's content — its properties header, notes, and attachments — is laid out and behaves. These are personal preferences for your reading and editing comfort, and they follow your account.



Thought Properties Header

These options are hidden on phones.

- **Hide when plex is showing** — keep the header out of the way while navigating.
- **Keep visible when scrolling** — pin the header as you scroll a long note.
- **Minimize when not focused** — collapse the header's controls until you need them.

Layout

- **Max width** — Cap how wide notes get for comfortable line length, or set **No limit**.

Behavior

- **File attachments** — What clicking an attachment that can be previewed, such as an image, video, PDF or text file, does: **Preview when possible** (the default) shows it in TheBrain, and the other choice opens it in its default app instead (**Open in default application**, in the desktop and mobile apps) or downloads it (**Download**, in the web app). Other kinds of files always open in their default app, or download in the web app. Hidden on phones.
- **URL attachments** — On the desktop app and tablets, choose whether link attachments, and web links you follow in notes, backlinks and mentions, open in TheBrain's embedded browser (**Preview in embedded browser**, the default) or in your own browser (**Open in external browser**).
- **Preview first attachment when note is empty.**
- **Display content on mouse-hover or keyboard-highlight** — an advanced option flagged "experts only"; leave it off unless you know you want it. It isn't shown on phones and tablets.



- Two options moved elsewhere: **Include template name in file name when creating from template** is now under **Settings > User > Options** (in its **Other** section), and **Maximize the navigation/content area when double-clicking on their backgrounds** is now under **Settings > User > General**.
- Some content-area options are set for each brain rather than here: **hero images** and the **line spacing** and **line gap** of notes are under **Settings > Brain > Content Settings** (see Brain Content Settings), and the **backlinks**, **mapped links** and **unlinked mentions** sections and the attachment layout are under **Settings > Brain > Personal Settings**.

Related Topics

- Settings Overview
- Brain Content Settings

8.2.4 Markdown Files Settings

Overview

Settings > User > Markdown Files holds the settings for Markdown files that come from outside TheBrain: files you open in windows of their own in the desktop app (see Markdown File Windows), `.md` files attached to thoughts, and Markdown imports.

In the web app and on phones and tablets, the tab has only **Wrapped lines**, because the other settings are for Markdown file windows.

What Saving Does to a File

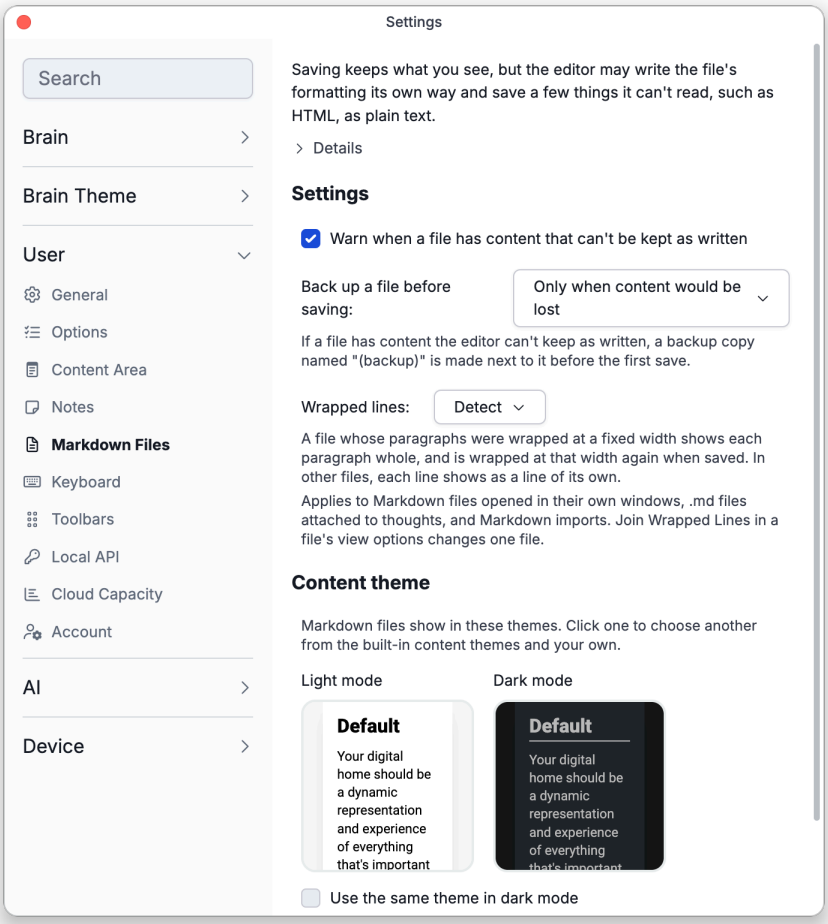
At the top, the tab sums up what happens when you save a Markdown file window: what you see is kept, but the editor writes the whole file again in standard Markdown, so the file's text can change. Open **Details** for the full list:

- **Formatting written differently** — The content stays the same, but list bullets written with `*` or `+` become `-` and numbered lists are numbered again, underlined headings are written with `#`, bold and italic written with underscores may be written with asterisks, and blank lines, indentation and line breaks inside paragraphs may change. Reference-style links (`[text][name]` with a `[name]: address` line elsewhere) are kept, and their address lines are written together at the end of the file.
- **Content that can't be kept as written** — HTML written in the file (such as `<div>` or `<span>`) is shown and saved as text. Syntax that other apps add to Markdown, such as wiki links, definition lists or custom blocks, is shown and saved as plain text. Some comments and text the editor can't show may be dropped.
- **Always kept** — Properties at the top of the file (frontmatter), the file's line endings and its byte order mark, and the paths the file gives its images. Pasted images are saved in an `images` folder beside the file. In the **Text** view, saving writes exactly what you typed.

The Settings

Setting	Choices	Default
Warn when a file has content that can't be kept as written	On or off	On
Back up a file before saving	**Never**, **Only when content would be lost**, **Before the first save in each window**, **Before every save**	**Only when content would be lost**
Wrapped lines	**Detect**, **Always join**, **Keep lines**	**Detect**
Content theme	A theme for light mode and one for dark mode	**Default**
Text and spacing	**Text scale**, **Line spacing**, **Line gap**, and **Show YouTube and Vimeo links as embedded videos**	100%, 1.4, 30%, and on
Opening Markdown files	**Set TheBrain as the default app for Markdown files**	—

A Markdown file belongs to no brain, so Markdown file windows show files with the **Text and spacing** settings here instead of a brain's settings. **Line spacing** and **Line gap** work as they do for a brain's notes (see Brain Content Settings), and changing the note text scale in a file's window changes **Text scale** here too.



The Warning and Backup Copies

With the warning on, a Markdown file window that opens a file with content the editor can't keep as written shows a bar: **This file uses some markdown that TheBrain shows as plain text.** It goes on to say that a backup copy is made next to the file before saving, or, when backups are set to **Never**, that saving may change how the file looks in other apps. The bar has **More info** and **Dismiss** buttons.

A backup is a copy of the file made next to it, with `(backup)` added to its name:

- **Only when content would be lost** — Before the first save of a file that has content the editor can't keep as written.
- **Before the first save in each window** — Before a window first saves the file.
- **Before every save** — Before every save, replacing the previous backup.
- **Never** — Files are saved without a backup copy.

When a once-only backup would replace an earlier one, it is named `(backup 2)` instead, and so on. After a save that made a backup, TheBrain tells you the name it was kept under.

Wrapped Lines

Many Markdown files are hard-wrapped: each paragraph is broken into lines of about the same width, often 80 characters, because Markdown joins those lines into one paragraph when the file is displayed. TheBrain's own notes keep every line break, so such a file would show as a column of short, broken lines. **Wrapped lines** decides how TheBrain reads these files:

- **Detect** — A file whose paragraphs were wrapped at a fixed width shows each paragraph whole, and is wrapped at that width again when saved. In other files, each line shows as a line of its own.
- **Always join** — Lines with no blank line between them always show as one paragraph, the way GitHub shows them.
- **Keep lines** — Each line of a file shows as a line of its own, as in TheBrain's own notes.

The setting applies to:

- **Markdown file windows** in the desktop app.
- **`.md` files attached to thoughts**, unless the file is written in TheBrain's own Markdown dialect.
- **Imports** with **Markdown Files**, **Obsidian Vault**, **Bear**, **Notion** and **Joplin**. Wrapped paragraphs are joined once, as the notes are imported, and the imported notes then keep their lines like any other note.

To change one file, use **Join Wrapped Lines**: in a Markdown file window it is in **Main Menu > View**, and for an attached file it is in the file's view options. A Markdown file window remembers the choice on this device. For an attached file, the choice is saved with the attachment, so it is the same for everyone who uses the brain, and changing it needs write access. If you turn **Join Wrapped Lines** off while you have unsaved edits, the paragraphs you didn't change get their original lines back.

Content Theme

Markdown file windows use a content theme of their own rather than a brain's. Click the **Light mode** or **Dark mode** preview to choose another theme from the built-in content themes and

your own; **Default** uses the app's default content theme. Tick **Use the same theme in dark mode** to use one theme in both.

Opening Markdown Files

Set TheBrain as the default app for Markdown files makes double-clicking a `.md` file in your file manager open it in a Markdown file window. On Windows, the button opens Windows' list of apps, where you choose TheBrain. Once TheBrain is the default, the tab says **TheBrain opens Markdown files when you double-click them.** When this copy of TheBrain can't be registered with the system, for example an AppImage on Linux without a desktop entry, the tab says **This copy of TheBrain can't be set as the default app. The installed app can.** instead. Installing TheBrain on Windows adds it to **Open With** but doesn't make it the default.



- When no one is signed in, these settings are kept for the device. Once you sign in, your own settings apply.
- Reference-style links are kept in notes too, in brains that save standard Markdown (see Standard Markdown Notes).

Related Topics

- Viewing Attachments
- Importing Brains
- Standard Markdown Notes
- Settings Overview

8.2.5 Keyboard Shortcuts

Overview

Almost every command in TheBrain can have a keyboard shortcut, and the **Keyboard** settings (under **Settings > User**) let you see them all and change them to suit how you work. The default shortcuts throughout this knowledge base are exactly that — defaults you can rebind here. The Keyboard settings are in the desktop and web apps, but not in the mobile apps.

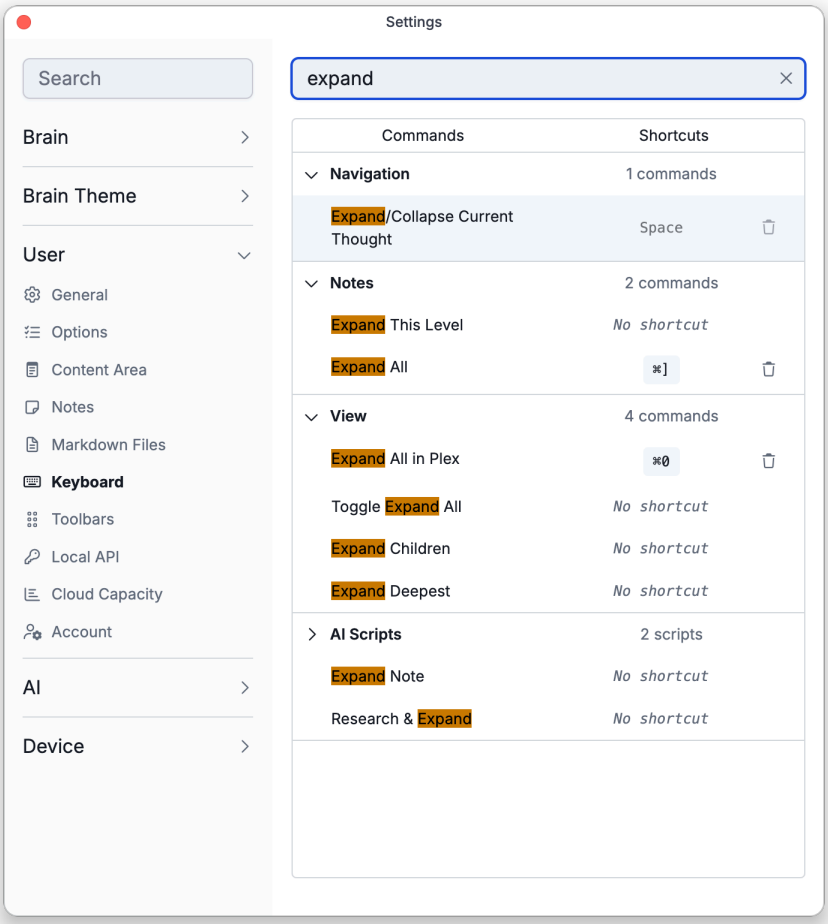
Keyboard Symbols

Topics give each shortcut first as it is in Windows, and then as it is on a Mac, such as `Ctrl+Z` (`⌘Z` on Mac). The Mac form uses Apple's symbols for its modifier keys:

Symbol	Mac key	Usual Windows key
⌘	Command	`Ctrl`
⌥	Option	`Alt`
⇧	Shift	`Shift`
^	Control	None. Control is a key of its own on a Mac, used by only a few shortcuts.

Finding a Command

The Keyboard settings list commands by category, with a **search commands** box to find one quickly. Turn on **Only Show Assigned** to see just the commands that currently have a shortcut.



Rebinding a Shortcut

Click a command to edit its shortcut, then press the keys you want. TheBrain warns you if the combination **conflicts** with another command or is a reserved system shortcut. The Markdown file window's **Save** and **Save As...** are the exception: they work only in those windows, so they can share a combination with a command that works elsewhere (see Markdown File Windows). You can remove a single binding or clear all of a command's bindings. Some commands are fixed and can't be rebound. A default shortcut on a key you can't record here — such as `Space`, `Enter`, or an arrow key — can't be removed either, since there would be no way to add it back; you can still give the command other shortcuts.

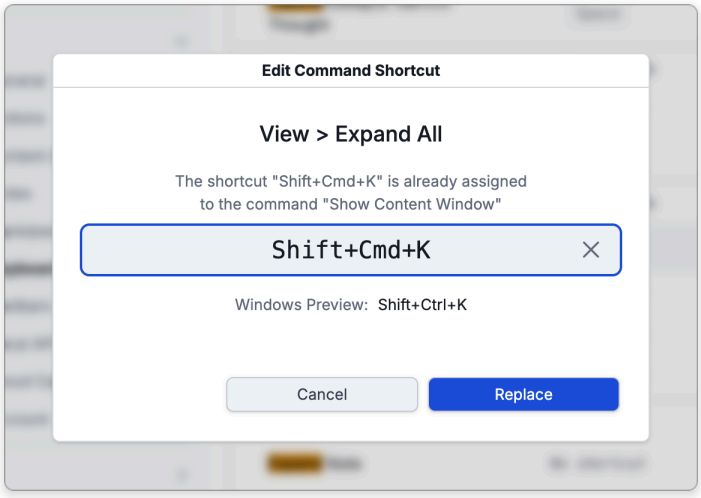
Which Combinations Are Accepted

- **A modifier plus another key** — A shortcut combines at least one modifier key with another key. The modifier keys are `Ctrl`, `Alt`, and `Shift`, and on Linux also the `Super` key;

on a Mac they are ⌘, ⌥, ⇧, and ^ (see *Keyboard Symbols*). On Windows, the **Windows** key can't be part of a shortcut, and the dialog ignores it.

- **The Mac Control key** — A shortcut that uses the Control key (^) on a Mac works only on a Mac, because Windows and Linux have no key that corresponds to it. When you record one, the dialog shows **Windows Preview: Not Available** with the note *This shortcut uses platform-specific keys and will not be available on Windows*. You can still save it.
- **A single key** — A key on its own is not accepted, except a function key (`F1`, `F2`, and so on), which can be used alone.
- **Shift alone is not enough** — When `Shift` is the only modifier, as in `Shift+A` or `Shift+F5`, the dialog shows **Additional modifier key required** and you can't save.
- **A combination another command uses** — The dialog names the command that has it, and the **Save** button becomes **Replace**. Replacing takes the combination away from that command and gives it to this one.
- **Sharing between notes and the plex** — A notes command and a command outside notes can use the same combination. The notes command runs while the note has focus, and the other one runs while the plex has focus.
- **Combinations you can't save** — Apart from that sharing, a combination that belongs to a fixed command can't be saved, and neither can a system shortcut.

Adding a shortcut keeps the ones the command already has. The dialog also previews the equivalent shortcut on the other platform (Mac or Windows) and warns you when it would not be available there.



Shortcuts on Your Other Devices

When you are signed in, your custom shortcuts are saved with your account and synced, so they follow you to your other devices and to the web app without exporting anything. A change made on one device reaches the others after it syncs. Your toolbar layouts are saved the same way (see Customizing Toolbars).

Shortcuts are saved in a form that works across platforms: a `Ctrl` shortcut on Windows or Linux is a `⌘` shortcut on a Mac, and `Alt` is `⌥`. The Mac's Control key (`^`) is the exception. It has no counterpart on Windows or Linux, so a shortcut that uses it is available only on your Macs. If you want the command on a shortcut everywhere, add a second shortcut for it that doesn't use `^`; a command can have more than one.

If you use the desktop app without signing in, your shortcuts and toolbar layouts are kept on that device only. When you create a new account from that device, they are copied into it.

Import, Export, and Reset

From the settings' actions menu (the **…** button) you can:

- **Import Shortcuts** from a file and **Export Shortcuts** to one, for example to copy your shortcuts into another account.
- **Restore Default** to reset all shortcuts to their shipped values (TheBrain confirms first).

- **A plain key you never set** — If a command shows a single key such as `1` or `G` as its shortcut, and that shortcut can't be removed, it is a leftover from an earlier version of TheBrain. Current versions remove these leftovers automatically when they load your shortcuts, so update TheBrain on each device where you see one. A single key that is a default, such as `Space`, is kept.

Related Topics

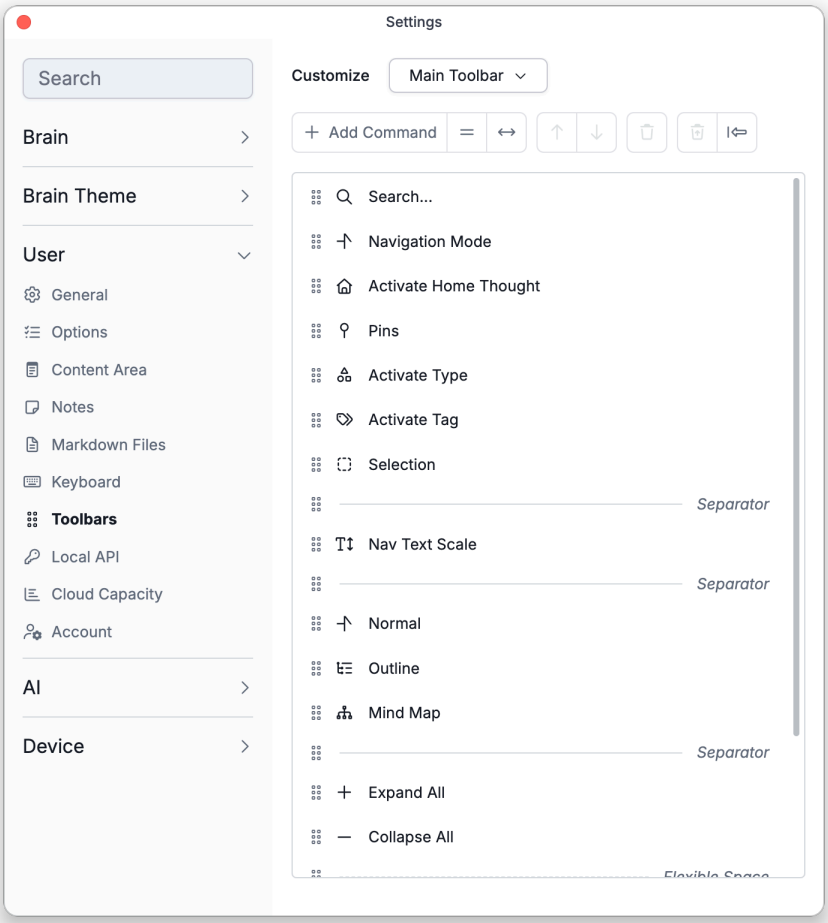
- Settings Overview

8.2.6 Customizing Toolbars

Overview

TheBrain's toolbars are yours to arrange. In **Settings > User > Toolbars** you can choose which buttons appear, what order they're in, and add separators and spacing — so the actions you use most are right where you want them.

You can customize toolbars this way in the desktop and web apps and on tablets, but not on phones. On a phone you customize the action bar at the bottom of the screen instead — see Using TheBrain on a Phone.



Customizing a Toolbar

1. Open **Settings > User > Toolbars** and pick the toolbar to edit from the **Customize** dropdown: the **Main Toolbar**, the **Window Toolbar** at the top of the window (the one with the main menu button), or the **Side Toolbar**.

2. Build it up:
    - **Add Command** — add a button for any command that can run on the platform you're using, including your AI scripts (see AI Scripts). Commands that a menu reveals only while you hold a modifier key work as ordinary toolbar buttons, with no modifier needed.
    - **Add Separator** / **Add Flexible Space** — group and space buttons.
    - **Move Up** / **Move Down** (or drag) — reorder items.
    - **Remove** / **Restore** — take a button off, or bring a removed one back.
3. **Reset** returns a toolbar to its default layout (TheBrain confirms first).



- A couple of essentials can't be removed — the **search** control stays on the main toolbar and the **main menu** button stays on the **Window Toolbar**.
- When you are signed in, your toolbar layouts are saved with your account and synced, so they follow you to your other devices and to the web app. If you use the desktop app without signing in, they are kept on that device only.

Related Topics

- Settings Overview

8.3 Brain Settings

8.3.1 Personal Settings

Overview

Personal Settings gathers the settings that change how *you* view a brain: how you navigate it, how thoughts are sorted, how big the text is, how fast the Plex animates, and which sections the content area shows. It is the first page under **Settings > Brain**.

In a brain that only you use, these settings work as they always have. In a **shared** brain — one that other people can open, or that is public or unlisted — your choices change only your own

view. Other people keep theirs, so sorting a shared brain by date or making its text bigger no longer changes it for everyone else. Anything you haven't changed follows the **brain's default**, and people who can edit the brain can make their choices the default.

Your personal settings for a brain are saved to your account, so they follow you to your other devices.

How to Open Personal Settings

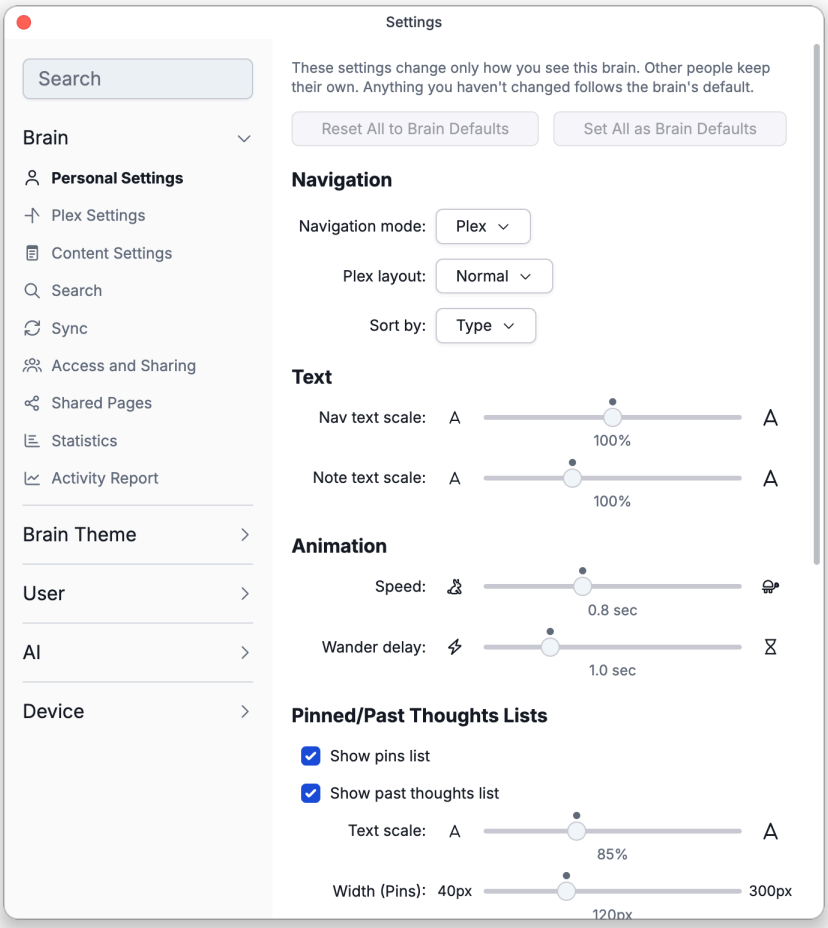
- Open **Settings** (the default shortcut is `Ctrl+,`, `⌘,` on Mac) and choose **Brain > Personal Settings**.
- Or, if you have added the **Brain Settings** menu (a sliders button) to a toolbar in **Settings > User > Toolbars**, open it and choose **Personal Settings...**. The toolbars don't have this button by default (see Customizing Toolbars).

What's on the Page

Section	Settings
Navigation	**Navigation mode** (Plex, Tree, Cards), **Plex layout** (Normal, Outline, Mind Map), **Sort by**
Text	**Nav text scale** (the Plex and Tree text, 50–150%), **Note text scale** (50–200%)
Animation	**Speed** (how quickly the Plex animates), **Wander delay** (how long Wander mode pauses on each thought)
Pinned/Past Thoughts Lists	**Show pins list**, **Show past thoughts list**, their **Text scale**, **Width (Pins)**, **Width (Past)**, and whether to **Expand truncated thoughts** vertically or horizontally. This section isn't shown on phones.
Note Sections	**Show mapped links section when in plex view**, **Show backlinks section**, **Show unlinked mentions section**
Attachments	**View attachments as list**, **Compact attachments display**
Layout on This Device	**Reset Layout on This Device** (shared brains only)

The toolbar buttons, menus and gestures that change these settings — the navigation mode and layout buttons, **Sort Thoughts by** on the Plex's right-click menu, the note text scale control,

pinching the Plex, and so on — work the same way. In a shared brain, they change only your view too.



Shared Brains and the Brain Default

In a shared brain, the page starts with a short explanation, and each setting where your choice differs from the brain's default shows a hint underneath, such as **Brain default: Name**. On the sliders, the dot marks the brain default.

- **Reset** — Under a setting, returns it to the brain's default.
- **Reset All to Brain Defaults** — At the top of the page, returns every setting on the page to the brain's default.
- **Set default** — Under a setting, makes your choice the brain's default. You need write access to the brain to see it; if you can only read the brain, your own choices are still saved for you. TheBrain asks you to confirm first.

- **Set All as Brain Defaults** — At the top of the page, makes all your choices that differ the brain's defaults at once (write access needed).

A new default reaches everyone who hasn't chosen their own setting, including new members and public visitors. People who have chosen their own keep it.

Layout on This Device

In a shared brain, splitter positions, the tools panel and the timeline strip are remembered separately on each device, because screens differ, and **Reset Layout on This Device** puts them back to the brain's layout on the device you're using. In a brain only you use, this section isn't shown and the layout is saved with the brain.

What Visitors See

When a brain is public or unlisted and you open Settings from inside it, **Settings > Brain > Access and Sharing** shows a **Visitor View** section that summarizes the default view visitors get, such as Plex sorted by Name. Your own view isn't shown to them. To change what they see, use **Set default** in Personal Settings.



- Other brain settings — such as **Plex Settings**, **Content Settings** and **Search** — still apply to everyone who uses the brain. In a shared brain, a note at the top of those pages says so and links to Personal Settings.
- When you use a brain without being signed in (as a visitor on the web, or in the desktop app without an account), your choices are saved on that device only.
- These settings used to live on the **Plex Settings** page, the **Content Settings** page, and a separate **Pins and PTL** page, which has been removed.

Related Topics

- Settings Overview
- Brain Access and Sharing
- Sorting and Arranging Thoughts
- The Plex

- Content Area Settings
- Viewing Attachments

8.4 Device Settings

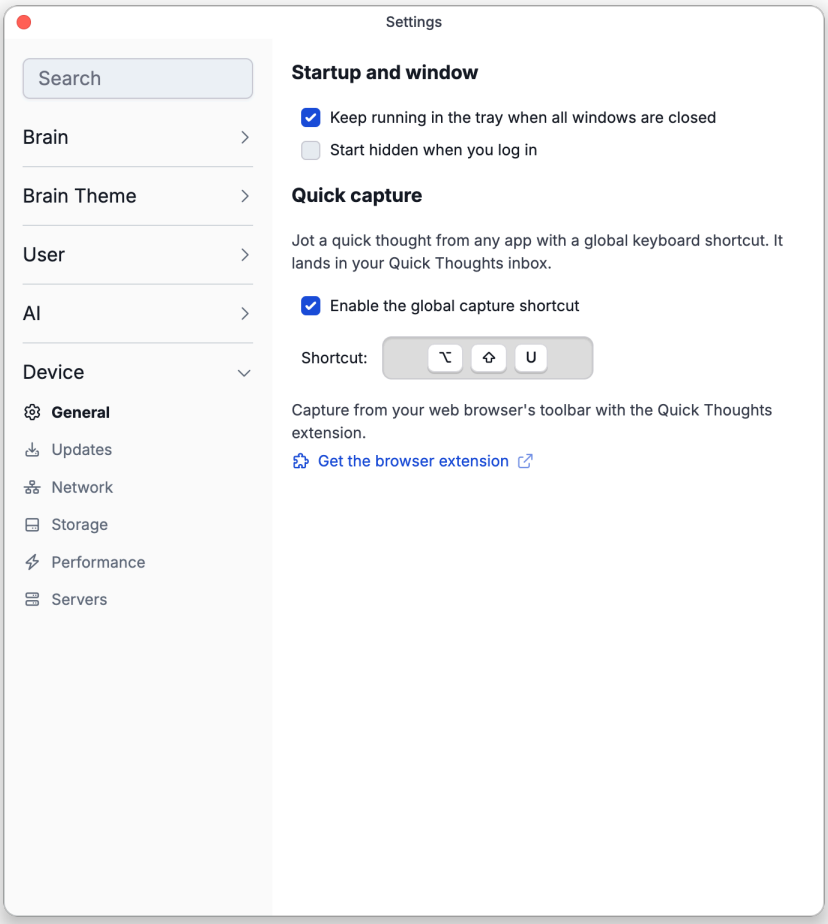
8.4.1 Tray Icon, Quitting, and Starting at Login

Overview

By default, closing TheBrain's last window in the desktop app does not quit it. TheBrain stays running as an icon in the system tray (the menu bar on a Mac), so that quick thought capture stays ready. This is why TheBrain can still be running after you close its window.

Two checkboxes control this. Both are in **Settings > Device > General**, under **Startup and window**, a page that only the desktop app has, and both apply only to the computer you set them on:

- **Keep running in the tray when all windows are closed** — on by default.
- **Start hidden when you log in** — off by default.



The Tray Icon

While **Keep running in the tray when all windows are closed** is on, TheBrain shows an icon in the system tray on Windows and Linux, and in the menu bar on a Mac. Right-click the icon (on a Mac, click it) for its menu:

- **Open TheBrain** — Brings TheBrain's window to the front. If you had closed every window, it reopens your windows and tabs as you left them.
- **Quick Thought** — Opens the quick thought capture window (see Quick Thoughts Capture Shortcuts).
- **Quit TheBrain** — Quits the app completely.

On Windows, a single click on the tray icon opens TheBrain. On Windows and Linux, starting TheBrain again also brings its window back. On a Mac, click TheBrain's icon in the Dock.

The first time you close the last window and TheBrain stays in the tray, Windows and Linux show a one-time notice titled **TheBrain is still running**.

How to Quit TheBrain Completely

Use either of these. Both shut TheBrain down completely, even while the tray option is on:

1. Right-click the tray icon (on a Mac, click the menu bar icon) and choose **Quit TheBrain**.
2. Or, from a TheBrain window, choose **Main Menu > File > Exit**. On a Mac you can also choose **TheBrain > Quit TheBrain** in the menu bar; the default shortcut is `⌘Q`.

How to Stop TheBrain from Staying in the Tray

1. Open **Settings** (the default shortcut is `Ctrl+,`, `⌘,` on Mac).
2. Choose **Device > General**.
3. Under **Startup and window**, turn off **Keep running in the tray when all windows are closed**.

TheBrain removes its tray icon and is no longer set to stay in the tray when its windows are closed. To be sure it has shut down completely, quit it with **Exit** or **Quit TheBrain** as described above.

How to Start TheBrain When You Log In

1. Open **Settings** and choose **Device > General**.
2. Under **Startup and window**, turn on **Start hidden when you log in**.

TheBrain then starts by itself each time you log in to your computer, with its window hidden. With the tray option on, it waits in the tray until you open it. Turn the checkbox off again to stop TheBrain from starting when you log in. The option is available on Windows, Mac and Linux.



- The same page has a **Quick capture** section, where you turn on a global keyboard shortcut for capturing quick thoughts. See Quick Thoughts Capture Shortcuts.

- A content window or a Markdown file window counts as a window. While one is still open, TheBrain keeps running in that window instead of going to the tray, and on a Mac clicking TheBrain's Dock icon brings back the one you used last. See Content Windows and Markdown File Windows.

Related Topics

- Settings Overview
- Quick Thoughts
- Content Windows

8.4.2 Network and Proxy Settings

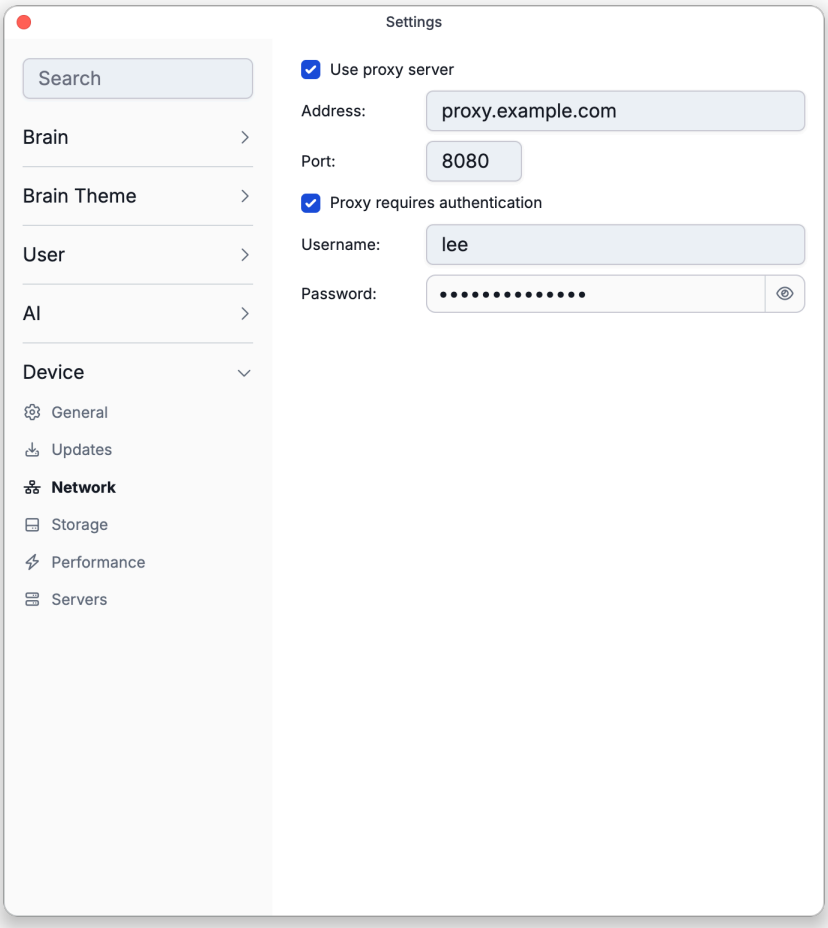
Overview

Some company and school networks only allow connections to the internet through a **proxy server**. The **Network** page (under **Settings > Device**), which only the desktop app has, is where you tell TheBrain to connect through one. Until you do, TheBrain follows your operating system's proxy settings, which is right for most people.

The proxy is used for TheBrain's own internet connections and for web pages shown inside the app. It is a setting of the computer you are on, not of your account.

How to Connect Through a Proxy Server

1. Open **Settings** (the default shortcut is `Ctrl+,`, `⌘,` on Mac).
2. Choose **Device > Network**.
3. Turn on **Use proxy server**.
4. Enter the proxy's **Address** and **Port**. Your network administrator can tell you both.
5. If the proxy asks for a login, turn on **Proxy requires authentication** and enter the **Username** and **Password**. The eye button beside the password shows or hides it.



Changes take effect right away. You don't need to restart TheBrain.

How to Stop Using the Proxy

1. Open **Settings** and choose **Device > Network**.
2. Turn off **Use proxy server**.

TheBrain goes back to your operating system's proxy settings. The address, port and login you entered are kept for the next time you turn the option on.

How to Switch the Proxy with a Keyboard Shortcut

TheBrain has a command named **Use Proxy Server** that turns the proxy on and off without opening Settings. It has no default shortcut, so you give it one yourself:

1. Open **Settings** and choose **User > Keyboard**.
2. Search for **Use Proxy Server** and assign the keys you want (see Keyboard Shortcuts).

Each time you press the shortcut, a notification tells you whether the proxy is now **On** or **Off**.

To sign in to your organization's own TeamBrain server instead of TheBrain Cloud, see Signing In to a Private Server.

Related Topics

- Settings Overview
- Keyboard Shortcuts
- Syncing Brains

8.4.3 Storage Location

Overview

On the desktop app, your brains are stored in a folder on your computer, and the **Storage** settings (under **Settings > Device**) show you where — and let you move it. This matters because where brain data lives affects its safety: TheBrain has specific guidance about which kinds of folders to avoid. The web app and the mobile apps have no Storage settings: the web app keeps brains in the cloud, and the mobile apps manage their own storage.

Where Brains Are Stored by Default

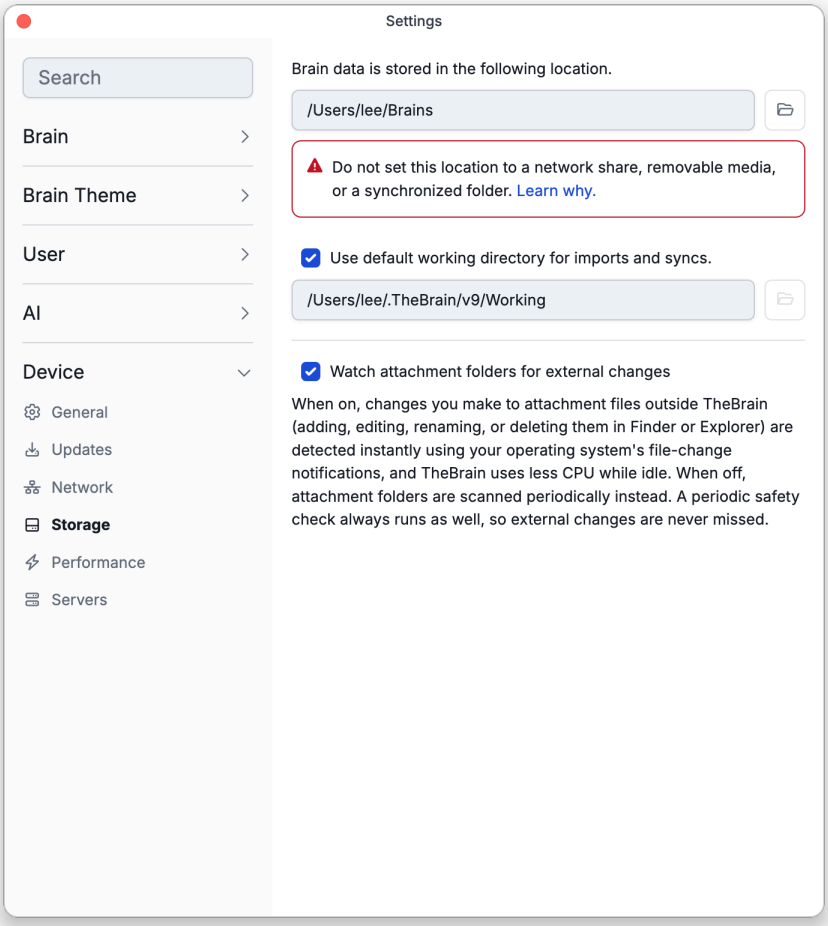
Until you move it, the desktop app keeps your brains in a folder named `Brains`:

- **Windows** — In your user folder, for example `C:\Users\<your name>\Brains`. If a `Brains` folder in **Documents** already holds brains, that folder is used instead.
- **Mac** — In **Documents** if a `Brains` folder there already holds brains. Otherwise in your home folder if a `Brains` folder exists there, and otherwise in the **Application Support** folder of your user Library (`~/Library/Application Support/Brains`).

- **Linux** — In your home folder.

Viewing and Changing the Folder

The Storage settings display the current brain-data location. To move it, choose a new folder; TheBrain warns you that changing location isn't recommended and asks you to tick **two acknowledgements** — that you have backups if needed, and that you won't interrupt the process by closing the app. It then relocates the data in a **maintenance state that must not be interrupted**, and asks you to **restart the app** for the change to take effect (it doesn't restart on its own).



Which Folders TheBrain Accepts

TheBrain refuses the folder you pick when it doesn't meet these rules, and the storage location stays as it was:

- **The folder must be empty.** TheBrain moves all of your brain data into it. A folder with other files in it is refused with a message such as **The selected folder is not empty. To move existing brains, please choose an empty folder.**
- **A folder that already holds brain data is accepted when your current location has no brains in it.** TheBrain then uses the brains it finds there and moves nothing. When both places hold brains, the change is refused with **Cannot merge existing brains. Both the current and new locations contain brain data.**
- **The path must be short.** The folder's full path can be at most 50 characters on Windows, and 100 on Mac and Linux. A longer one is refused with **The selected path is too long. Please choose a shorter path.**

If moving the data fails, the storage location is not changed, and a message suggests checking file permissions and available disk space.

Attachment Folder Watching

Watch attachment folders for external changes (on by default) uses your operating system's file-change notifications to notice instantly when you add, edit, rename, or delete attachment files outside TheBrain — in Finder or Explorer — and it lowers idle CPU use. When off, attachment folders are scanned periodically instead; a periodic safety check always runs either way, so external changes are never missed. After toggling it, restart the app for the change to take effect. Either way, a file whose name starts with a dot, `~`, or `$`, or ends with `~lock~` or `.Ignore`, is never picked up as a new attachment, although one you attached yourself is kept up to date — see *Files Left Out of a Folder* in Adding Attachments.

The Storage settings also show the working directory, the folder that imports and syncs work in. The **Use default working directory for imports and syncs** checkbox stays on until you choose another folder. To choose one, turn the checkbox off and click the folder button beside the path. TheBrain then works in a `Working` folder inside the folder you pick, which keeps its files apart from what the folder already holds.

Where Not to Put It

Do not set the storage location to a **network share**, **removable media**, or a **synchronized folder** (such as Google Drive, Dropbox, iCloud, or OneDrive). Those services can corrupt brain data by syncing files underneath TheBrain. If you pick a network location anyway, TheBrain warns you

first and moves the data there only when you choose **Override**. To access your brains across devices, use TheBrain's own cloud sync instead — see Syncing Brains.

Before moving data, a backup is wise — see Backup to Brain Archive.

Related Topics

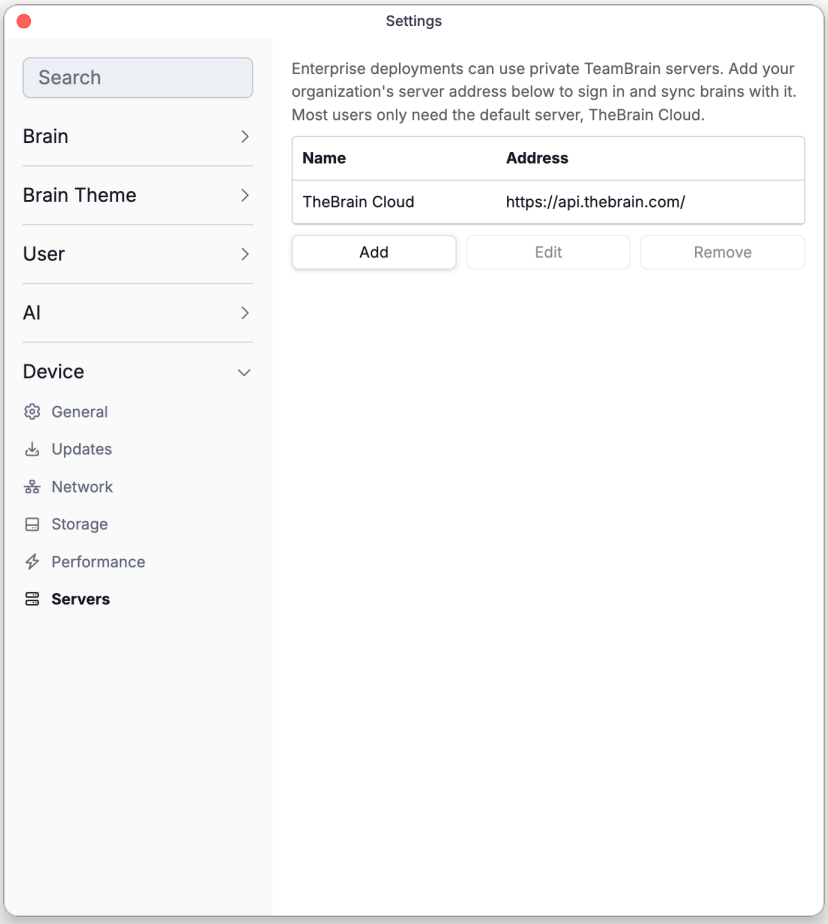
- Settings Overview
- Syncing Brains
- Backup to Brain Archive

8.4.4 Signing In to a Private Server

Overview

The desktop and mobile apps normally sign in to **TheBrain Cloud**, TheBrain's own service. Some organizations run a private TeamBrain server of their own instead. If yours does, the app has to know about that server before you can log in to it — and that is what the **Manage Servers...** button on the login screen is for. It opens the **Servers** list, where you add your organization's server. The web app has neither **Manage Servers...** nor this list.

TheBrain describes the list this way: *Enterprise deployments can use private TeamBrain servers. Add your organization's server address below to sign in and sync brains with it. Most users only need the default server, TheBrain Cloud.* If you have an ordinary TheBrain account, you can leave **Manage Servers...** alone.



How to Add Your Organization's Server and Sign In

1. On the login screen of the desktop or mobile app, choose **Manage Servers...** near the bottom of the screen. (When other accounts are still signed in on this device, the screen lists them under **Choose an account to continue** instead of showing the login form; choose **Use another account** first, because **Manage Servers...** appears only with the login form.) Settings opens on **Device > Servers**, which lists each server's **Name** and **Address**. The default server is **TheBrain Cloud**. If your organization's server is already in the list, skip to step 5.
2. Choose **Add**.
3. In **Server Properties**, enter a **Name** for the server (anything that helps you recognize it) and its **Address**, which must start with `http://` or `https://`. Your organization's administrator can tell you the address.
4. Choose **OK**. The dialog stays open if the name is empty or the address is not a valid one, so check both if nothing happens.

5. Close Settings to return to the login screen. When more than one server is listed, the login form has a server picker below its **Reset Password** button, labeled with the name of the server currently selected. Open it and choose your organization's server; each entry shows the server's name and address. If the picker isn't there yet, quit TheBrain and open it again.
6. Enter your username and password for that server and choose **Login**. The **Or continue with** buttons for Google, Apple, and Microsoft are shown only when the selected server supports them, so expect them to be missing when your organization's server is selected.

How to Change or Remove a Server

Open the list with **Manage Servers...** on the login screen, or with **Settings > Device > Servers**. Select a server in the list, then:

- **Edit** — Change the server's name or address.
- **Remove** — Take the server off the list. TheBrain asks you to confirm first. **Remove** is unavailable for the default server, **TheBrain Cloud**, and for any server that an account on this device belongs to.



- For logging in itself — passwords, password reset, and two-factor codes — see Signing In.

Related Topics

- TeamBrain Overview
- Settings Overview

8.5 Themes

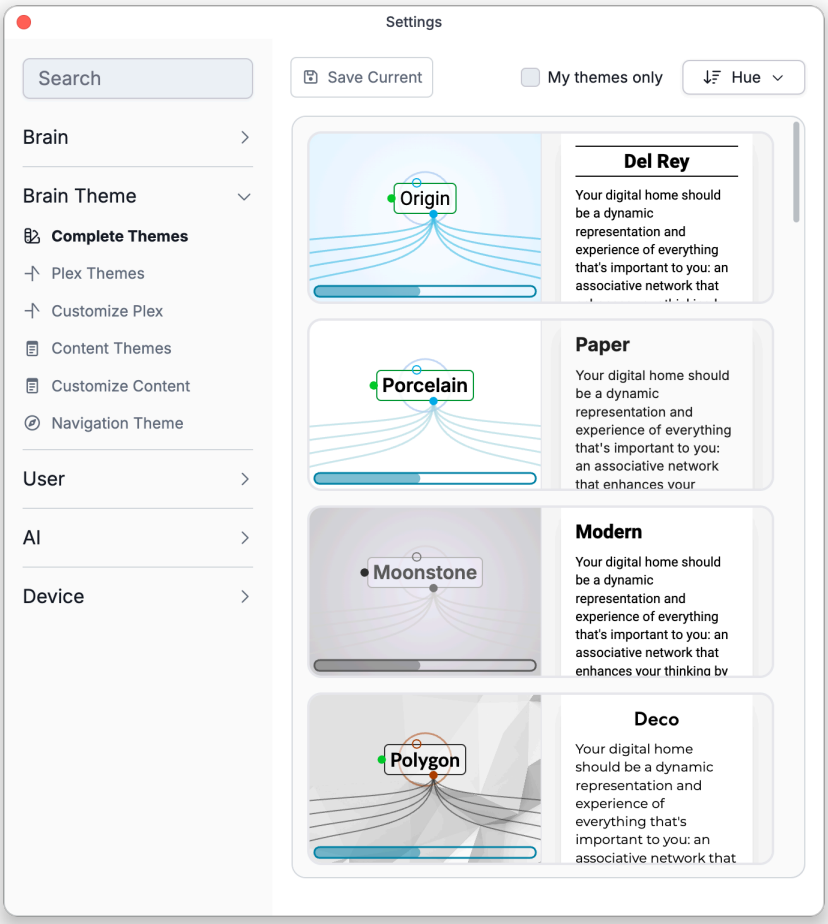
8.5.1 Brain Themes Overview

Overview

Every brain can look the way you want it to. Open **Settings > Brain Theme** (or **Main Menu > View > Brain Theme...**) to browse galleries of ready-made looks and apply one with a click, or to customize the open brain's look element by element. A theme applies only to the brain that is open. Anyone with access to the brain can browse the galleries and manage their own theme library; **applying** a theme to the brain — and the Customize tabs — require admin rights on that brain.

The Brain Theme Tabs

- **Complete Themes** — a gallery of paired looks: each entry couples a plex theme with a matching content theme, shown as two thumbnails side by side. Click one to apply both halves at once. You can build your own pairs, swapping either half with the **Change** button.
- **Plex Themes** — a gallery of looks for the visual map. Click a card to apply it. See Plex Theme and Wallpaper.
- **Customize Plex** — edit the open brain's plex colors, wallpaper, fonts, and link style directly. See Plex Theme and Wallpaper.
- **Content Themes** — a gallery of looks for the notes/content area. See Content Theme.
- **Customize Content** — edit the brain's current note styling, from body text to headings to callouts. See Content Theme.
- **Navigation Theme** — the backdrop behind the Cards and Tree views, and the opacity of the cards in Cards view. See Navigation Theme.



Galleries and Your Theme Library

The galleries mix built-in themes with ones you've saved — yours carry a small badge. A shared sort control orders every gallery by **Alphabetical**, **Brightness**, **Hue**, or **Recent**, and a **My themes only** checkbox filters to your own.

When the brain's current look doesn't match any gallery entry, the gallery offers **Save Current** to keep it as a theme of your own; when it does match, the button becomes **Show Selected** and scrolls to it. Saved themes belong to your account — they're available in every brain and sync across your devices, the web included.

Undoing Theme Changes

Trying themes is safe, because changes to a brain's theme are brain edits that can be undone. How you undo one depends on how you made the change:

- **You applied a theme from a gallery** — If you applied a theme from **Complete Themes**, **Plex Themes**, or **Content Themes** while Settings was open, closing Settings shows a **Theme changed** notification with an **Undo** button. The notification stays for about 12 seconds. Its **Undo** takes the brain's plex and content look, wallpaper included, back to what it was before the first theme you applied in that Settings session, so it also reverses any Customize Plex or Customize Content edits you made after that. It does not change the Navigation Theme settings.
- **You only edited in Customize Plex, Customize Content, or Navigation Theme** — These edits do not show the notification. Each change is recorded as its own step in the brain's undo history, so after you close Settings use **Main Menu > Edit > Undo** once for each change (the default shortcut is `Ctrl+Z`, or `⌘Z` on Mac), or **Undo Multiple Actions** to step back through several changes at once.
- **The notification has gone** — Each theme you applied is also a single step in the same undo history, so **Undo** still steps back through the applied themes one at a time. See Undo and Redo.

The separate **UI Theme** setting (light/dark for the app's interface) is in *General and Appearance*. Its **Follow Brain Theme** option takes the interface's colors from the brain's content theme, not from the plex theme.

Related Topics

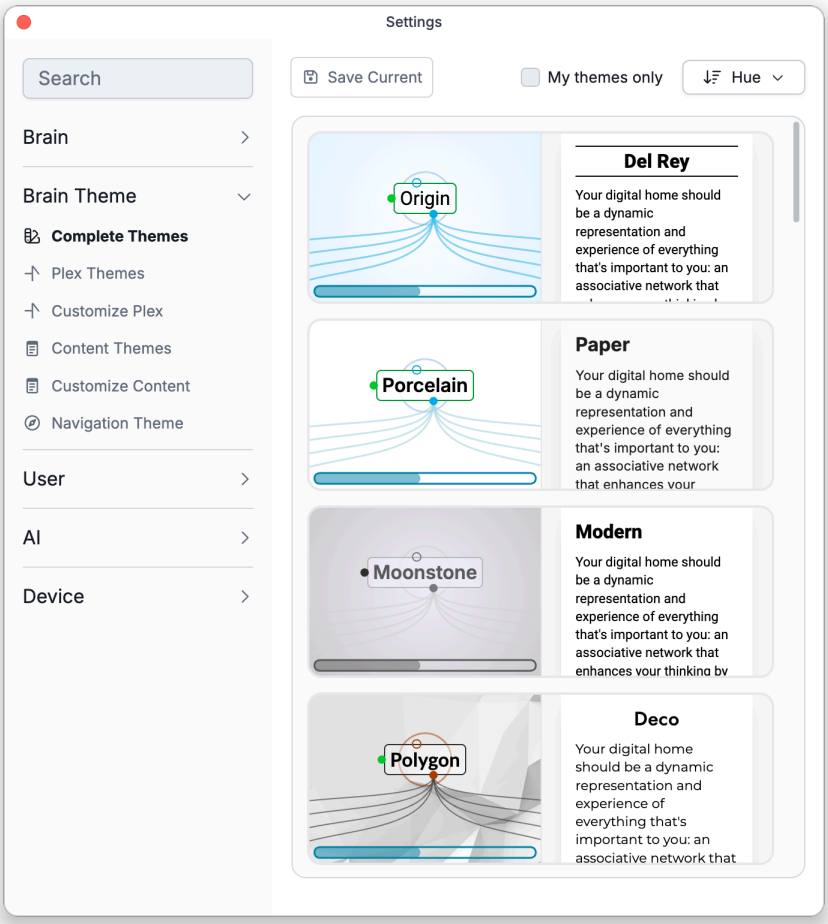
- Undo and Redo

8.5.2 Theme Templates and Complete Themes

Overview

Once you've styled a brain the way you like, save that look as a **theme** of your own so you can apply it again — to another brain, or after experimenting. Your saved themes belong to your account: they appear in the theme galleries of every brain and sync across your devices, the web included.

Complete Themes goes a step further: each entry pairs a plex theme with a matching content theme, applied together in one click for a coordinated look. TheBrain ships a set of ready-made pairs, and you can build your own.



Applying and Saving

Every gallery works the same way. Sort it by **Alphabetical**, **Brightness**, **Hue**, or **Recent**, tick **My themes only** to see just your own (your themes carry a small badge), and click an entry to apply it to the open brain (applying needs admin rights on the brain). When the brain's current look matches no gallery entry, the gallery offers **Save Current** — on the Complete Themes tab this saves the plex/content pair, on the others just that half. If your edits started from one of your saved themes, saving offers **Replace** it or **Save as New**.

Applying a plex theme or a complete theme replaces the brain's whole plex look, including its wallpaper and fonts, and a complete theme replaces the content theme as well — see Plex

Theme and Wallpaper for what is replaced. To keep the look you have now, use **Save Current** first.

On the **Complete Themes** tab you can also compose a pair by hand: an unfinished entry shows an empty slot with a chooser, and hovering either half offers **Change** to swap it.

Managing Your Themes

Right-click a card in the **Plex Themes** or **Content Themes** gallery — or use the buttons under the gallery — for the following. A pair on the **Complete Themes** tab offers only **Delete**.

- **Rename** — rename one of your themes.
- **Delete** — remove one of yours. It is deleted at once, with no confirmation, and **Undo** does not bring it back: a saved theme belongs to your theme library, not to the brain, so deleting it is not recorded in the brain's undo history. Deleting never changes any brain that used the theme, so if you deleted one by mistake you can get it back by opening a brain that still has that look and using **Save Current**, or by importing it again from an exported file. Deleting a pair on the **Complete Themes** tab removes only the pairing; its plex theme and content theme stay in their own galleries.
- **Export** — save any theme, built-in or your own, as a file: `.BrainTheme` for plex themes, `.nstyle` for content themes.
- **Import** — bring in a theme from such a file, with the **Import** button under the **Plex Themes** or **Content Themes** gallery. Importing only adds the theme to your own library, as a card with your badge; it does not change the brain until you click that card. A plex theme (`.BrainTheme`) is named after the file and brings its wallpaper with it; a content theme (`.nstyle`, up to 5 MB) keeps the name stored in the file. A `.BrainTheme` file adds a plex theme only, even if an older file also carries note styling. If that name is already taken, a number is added to it. If a theme with exactly the same settings is already in the gallery, built-in or your own, nothing is added and no message appears. Tick **My themes only** to find the imported card quickly.

All of this works on every platform, including the web.

Applying themes is safe to experiment with: each apply is one undo step, and closing Settings after applying a theme from a gallery shows a notification with an **Undo** button, for about 12 seconds, that restores the look you started with — see Brain Themes Overview.

8.5.3 Plex Theme and Wallpaper

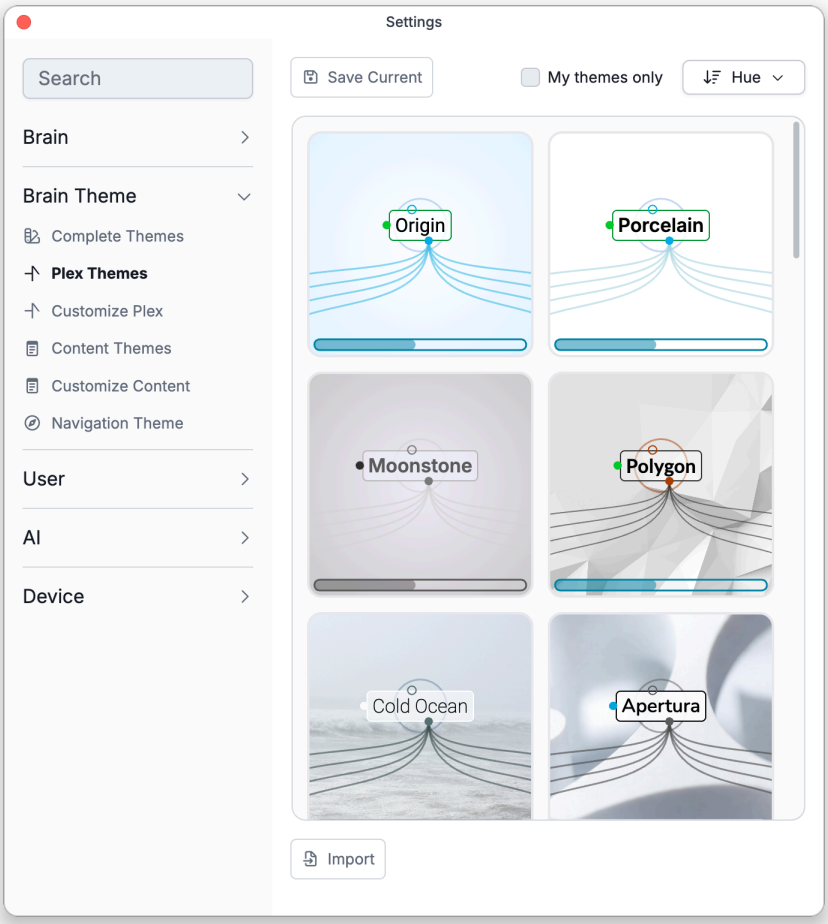
Overview

The plex theme controls how the visual map looks — the colors of thoughts, links, and gates, the background behind them, the fonts, and how connections are drawn. It's the most visible part of a brain's look, so it's where most personalization happens. Two tabs under **Settings > Brain Theme** cover it: the **Plex Themes** gallery for picking a ready-made look, and **Customize Plex** for editing the open brain's settings directly.

Choosing from the Gallery

The **Plex Themes** tab shows ready-made themes and any you've saved, as preview cards. Click a card to apply it to the brain (applying needs admin rights on the brain). Right-click a card — or use the buttons under the gallery — to **Rename** or **Delete** your own themes, **Export** any theme as a `.BrainTheme` file, or **Import** one. **Save Current** keeps the brain's current plex look as a theme of your own. A theme's wallpaper travels with it and syncs across your devices.

Applying a plex theme replaces the brain's whole plex look, not only its colors: the plex colors, the universal font and the device font, the font weight, the wallpaper and its alignment, the background gradient, the fill opacity, and the link thickness, opacity, and style. If the theme has no wallpaper, the brain's current wallpaper is removed — several of the built-in themes have none. An older theme file may not carry the weight, gradient, opacity, or link settings; applying one leaves those as they are. The content theme is not touched unless you apply a pair from **Complete Themes**, and the **Navigation Theme** settings are not part of any theme, so applying one leaves them as they are. To keep the look you have now, use **Save Current** before you apply another theme. Each apply is a single undo step — see Brain Themes Overview for how to undo theme changes.

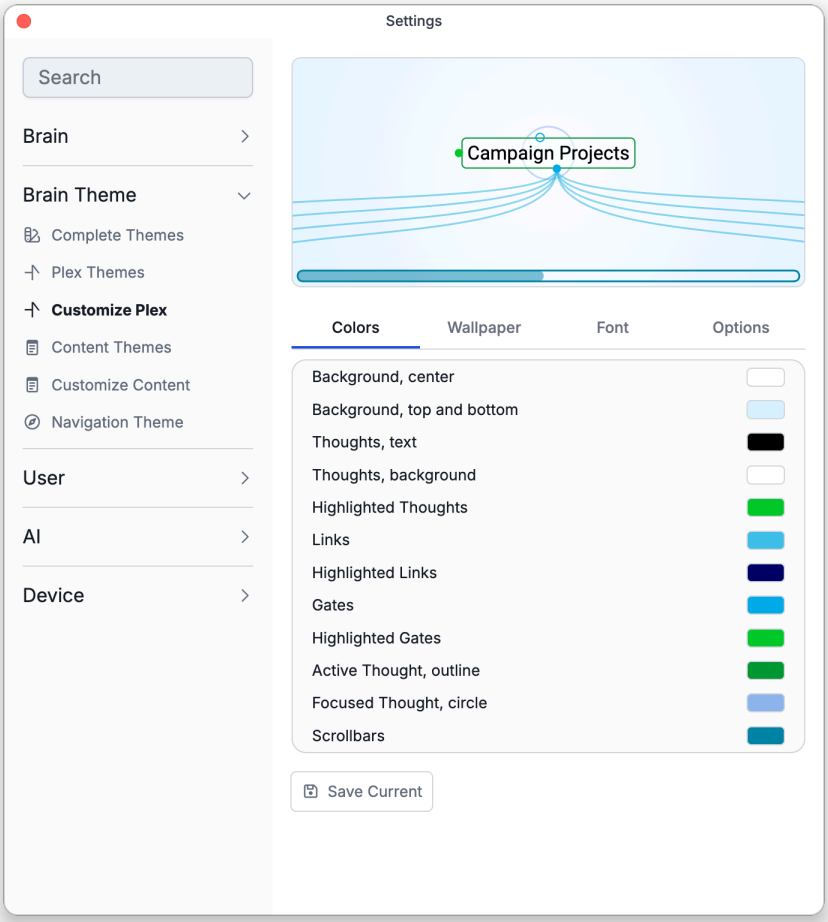


What You Can Set in Customize Plex

Customize Plex has four tabs:

- **Colors** — Individual colors for the background (center and edges), thought text and background, highlighted and active thoughts, links, gates, the focused-thought circle, and scrollbars.
- **Wallpaper** — Upload an image (PNG/JPG) to sit behind the Plex, with horizontal and vertical alignment. (The background colors are hidden while a wallpaper is set.) See *How to Set, Change, or Remove the Wallpaper* below.
- **Font** — Choose a **universal font** (downloaded automatically so it looks the same everywhere) and set its **weight**. In the installed desktop app, but not the web app, you can also pick a **device font** installed on your machine, which falls back to the universal font where it isn't available.

- **Options** — The **Background Gradient** behind the map (**Radial** or **Horizontal**), the **Fill Opacity** of thoughts, and how links are drawn: their **Thickness**, **Opacity**, and **Style** (**Curved** or **Straight**). See *How to Make Links Straight, Thicker, or Fainter* below.



How to Set, Change, or Remove the Wallpaper

1. Open **Settings > Brain Theme > Customize Plex** and choose the **Wallpaper** tab. Customize Plex needs admin rights on the brain.
2. Click **Add Wallpaper** and pick a PNG or JPG image. It becomes the background image behind the brain's Plex.
3. Once a wallpaper is set, the tab shows **Change** and **Remove** in place of **Add Wallpaper**. **Change** picks a different image; **Remove** takes the wallpaper away and brings back the background colors and gradient.

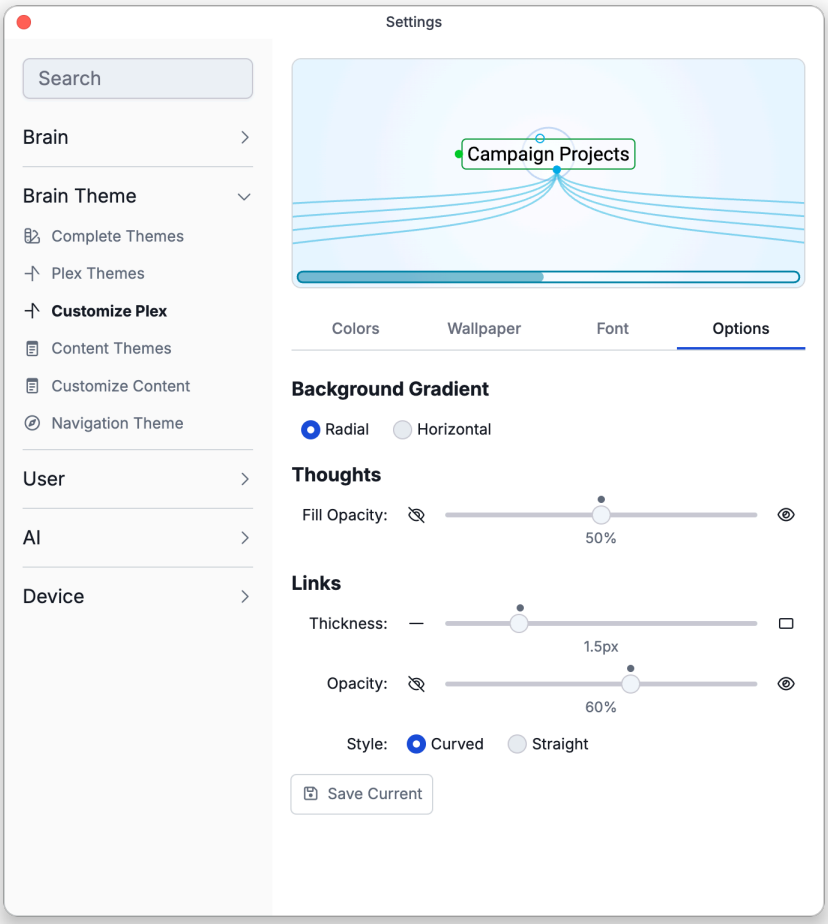
The wallpaper always fills the whole Plex and keeps its proportions, so whatever part of the image doesn't fit the shape of the Plex area is cropped. **Horizontal Align** (**Left**, **Center**, or **Right**)

and **Vertical Align** (**Top**, **Center**, or **Bottom**) choose which part of the image stays in view. **Center** is the default for both; the brain keeps the alignment it was last given, even after its wallpaper is removed.

The **More Actions** menu beside these buttons offers **Copy Wallpaper** once a wallpaper is set and, in the installed apps, **Paste Wallpaper**.

How to Make Links Straight, Thicker, or Fainter

1. Open **Settings > Brain Theme > Customize Plex** and choose the **Options** tab. Customize Plex needs admin rights on the brain.
2. Under **Links**, set **Style** to **Curved** (the default) or **Straight**.
3. Drag **Thickness** to make links thinner or thicker, from 0.5 to 5 px, and **Opacity** to make them fainter or stronger, from 0 to 100%.
4. Under **Thoughts**, **Fill Opacity** (0 to 100%) sets how solid the background of each thought is.



A small dot above each slider marks its default: 1.5 px for link thickness, 60% for link opacity, and 50% for fill opacity. These settings are part of the brain's plex theme, so they change the brain for everyone who uses it.

Dynamic and Pasted Wallpaper

Beyond the single Plex wallpaper above, there are two more ways to set a background:

- **Dynamic Wallpaper (per type)** — Give a **type** its own wallpaper so that, whenever a thought of that type is the active thought, the Plex background switches to that image and then reverts as you navigate away. Set it from the type's menu with **Set Dynamic Wallpaper** (you upload an image), and clear it with **Remove Dynamic Wallpaper**. See Thought Types.
- **Paste Wallpaper** — If you've copied an image to your clipboard, right-click the Plex and choose **Paste Wallpaper** to set it as the brain's wallpaper directly. (It uses your device's clipboard, so it's on the installed apps.)

- **Customize Plex** also carries a **Save Current** row: when your edits started from one of your saved themes, saving offers **Replace** it or **Save as New**. Very large wallpaper images are compressed when a theme is saved.
- Ready-made pairings of a plex theme with a matching content theme live on the **Complete Themes** tab — see Theme Templates and Complete Themes.

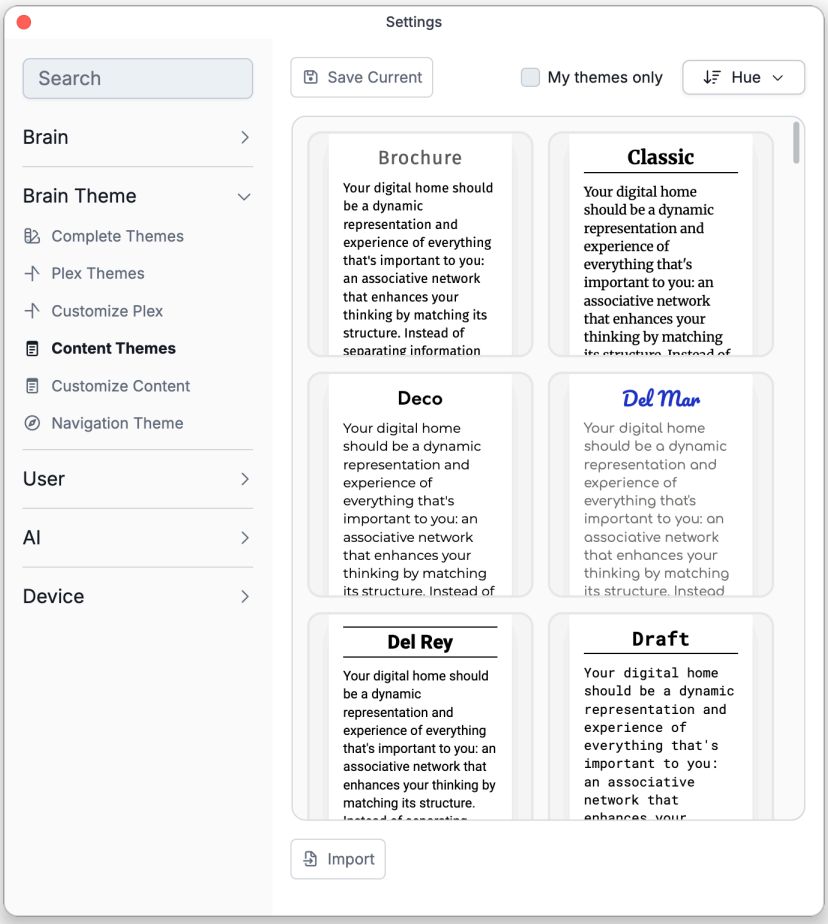
8.5.4 Content Theme

Overview

The content theme styles the notes/content area — the background, text, links, and typography of your notes. Two tabs under **Settings > Brain Theme** cover it: the **Content Themes** gallery for picking a ready-made look, and **Customize Content** for fine-tuning the brain's current styling, so your writing reads the way you like across the brain.

Choosing from the Gallery

The **Content Themes** tab shows dozens of ready-made themes and any you've saved, as live preview cards. Click a card to apply it to the brain (applying needs admin rights on the brain). Sort the gallery by **Alphabetical**, **Brightness**, **Hue**, or **Recent**, or filter to **My themes only**. Right-click a card — or use the buttons under the gallery — to **Rename** or **Delete** your own themes, **Export** any theme as an `.nstyle` file, or **Import** one.



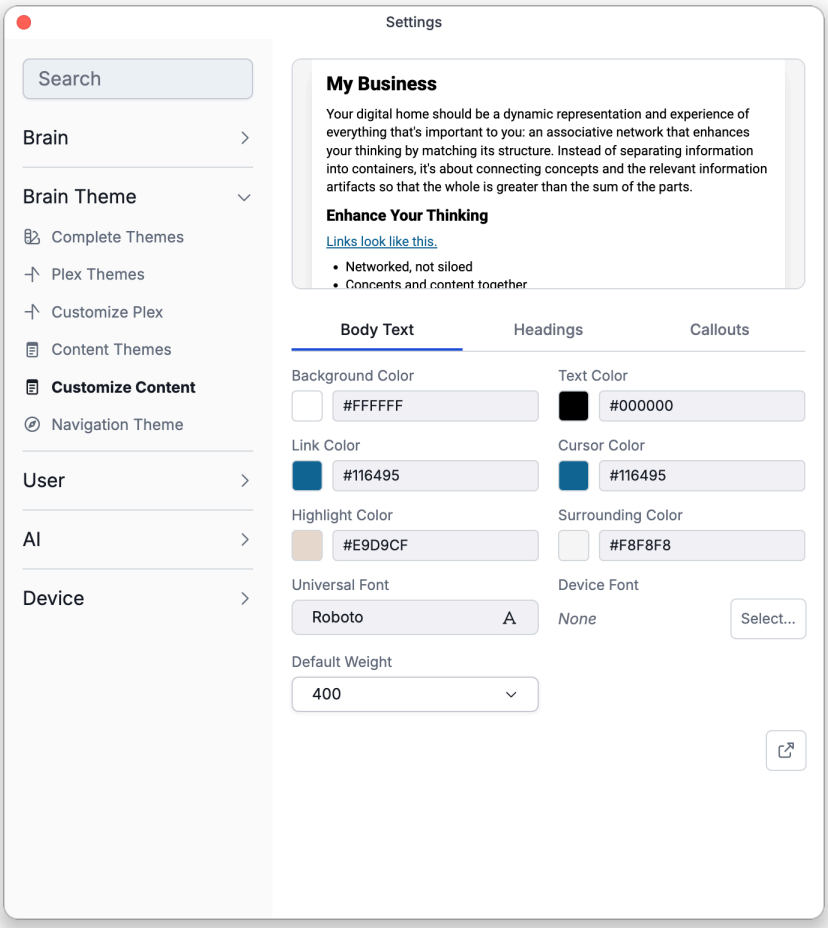
Customizing the Current Theme

The **Customize Content** tab shows a live preview beside an editor with three sections:

- **Body Text** — background, text, link, cursor, and highlight colors; the **Surrounding Color** (the backdrop around the note page — leave it unset for an automatic shade derived from the background); and the font of your note text — a **Universal Font**, its **Default Weight**, and, in the desktop app, an optional **Device Font** installed on your computer.
- **Headings** — typography for headings, either for all of them at once (**Base**) or per level (**H1**–**H6**), plus overall heading sizes.
- **Callouts** — per-type styling for callout blocks: accent, background, icon, and text colors, the icon itself (standard, emoji, or none), and the callout title style. See Callouts in Notes.

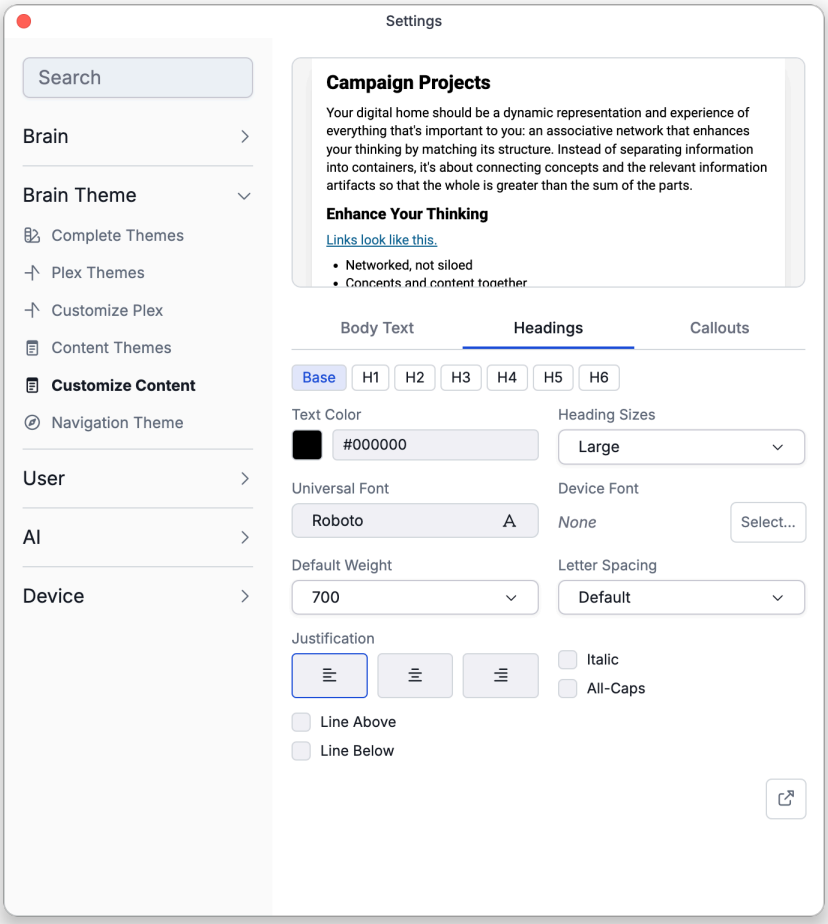
Your edits apply to the brain as you make them. **Save Current** keeps the result as a theme of your own — if you started from one of your saved themes, saving offers **Replace** it or **Save as**

New. On everything but phones, a button opens the same editor in a larger dialog, where you can also click any element in the preview to jump to its settings.



How to Change the Font of Your Notes

1. Open **Settings > Brain Theme > Customize Content**. This tab needs admin rights on the brain.
2. Under **Body Text**, use **Universal Font** to pick the font for your note text, and **Default Weight** to make it lighter or heavier.
3. To give headings a font of their own, go to **Headings**, choose **Base** for all headings or one level (**H1**–**H6**), and pick its **Universal Font**.



The font is part of the brain's content theme, so it applies to the notes of the whole brain, not to a single note. Applying another theme from the **Content Themes** gallery replaces the fonts along with the rest of the note styling.

Universal Font and Device Font

Every font in **Customize Content**, for body text and for headings, is set with a **Universal Font**, and you can also give it a **Device Font**.

- **Universal Font** — A font from the Google Fonts library. TheBrain downloads it when it's needed, so your notes look the same on every computer, phone and browser.
- **Device Font** — A font that is already installed on the computer you're using, such as one that came with the operating system, one you bought, or your organization's own font. A device that has this font installed shows your notes in it. A device that doesn't have it shows the **Universal Font** instead.

A device font has advantages:

- **More choice** — You can use fonts that the Universal Font list doesn't offer, such as fonts that come with macOS or Windows, fonts you've bought, or a brand font your organization uses.
- **Nothing to download** — The font is already on the computer, so notes don't wait for it to download.

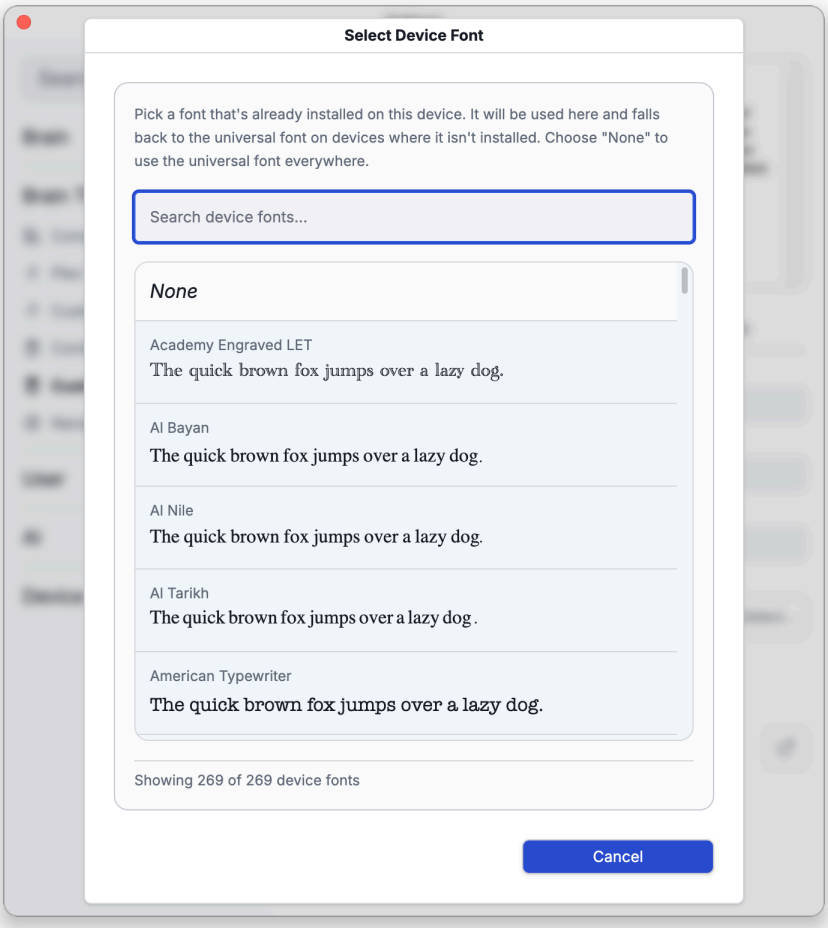
It also has drawbacks:

- **Not everyone sees it** — Your phone, your other computers, and the people you share the brain with see the Universal Font unless the same font is installed on their device.
- **Notes look different from device to device** — Fonts differ in width and spacing, so where lines wrap and how long a note looks change with the font.
- **Desktop only to choose** — You can choose a device font only in the desktop app.

If your notes need to look the same everywhere, use only a Universal Font. If you use a device font, pick a Universal Font that looks similar to it, so that devices without the device font show something close.

To choose a device font:

1. In the desktop app, open **Settings > Brain Theme > Customize Content**.
2. Under **Body Text**, select **Select...** beside **Device Font**. For headings, go to **Headings**, choose **Base** or one level, and select **Select...** there.
3. Find a font by typing part of its name into the search box, or scroll the list. Each font shows a sample sentence written in it.
4. Click the font to use it. **None** goes back to the Universal Font everywhere.



To stop using a device font, select the **×** (**Clear**) button beside its name.

- The content theme styles the *notes* area; the map is styled separately by the plex theme (see Plex Theme and Wallpaper), and ready-made pairings of the two live on the **Complete Themes** tab.
- Importing and exporting themes works on every platform, including the web. Plex themes use `.BrainTheme` files.
- **Line spacing** and **Line gap** are not part of the content theme. They are settings of the brain, on the **Notes** tab of **Settings > Brain > Content Settings** — see Brain Content Settings.

Related Topics

- Writing and Formatting Notes

8.5.5 Navigation Theme

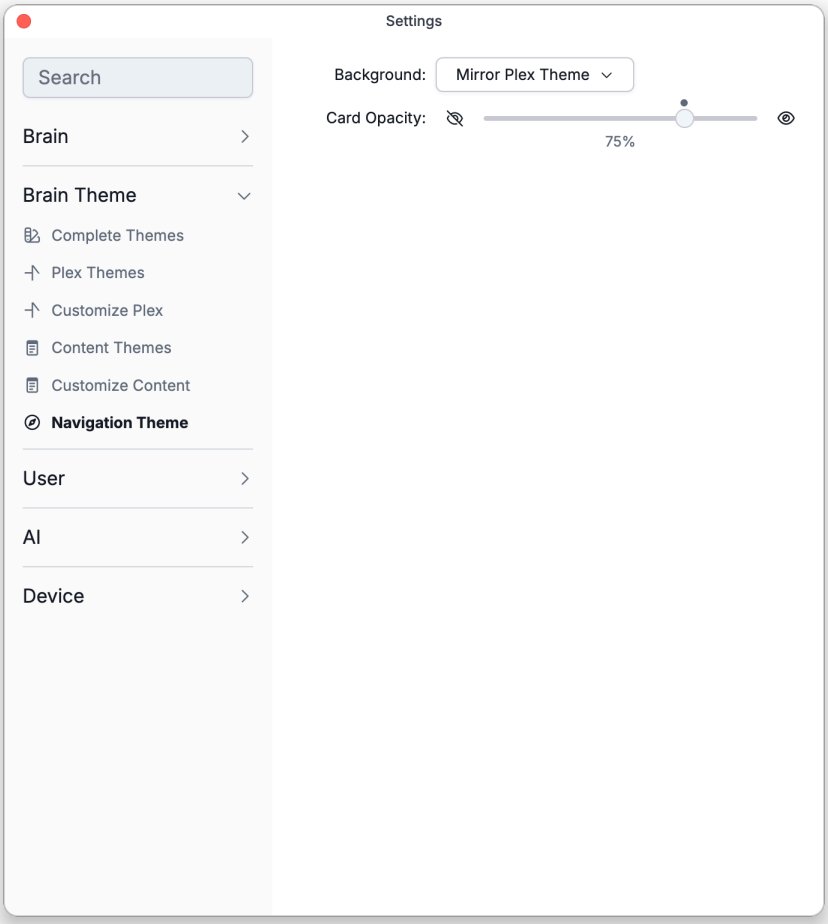
Overview

The **Navigation Theme** controls the look of the navigation area — the backdrop behind the Cards and Tree views and the transparency of the cards themselves. The backdrop mirrors a theme you've already set (your Plex or Content theme), and you choose how transparent the cards are, so the navigation area fits the rest of the brain.

What You Can Set

The Navigation Theme has just these two controls, and changing them needs admin rights on the brain. There is no separate styling for Tree view.

- **Background** — Choose **Mirror Plex Theme** (the default) or **Mirror Content Theme**; these two are the only options (there's no separate standalone background here).
  - **Mirror Plex Theme** puts the Plex's backdrop behind the cards or tree: the brain's wallpaper — or a type's dynamic wallpaper while a thought of that type is active — and, when there is no wallpaper, the Plex background gradient.
  - **Mirror Content Theme** uses the content theme's plain background color instead, and shows the section headings in the content theme's text color.
- **Card Opacity** — How opaque the cards are in Cards view, from see-through (0%) to fully solid (100%), in steps of 5%. Tree view has no cards, so only **Background** affects it. The default is 75%, marked by a small dot above the slider. The active thought's card always stays fully solid.



This area's look pairs with *Cards View*; see also Plex Theme and Wallpaper and Content Theme for the themes it can mirror.

9 Account and Plans

9.1 Signing In and Security

9.1.1 Welcome and First Launch

Overview

The first thing you see in TheBrain when you're not signed in is the **welcome screen** — a login panel with a short introduction. TheBrain describes itself here as *TheBrain is a platform for digital thinking. Organize and share your information in a networked visual interface.* From this screen you get into your brains, try TheBrain without an account, or take a look at someone else's public brain.

What's on the Welcome Screen

- **Login to access your brains** — Sign in with your account (see Signing In).
- **Continue as guest** — Use TheBrain locally without an account. Only the desktop app offers it (see Guest Mode).
- **Explore someone else's brain...** — Open a public brain to see what one looks like (web only, when featured brains exist; see Featured and Public Brains).
- A **Create Account** link may appear when sign-up is enabled (see Creating an Account).
- **Manage Servers...** — In the desktop and mobile apps, add your organization's own TheBrain server before you log in to it (see Signing In to a Private Server).

When other accounts are still signed in on this device or in this browser, for example after you log out of one of them, the login panel lists them under **Choose an account to continue** instead. Choose one to continue as that account without its password, or choose **Use another account** to show the login form. **Continue as guest**, **Create Account** and **Manage Servers...** appear only with the login form (see Signing In).

After You Sign In

Once you're signed in, TheBrain opens to your **brains list** instead of the welcome screen — your home base for opening and creating brains (see The Brains List). While you have no brains yet, the brains list shows a **Welcome to TheBrain** screen; except on phones and tablets, it has a **Get Started** button that starts the interactive **Getting Started** walkthrough (see Onboarding Walkthrough). The walkthrough does not start by itself.

9.1.2 Creating an Account

Overview

A TheBrain account lets you sync your brains to the cloud, use them across devices, and unlock features beyond local use. Creating one is free and takes a moment: provide a few details and verify your email.

How to Sign Up

1. Go to the **Create Account** page (the `/create-account` page — `/signup` also works), reachable from the **Create Account** link on the login screen where sign-up is offered. Whether it is offered depends on your deployment: some, like TeamBrain servers, turn off in-app sign-up.
2. Fill in your **First Name**, **Last Name**, **Email**, **Username**, and a **Password** (and confirm it). A password must be at least 8 characters, and a username at least 3 characters with no spaces.
3. Optionally tick **Newsletter** or **Interested in TeamBrain**, where the form offers them.
4. Choose **Create**.

After signing up, TheBrain sends a verification email — open it and follow the link to verify your address (see Email Verification). The desktop and mobile apps won't log you in until you have verified it.



- If you'd rather not create an account yet, you can use the desktop app locally with **Guest Mode**, and sign in later — see Guest Mode and Signing In.

- Where the login screen offers **Google**, **Apple**, or **Microsoft** sign-in, choosing one also creates an account, without this form, when no TheBrain account uses that email address yet — see Signing In.

9.1.3 Signing In

Overview

Signing in connects TheBrain to your account so your cloud brains and synced data are available. You log in with your username (or email address) and password — and depending on how your TheBrain is set up, you may also be able to sign in with an external account.

Logging In

On the login screen, enter your **username** and **password** and choose **Login**. The first field also accepts the email address of your account, so if you have forgotten your username you can log in with your email address instead. From here you can also:

- **Reset Password** — If you've forgotten it, this opens a dialog where you enter your username or email and choose **Send Email**; TheBrain emails you a reset link (see *Resetting Your Password* below). (It's also reachable at `/forgot-password`, which pops the same dialog.)
- **Continue as guest** — In the desktop app, skip signing in and use TheBrain locally — see Guest Mode. The web client and the mobile apps always require an account, so this link does not appear there.

When accounts are still signed in on this device or in this browser, for example after you log out of one of several (see Managing Your Account), the login screen first lists them under **Choose an account to continue**. Choose one to continue as that account without a password, or choose **Use another account** to see the login form.

Resetting Your Password

1. On the login screen, choose **Reset Password**, enter your username or email, and choose **Send Email**.

2. Open the link in the email TheBrain sends you. It opens the **Reset Password** page in your browser.
3. Enter a **New Password** of at least 8 characters, enter it again under **Confirm Password**, and choose **Save**.

TheBrain confirms with *Password reset successful. You may now login with your new password.* and returns you to the login screen.

Each reset link works only once, and it is used up as soon as the **Reset Password** page opens. If you reload that page or open the link again — including after leaving the page without saving — you see **This link is invalid or may have expired.** In that case choose **Reset Password** on the login screen again and use the link in the new email.

Signing In with an External Account

Where it's enabled, an **Or continue with** section offers sign-in via **Google**, **Apple**, or **Microsoft**. What happens the first time you choose one depends on the email address of that external account:

- **No TheBrain account uses that email address** — TheBrain creates a new account for you on the spot, from the name and email address the provider supplies. The new account's username is the email address, it has no password, and it is already verified, so there is no verification email to wait for.
- **A TheBrain account already uses that email address** — The two are not linked automatically. The login form comes back with your email filled in and a message such as *This email is already linked to an account for TheBrain. Log in to connect your Google account.* Enter your TheBrain password and choose **Login and Link**. (Choosing plain **Login** signs you in without linking.) Do this soon after signing in with the provider; if it has expired, start again from the provider's button.

Linking needs your TheBrain password. If the existing account has no password yet — for example, because it was itself created by signing in with another provider — set one first with **Reset Password**.

Once an external account is linked, you can sign in either way: with your TheBrain password, or with the provider's button. Linking goes by email address, so an external account whose address matches no TheBrain account gets a new, separate account rather than a link. Your

linked accounts are listed under **Linked Accounts** in **Settings > User > Account**, where you can also unlink one (see Managing Your Account).

In the desktop and mobile apps, the provider's sign-in page opens in your web browser while the app waits with a **Cancel** button; the attempt is abandoned if you don't finish it in time.

Two-Factor at Login

If you've enabled two-factor authentication, after your password you'll be asked for the **6-digit code** from your authenticator app. See Two-Factor Authentication.

- After your first successful login, your account is remembered locally, so TheBrain keeps working even when the server is unreachable (see Guest Mode).
- If the desktop or mobile app answers a login with **Account not activated**, the account's email address has not been verified yet — see Email Verification.
- If your organization runs its own TheBrain server, the desktop and mobile apps have to be pointed at it before you log in — see Signing In to a Private Server.

9.1.4 Guest Mode

Overview

Guest mode lets you use TheBrain **without ever creating or logging in to an account**. As a guest, you can open, create, and work with local brains — no account required.

Guest mode is available in the **desktop app only**. The web client always requires signing in — it works with brains stored in the cloud, so there are no local brains for a guest to use — and the mobile apps also ask you to sign in.

Do I Need Guest Mode?

- **You have logged in before** — No. Your account is remembered locally and TheBrain works normally when the server is unreachable. Your account-linked brains and local brains are all available.

- **You have never logged in and want to work without an account** — Yes. Continue as a guest to bypass the login screen and work with local brains only.
- **You have never logged in and have no internet connection** — Yes, to get past the login screen of a new installation. You can log in later, once you're online.

How to Use Guest Mode

1. Launch the desktop app. On the login screen, a **Continue as guest** link sits below the login form. (If the screen lists accounts that are still signed in under **Choose an account to continue**, choose **Use another account** first to show the form and the link.)
2. Click the link. Depending on how your login page is configured, TheBrain may first show a **Create a free account** dialog summarizing what a free account adds (sync, BrainBox capture, settings that follow you, a daily AI allowance, brain sharing, standalone shareable pages, and web access) — choose **Continue as guest** there to proceed.
3. You land on the brains list, ready to create and open local brains.

Guest mode stays enabled for future sessions, so you won't see the login screen again unless you sign in — or log out, which ends guest mode and brings the welcome screen back on the next launch. There is no separate guest-mode setting to manage — continuing as a guest is all it takes.

What Works in Guest Mode

- Opening and navigating local brains stored on your device.
- Creating new brains.
- Importing brain archives.
- Editing thoughts, notes, and attachments in local brains.
- Your preferences stick: keyboard shortcuts and toolbar customization are remembered across restarts. When you create a new account, they are copied to it: whether signing in with Google, Apple, or Microsoft creates the account, or you create it with the **Create Account** form on this computer and then log in to it here for the first time. When you log in to an account that already existed, TheBrain uses that account's own settings.

What Doesn't Work Without an Account

- **Cloud sync** — Brains cannot sync with TheBrain's servers.
- **Cerebro and other AI features** — Every AI feature needs a signed-in account. As a guest you don't get the Cerebro chat panel, the AI script buttons, or the **AI** section of Settings, which includes **Local AI** — so a guest can't use AI even with a local model. Sign in to an account to use them (see *Logging In Later* below).
- **BrainBox and Quick Thoughts** — Both need a signed-in account, and their buttons are hidden until you sign in. The desktop capture window still opens, for example from **Quick Thought** in the tray icon's menu, but it says **Sign in to TheBrain to sync — notes stay on this device.** and holds your notes until you sign in (see Quick Thoughts Capture Shortcuts).
- **Shared pages** — Shared thought pages require an internet connection and a logged-in account.
- **Account-linked brains** — Only local brains are available. Brains associated with an account require logging in at least once.

Logging In Later

You can log in at any time to access your account-linked brains and enable cloud sync.

To sign in or create an account while you are using TheBrain as a guest:

1. Open the account menu in the top-right corner (a person icon while you are a guest). Its last item reads **Login** instead of **Log Out**.
2. Choose **Login**. TheBrain shows the login screen.
3. Log in, or choose **Create Account**, where it is offered, to sign up for a new account (see Signing In and Creating an Account).

If you have no brains yet, the brains list also shows the prompt *You're using TheBrain as a guest. Sign in or create a free account to sync your brains and unlock more.* with a **Sign in or create an account** button, which opens the same login screen.

Any brains you created without an account will still appear in your brains list after you log in. You can then sync them to the cloud using your account. However, once a brain is associated with your account, it will only be accessible when logged in to that account — it will no longer appear when using guest mode without an account.

9.1.5 Email Verification

Overview

TheBrain verifies your email address to confirm it's really yours and to be able to reach you about your account. After you sign up, you verify by following a link sent to your inbox; you can also change your email address later and verify the new one.

Verifying Your Email

After creating an account, TheBrain emails a verification link from `no-reply@thebrain.com`. Open the message and follow the link to complete verification. If you don't see it, check your spam folder, and if your spam filter is aggressive, add that address to your contacts.

Until you verify, what happens depends on where you log in:

- **On the web** — You are signed in, but in place of your brains list you see an **Account Verification Pending** notice. It has a **Resend Verification Email** button in case the message didn't arrive. After an email has been sent (right after you sign up on the web, or after you use the button), the notice instead says where the email went, with a **set a new email address** link in case the address is wrong and the `support@thebrain.com` address for help.
- **In the desktop and mobile apps** — Login is refused with the message *Account not activated. Look in your email for the activation link.* The login screen in these apps has no option to resend the email.

Signing up in the desktop or mobile app shows an **Account created** message that asks you to follow the link in your email, then returns you to the login screen. Signing up on the web signs you straight in to the **Account Verification Pending** notice.

If the Desktop or Mobile App Says "Account not activated"

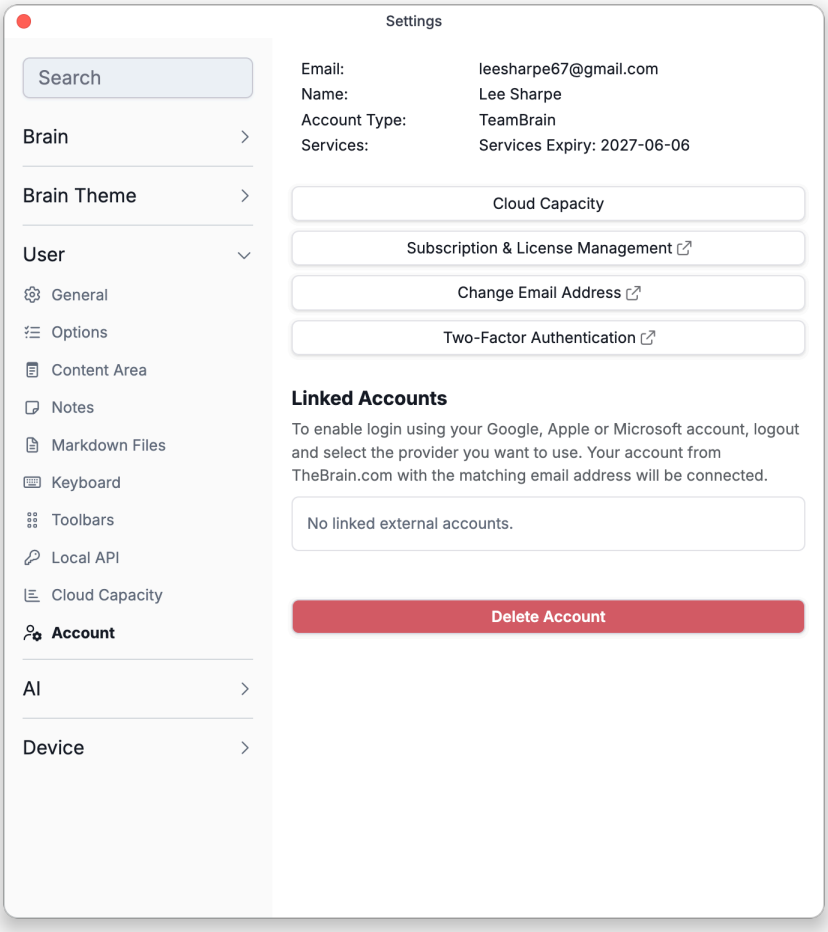
1. Find the verification email from `no-reply@thebrain.com` (check your spam folder) and open the link in it.

2. Go back to the app and log in again.

If the email never arrived, log in to TheBrain's web app (`app.thebrain.com`) in a browser with the same username and password. The **Account Verification Pending** notice there has the **Resend Verification Email** button. After you have followed the link in the new email, log in to the desktop or mobile app.

Changing Your Email Address

To use a different address, open **Settings > User > Account** and choose **Change Email Address**. Enter the new address; TheBrain sends a verification email to it with instructions to complete the change. On the desktop and mobile apps, **Change Email Address** opens the process in your browser (a small external-link icon marks it); on the web it opens in a dialog.



- A verification link works only once. If you open it a second time you see **This link is invalid or may have expired.** If the first time showed **Email Address Verification**

Successful, your address is verified and you can simply log in.

- An account created by signing in with Google, Apple, or Microsoft is verified from the start, so it needs no verification email (see Signing In). Accounts on an organization's own TheBrain server are verified automatically as well.

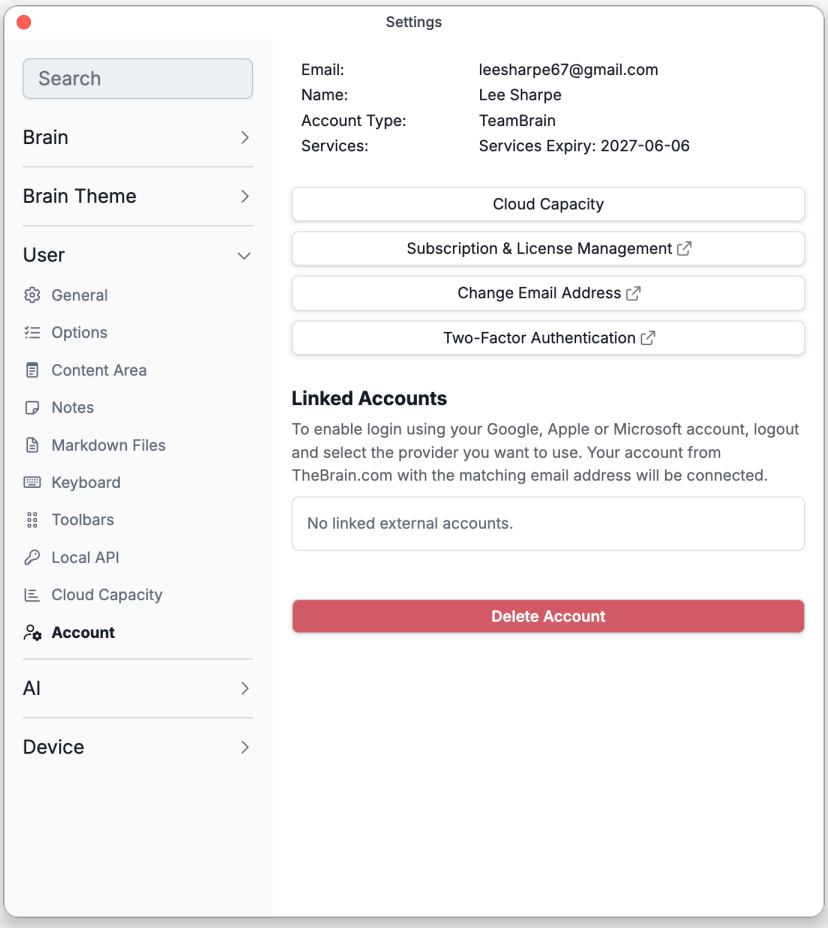
9.1.6 Two-Factor Authentication

Overview

Two-factor authentication (2FA) adds a second step to signing in: after your password, you enter a one-time code from an authenticator app on your phone. This protects your account even if your password is exposed.

Enabling 2FA

Open **Settings > User > Account** and choose **Two-Factor Authentication**. (On the web, you'll first confirm your password; on the desktop and mobile apps this opens in your browser.) To turn it on, choose **Enable Two-Factor Authentication**, then:



1. **Scan the QR code** with an authenticator app (such as Google Authenticator), or enter the **secret key** manually.
2. Enter the **6-digit code** from the app to **Verify and Save**.

Once enabled, you'll be asked for a code each time you sign in (see Signing In).

Saving Your Secret Key

When 2FA is configured, TheBrain shows a **secret key** to save somewhere safe. It can be used to recover your 2FA if you lose access to your authenticator app — and **there's no way to view it again** once you close the dialog, so save it then. Losing both your authenticator app and the key can mean permanently losing access to your account and brains.

Moving 2FA to a New Phone

To move two-factor authentication to another phone or authenticator app, set a new secret key while you are signed in:

1. Open **Settings > User > Account** and choose **Two-Factor Authentication**.
2. With 2FA already on, the dialog offers **Set New Secret Key** as well as **Disable Two-Factor Authentication**. Choose **Set New Secret Key**.
3. TheBrain shows a new QR code. Scan it with the authenticator app on the new phone, or choose **Show** to reveal the new secret key and enter that manually.
4. Enter the **6-digit code** from the new phone and choose **Verify and Save**.
5. Save the new secret key when it is shown.

The new key replaces the old one. You have to be signed in to get to this dialog, so if you no longer have the old phone, first add your saved secret key to an authenticator app on the new phone so that it can generate your login codes.

If It Asks for a Password You Don't Have

Before the Two-Factor Authentication dialog opens, TheBrain asks for your TheBrain password. An account created by signing in with Google, Apple, or Microsoft has no password yet, so first set one with **Reset Password** on the login screen (see Signing In), then come back.

Disabling 2FA

From the same screen, choose to **disable** two-factor authentication (TheBrain confirms first).



- An internet connection is required to sign in with 2FA.
- TheBrain sends you an email whenever two-factor authentication is enabled, changed to a new secret key, or disabled.
- The dialog warns that login from legacy client apps does not work while 2FA is enabled, so update TheBrain to the latest version on all your devices before turning it on.

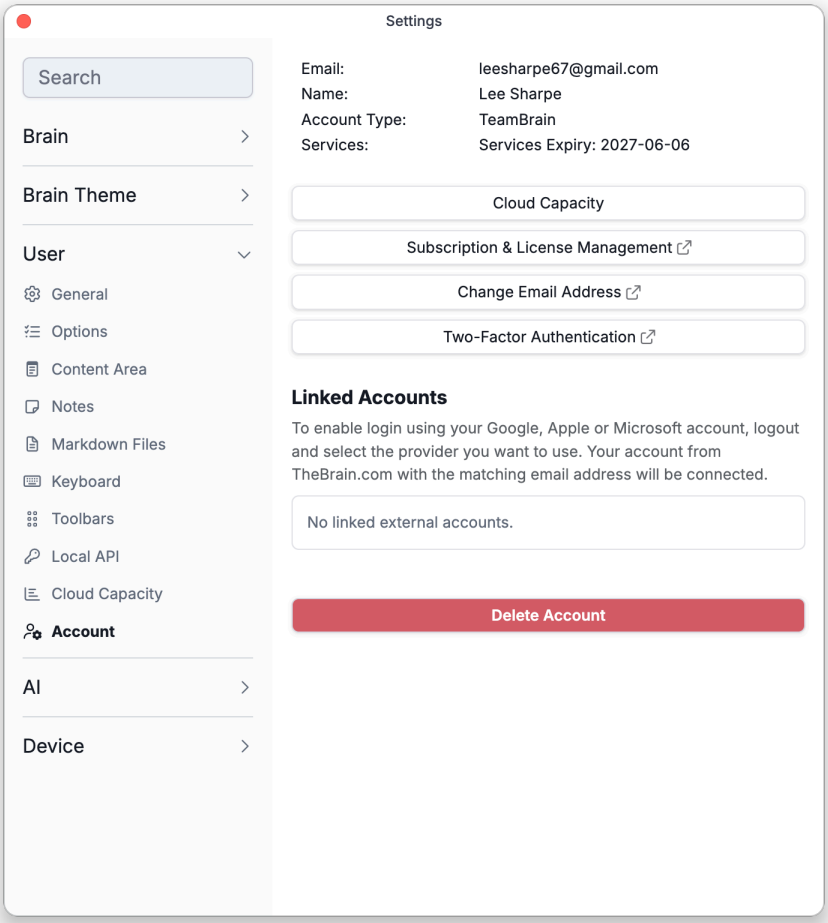
9.1.7 Managing Your Account

Overview

Settings > User > Account is the home for your account itself — your details, how you sign in, your subscription, and account-level actions like deleting the account. You can also reach account tools from the **account menu** in the top-right corner, which includes **Account Info & Tools**, **Switch Users** and **Log Out**.

Your Account Details

The Account settings display your **email**, **name**, **account type**, and current **services**, including the date your services expire (for the renewal date and amount, see Upgrading and Purchase). These details are shown, not edited in place:



- To change your email, use **Change Email Address** (see *Account Actions*).
- To set or change your password, use **Reset Password** on the login page — see Signing In.

Linked Accounts

If you sign in with **Google**, **Apple**, or **Microsoft**, those linked accounts are listed here with the provider, email, and when they were linked, and you can unlink one (with a confirmation). You can't unlink your last external account without first setting a password, so you always keep a way in. See Signing In.

How to Link a Google, Apple, or Microsoft Login

There is no Link button in Settings. A login is linked from the login screen, by signing in with the provider and then confirming with your TheBrain password:

1. **Log Out**, and on the login screen choose **Google**, **Apple**, or **Microsoft** under **Or continue with**; if the login screen first lists accounts that are still signed in, choose **Use another account** to get to these buttons. Sign in with that provider. (In the desktop and mobile apps the provider's page opens in your browser.)
2. When the provider's email address matches your TheBrain account, the login screen returns with your email filled in and the message *This email is already linked to an account for TheBrain. Log in to connect your Google account.* (naming the provider you chose).
3. Enter your TheBrain password and choose **Login and Link**. Plain **Login** signs you in without linking.

Finish step 3 soon after signing in with the provider; if it has expired, start again from step 1. Afterwards the login appears under **Linked Accounts**, and you can sign in either way.

Two things can get in the way:

- **A different email address** — the link is offered only when the provider's email address is the same as the one on your TheBrain account. If the provider's address matches no TheBrain account, signing in with it creates a new, separate account instead of linking. To link, the two addresses have to match first; your TheBrain address is changed with **Change Email Address**.
- **No password yet** — step 3 needs a TheBrain password. If your account doesn't have one (for example because it was created by signing in with a provider), set one first with

Reset Password on the login screen.

After unlinking a login you can link it again the same way.

Account Actions

- **Subscription & License Management** and (on free or expired accounts) **Upgrade or Renew Services** — manage your plan (see Upgrading and Purchase).
- **Cloud Capacity** — jump to your storage and sync allowances (see Cloud Capacity).
- **Change Email Address** and **Two-Factor Authentication** — see Email Verification and Two-Factor Authentication.
- **Delete Account** — permanently delete your account.

To sign out, use **Log Out** in the top-right account menu. Signing out doesn't delete anything; your account and brains remain.

To use more than one account, choose **Switch Users > Log In as Another User...** in the same menu and log in. The account you were using stays signed in, so **Switch Users** then lists both accounts, with a check on the one in use, and choosing the other switches to it without a password. Only one account is in use at a time. A switch saves your work and then shows the other account: in the desktop and mobile apps with the tabs it had open last, and on the web at its brains list. **Log Out** signs out only the account in use, and **Log Out All Accounts**, at the end of **Switch Users**, signs out all of them.

Deleting Your Account

Deleting is permanent and **can't be undone** — you confirm by typing `DELETE MY ACCOUNT`. If you're the admin of any remote brains, you must delete them or transfer admin rights to someone else first; the dialog lists the brains that block deletion. After deletion you're signed out automatically.



- Some of these actions (subscription management, change email, two-factor) open in your browser on the desktop and mobile apps.
- On TeamBrain enterprise servers, subscription management, capacity, upgrade, and account deletion are handled by your organization and don't appear here.

Related Topics

- Upgrading and Purchase
- Cloud Capacity

9.2 Plans and Billing

9.2.1 Plans and Cloud Services

Overview

Paid plans add **capacity**: how much of your data can sync through TheBrain's cloud, how large your AI usage allowance is, and whether you can collaborate with others in shared brains.

What Every Account Includes

- **The app** — unlimited thoughts and brains on your own devices, with notes, file attachments, types and tags, advanced layouts, reports, AI features, and import and export.
- **Cloud sync with a free allowance** — a free account can sync a limited number of limited-access thoughts and a limited amount of attachment storage; public thoughts in public brains don't count toward the thought limit. Your exact allowance and current usage are shown in **Settings > User > Cloud Capacity** — see Cloud Capacity.
- **An AI usage allowance** — see AI Usage Limits.

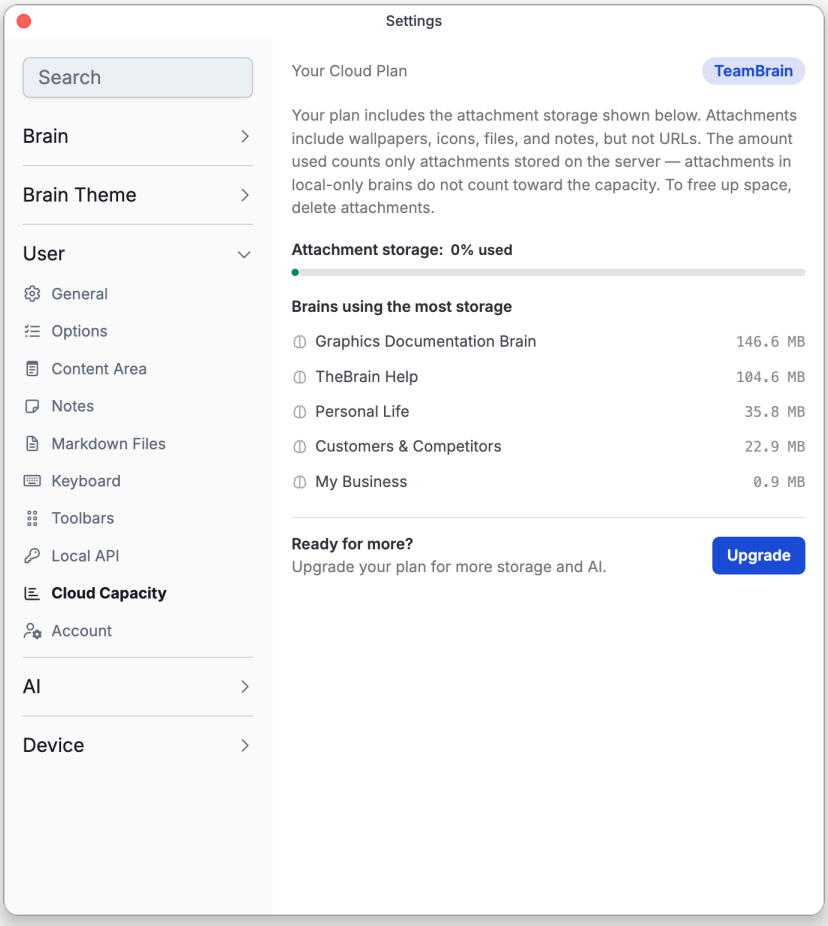
What Paid Plans Add

Paid tiers — **Pro**, **TeamBrain**, and **Max** — add:

- **Larger sync capacity** — no limited-access-thought cap, and much more attachment storage.

- **A larger AI allowance** — every paid plan has a larger AI usage allowance than the free plan.
- **TeamBrain** — collaborating with other people in shared team brains requires a TeamBrain plan. **Max** includes everything TeamBrain gives, so a Max subscriber doesn't need TeamBrain as well. See TeamBrain Overview.
- **Cloud API access** — creating cloud API keys requires an active Cloud Services subscription. (The desktop app's local API is free — see API Keys.)

Plans are offered on **monthly** and **annual** billing, and you can change or cancel anytime. To subscribe or renew, see Upgrading and Purchase.



- On a free account both allowances, attachment storage and limited-access thoughts, are hard limits: once you're over either one, your brains stop syncing until you remove enough thoughts or attachments, or upgrade. On paid plans, **Cloud Capacity** warns you as you near or pass your storage allowance.

- If paid services lapse, nothing is deleted — your account simply returns to the free plan's sync and AI allowances.

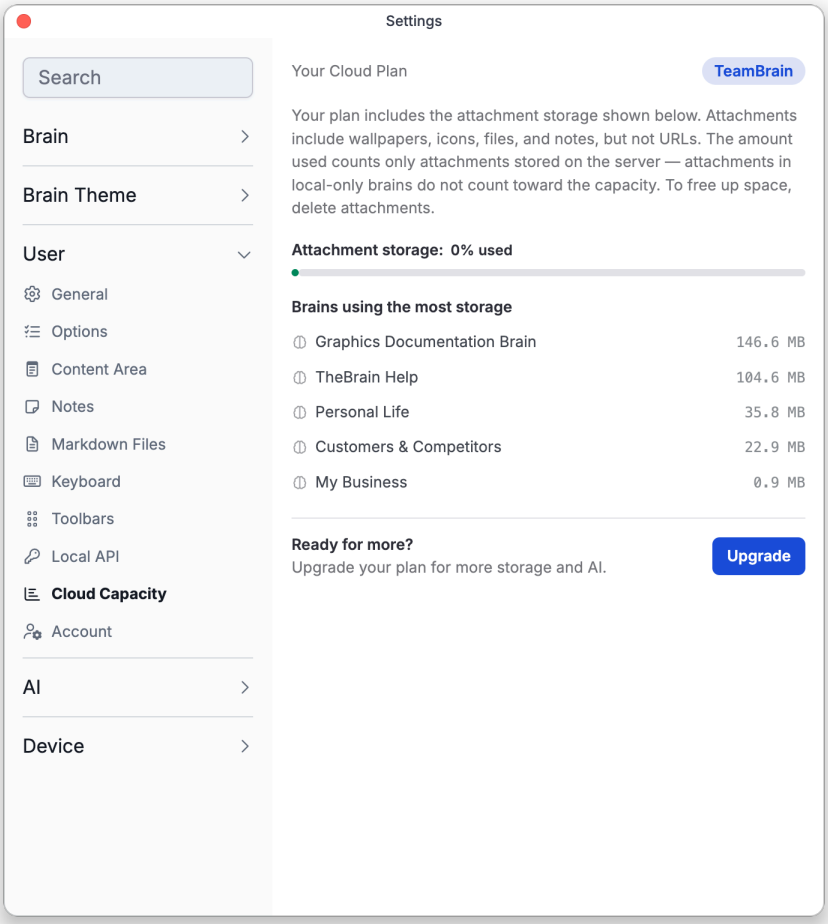
9.2.2 Upgrading and Purchase

Overview

When you want a larger plan — or need to renew or update billing — TheBrain handles it through your account. You can subscribe, manage your payment details, and cancel renewal whenever you like. For what the paid plans actually change, see Plans and Cloud Services.

Upgrading

Start from an **Upgrade** prompt (for example on the *Cloud Capacity* screen when you're near your allowance), from **Upgrade Now** in the account menu, which is there while you have no paid services, or from **Settings > User > Account** — the **Upgrade or Renew Services** action appears there while you're on the free plan or your services have expired.



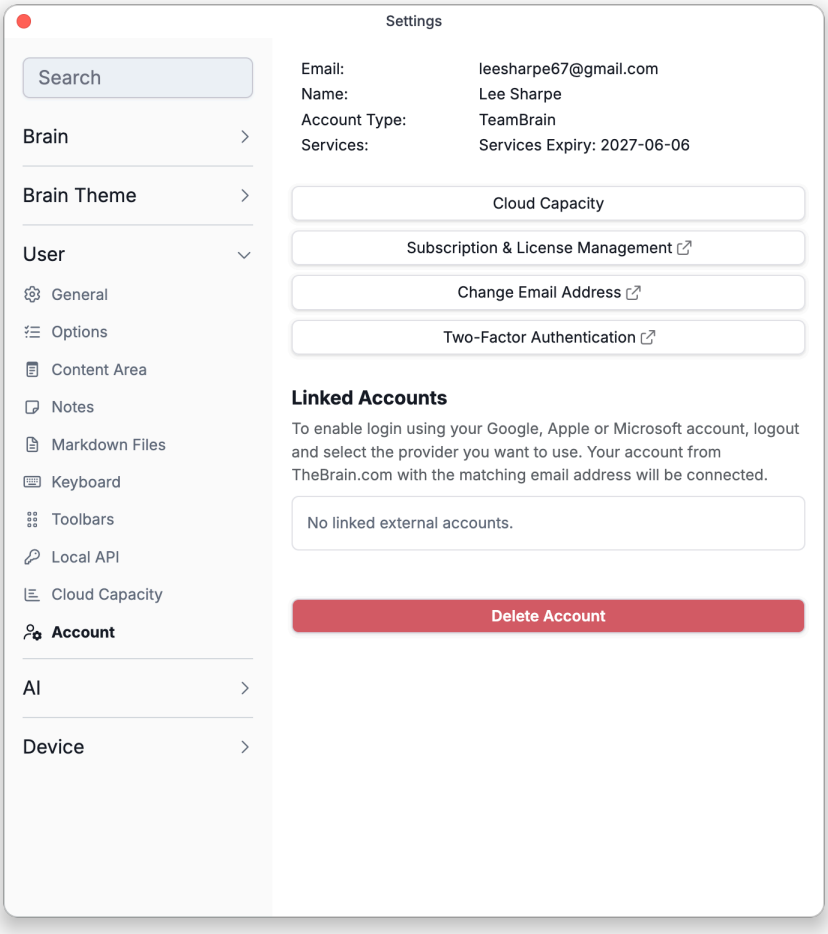
What happens next depends on your platform:

- **Web and desktop** — TheBrain opens the plan store on `thebrain.com` in your browser, pre-filled with your account email. Complete the purchase there and it applies to your account.
- **Android** — **Upgrade or Renew Services** and **Upgrade Now** start an email to TheBrain in your email app, asking for information about upgrading, with your account email in it.
- **iOS** — **Upgrade or Renew Services** and **Upgrade Now** open an in-app purchase dialog that offers **monthly** or **annual** billing through the App Store, with links to the terms and privacy policy. After purchase TheBrain confirms it; if a purchase doesn't apply right away, the **Restore purchases** option re-checks it.

Seeing When Your Plan Renews or Expires

Your expiry date is shown in several places, and the renewal details in one:

- **The account menu** (top-right corner) — while your services are active, it shows a line such as **Pro Services Expire** (the wording names your plan) followed by the date.
- **Settings > User > Account** — the **Services** line reads **Services Expiry** and the date. Once a paid plan has lapsed, it reads **Expired** and the date instead.
- **About TheBrain** — in the desktop and mobile apps, this shows the same expiry line as the account menu.
- **Settings > User > Account > Subscription & License Management** — the place to see the renewal itself. Each subscription is listed with one of three statuses: **Renews**, with the next payment date and the renewal amount in US dollars, when it renews automatically; **Expires**, with the date and **No auto-renew**, when it is not set to renew (for example after **Cancel Renewal**); or **Expired**, with the date. The renewal details load a moment after the list opens, so the line may briefly read just **Expires** and the date.



Managing Payment and Renewal

Open **Settings > User > Account > Subscription & License Management** (on the desktop and mobile apps this opens your account pages in the browser). For a subscription you administer, choose **Payment Info** to:

- **Update Card** — change the credit card on file.
- **Cancel Renewal** — stop the subscription from renewing; your services continue until the current term ends.

- When paid services lapse, nothing is deleted — your account returns to the free plan's allowances.
- For seat-based management on team plans, see TeamBrain Overview.

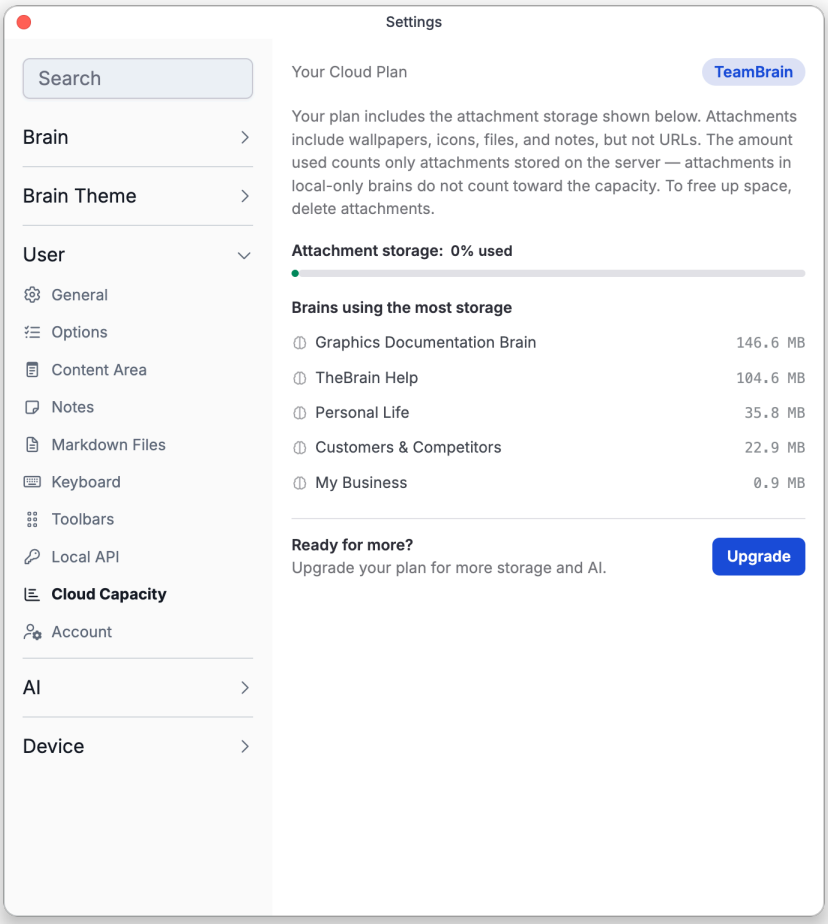
Related Topics

- Managing Your Account

9.2.3 Cloud Capacity

Overview

The **Cloud Capacity** settings (under **Settings > User**) show **Your Cloud Plan** and where you stand against its allowances, each with a bar showing the percentage used and your exact numbers, so you can tell when you're getting close and which brains are using the most space. Every plan has an **attachment storage** allowance; on the **free plan** there is also a **limited-access thoughts** allowance — paid plans have no thought limit.



What Counts

- **Attachment storage** — the space used by attachments stored on the server: wallpapers, icons, files, and notes, including the images in notes. Web-link attachments don't count, and neither do external files and folders — ones a thought only links to on your computer, which stay outside the brain (see Linking to External Files and Folders). Brains that are only local (not synced) don't count either.
- **Limited-access thoughts** (free plan only) — thoughts in non-public brains, plus private thoughts in public brains. Public thoughts in public brains don't count toward the limit.

The screen also lists the **brains using the most storage**, so you can see where space is going.

Whose Brains Count

Your figures cover the cloud brains you administer, so a brain that someone else shared with you as a **Reader** or **Writer** isn't included. See Brain Access and Sharing for the access levels.

When You're Near the Limit

As you approach a limit, TheBrain lets you know — the capacity bars warn from 90% up, and milestone notices appear as your usage grows. What happens at the limit depends on your plan:

- **Free plan** — both allowances, attachment storage and limited-access thoughts, are hard limits. Once you're over either one, your brains stop syncing, not just their attachments: the only syncs that go through are ones that remove thoughts or attachments from a brain. The over-limit notice tells you how much to remove. Automatic sync keeps trying, and syncing returns to normal once you're back under the limit or after you upgrade. In the web app, which doesn't sync, TheBrain instead refuses a new thought or attachment that would put you over the limit and shows **This would exceed your cloud capacity**.
- **Paid plans** — the capacity bars warn you as you near or pass your storage allowance.

To raise your allowances, use the **Upgrade** prompt on this screen — see Upgrading and Purchase.



- Cloud Capacity is about *storage and thought counts*; AI usage is metered separately — see AI Usage Limits.
- Exact allowance figures depend on your plan and account — this screen always shows your real numbers, so this topic gives none.

Related Topics

- Brain Access and Sharing

9.2.4 API Keys

Overview

If you want to reach your TheBrain data from your own tools and scripts, **API keys** make that possible. There are two kinds: **cloud** API keys for TheBrain's web API, and a **local** API key for accessing your local brains directly on the desktop. Both kinds are secrets, like passwords.

Cloud API Keys

In the **web app**, **Settings > User > API Keys** (also reachable from the account menu as **API Keys…**) lets you **generate** and manage cloud API keys for TheBrain's cloud API. The page requires an active **Cloud Services** subscription, and it links to the API itself with an **Access API** button. The account menu offers **API Keys…** only once your account's email address is verified. Cloud API keys aren't available on TeamBrain enterprise servers.

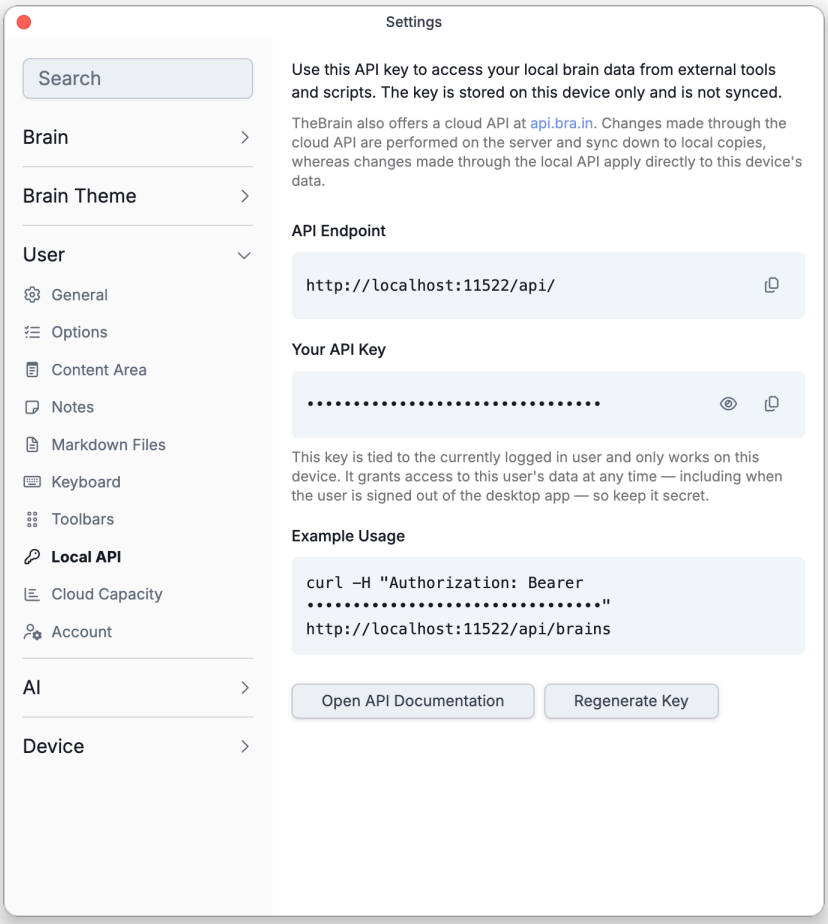
Each key is listed with its **name**, an obfuscated preview of its value, when it was **created**, when it was **last used**, and its **usage count**. You can:

- **Generate Key** — the full key value is shown **once**, with a copy button; store it somewhere safe, because you won't be able to view it again.
- **Rename** a key — use the pencil icon.
- **Delete** a key — use the **X** at the end of its row. TheBrain asks you to tick two boxes before it removes the key, since anything still using the key stops working.

⚠ Keep API keys **secret** — anyone with one of your API keys can read and modify your data. If a cloud key may have been exposed, delete it and generate a new one; for the local key, use **Regenerate Key**.

Local API

On the **desktop app**, **Settings > User > Local API** provides a key for reaching your **local** brain data from external tools and scripts on that machine. The page shows the local endpoint address — normally `http://localhost:11522/api/`, or another port if that one is already in use on your computer — lets you show, hide, and copy the key, includes a ready-made example request, links to the API documentation, and offers **Regenerate Key** (which invalidates the current key).



The local key is stored on the device only and isn't synced; it works only on this device — including while you're signed out of the desktop app. There is no subscription requirement for the local API.

- Changes made through the **cloud** API happen on the server and sync down to your devices; changes made through the **local** API apply directly to the data on that device.

Related Topics

- Managing Your Account

10 Keeping Your Work Safe

10.1 Thought History

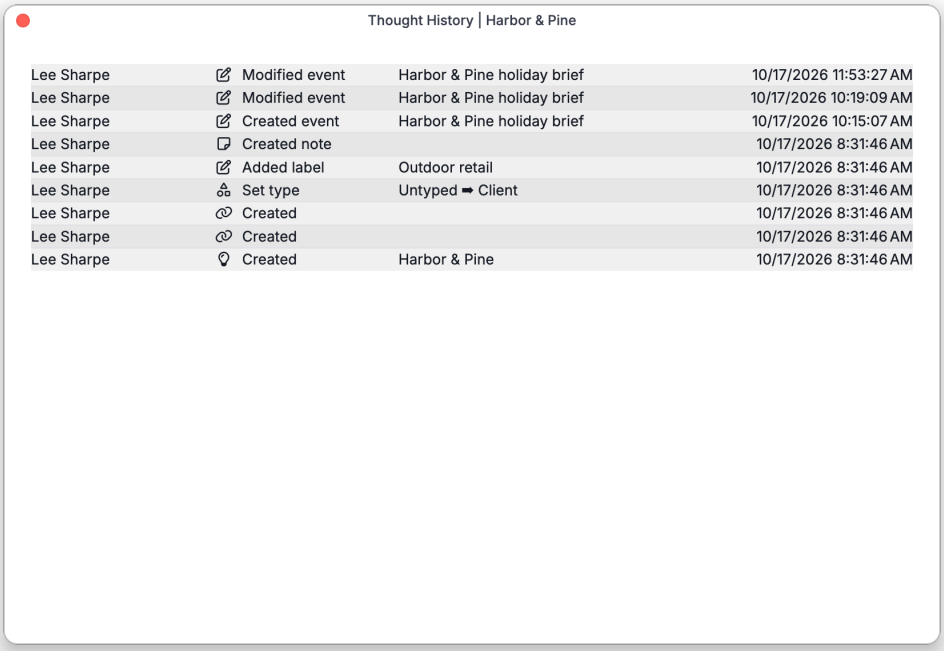
Overview

TheBrain keeps a **history** of changes to a thought, so you can see how it has evolved. Each entry shows who made the change, the kind of change, a short summary of what changed, and the date and time. In a shared brain this is especially useful for understanding how a thought reached its current state and who did what.

Viewing a Thought's History

1. Open the thought and look at its **properties**.
2. From the **More Actions** menu — the **…** (ellipsis) button — choose **Show History**.

The history dialog lists the changes to that thought, newest first. Closely-spaced edits by the same person are grouped together so the list stays readable. On the desktop app, the history opens in a window of its own beside the brain window, titled with the thought's name, and keeps up to date as the brain changes while you work. It closes when you close its tab or switch to another tab.



An undo or redo is recorded as its own entry — **Undo** or **Redo**, with the name of the action that was reversed or reapplied — rather than erasing the original entry, so the record shows both the change and its reversal. On a shared brain the history is also the best guide to a sync conflict: it shows who changed a thought and when, which tells you whose version won (see Working Offline and Sync Recovery).

Viewing the Whole Brain's History

A **Brain History** window lists the recorded changes for the whole brain instead of one thought. It shows the same details for each entry — who made the change, the kind of change, a short summary, and the date and time — with the newest changes first.

- **Mac desktop app** — choose **Brain > Show Brain History...** in the menu bar.
- **Windows, Linux, and the web** — the command is not in a menu. Give **Show Brain History** a keyboard shortcut in **Settings > User > Keyboard** (see Keyboard Shortcuts), or add it to a toolbar in **Settings > User > Toolbars** (see Customizing Toolbars).

The window lists the changes the brain has on record. Repeated changes of the same kind to the same item by the same person within five minutes are shown as one entry. Unlike a single thought's history, the brain-wide list does not update while it stays open, so close it and open it again to see newer changes.

- The history is a **read-only record** — it shows what happened, for review and accountability. It doesn't restore or roll a thought back to an earlier version. To see and copy from earlier versions of a thought's **note**, use **Note Versions** instead (see Note Versions).
- For overall counts rather than a change log, see Brain Statistics.

Related Topics

- Thought Properties
- Brain Statistics
- Syncing Brains
- Keyboard Shortcuts
- Customizing Toolbars

10.2 Backup to Brain Archive

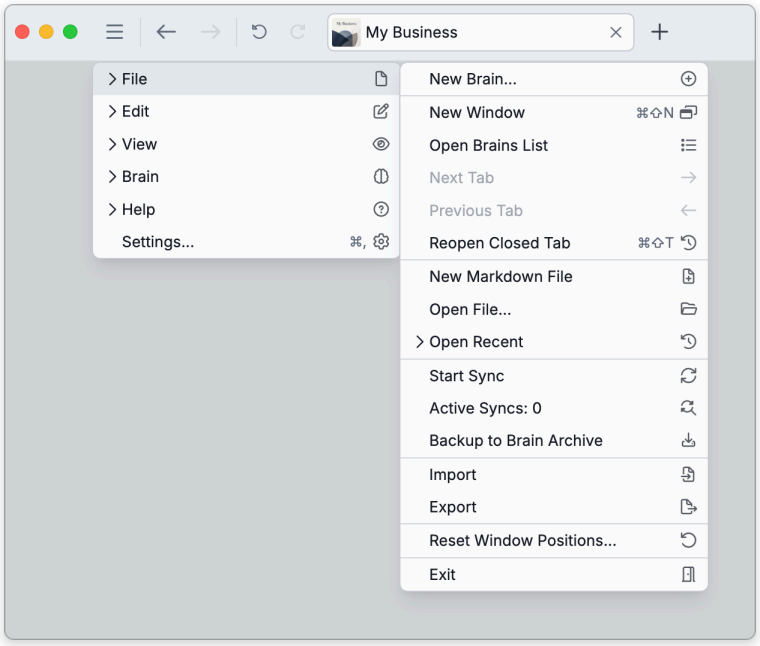
Overview

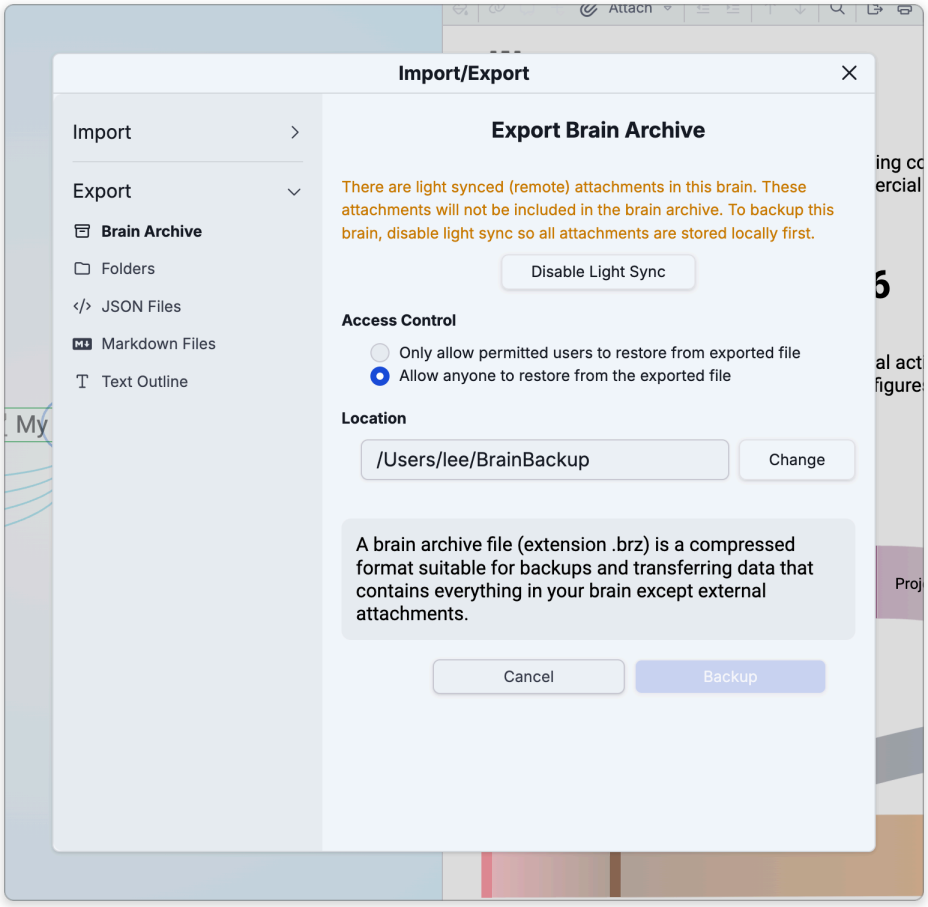
Back Up to Brain Archive saves a brain to a single compressed file — a `.brz` archive — that contains everything in the brain except external attachments. It's the simplest way to make a complete, portable backup you can keep safe, move to another machine, or re-import if you ever need to restore. It's available in the desktop and mobile apps and on the desktop web client (it's hidden on a phone browser), and it requires **admin** rights on the brain.

How to Back Up

1. Open **Main Menu > File > Backup to Brain Archive** (in the Mac menu bar, **File > Back Up to Brain Archive…**).
2. In the installed apps, light-synced (remote) attachments aren't included in an archive, so when the brain has some, click **Disable Light Sync** to store all its attachments locally. **Backup** stays unavailable until you do. The dialog closes while TheBrain syncs the brain and downloads its attachments; open **Backup to Brain Archive** again once they are stored.

3. In the installed apps, choose who may restore the archive under **Access Control**: **Only allow permitted users to restore from exported file** (the default) or **Allow anyone to restore from the exported file**. "Permitted users" means accounts already granted access to the original brain. TheBrain remembers the choice for your next backup, so check it each time you make an archive you intend to hand to someone else or use with a different account. On the web you don't get this choice, just a reminder to handle the file with care, because an archive contains your brain's contents; an archive made on the web is restricted as with **Only allow permitted users to restore from exported file**.
4. In the desktop app, check the **Location** box, which shows the folder the archive will be saved in. Click **Change** to pick another folder, or type a path into the box.
5. Click **Backup**. The dialog closes and a notification shows the progress while TheBrain generates the archive; you can cancel the backup from that notification.





This is the export dialog focused on the Brain Archive format — see Exporting Brains for the other formats.

Where the File Is Saved and What It Is Called

The archive is named after the brain and the date: `<brain name> YYYY-MM-DD.brz`. If a file with that name is already there (a second backup on the same day, for example), the new one gets `(1)` added to its name, then `(2)`, and so on.

- **Desktop app** — The file is saved in the **Location** folder. That box starts at the folder you last picked with **Change** on this computer, or at your Documents folder the first time. When the backup is done, the notification reads **Backup created at "…"** with the full path; click that text to open the folder that holds the file.
- **Web** — There is no location to choose. When the archive is ready, the notification shows a **Download** link for the file; click it to save the archive through your browser.
- **iPhone, iPad, and Android** — There is no **Location** box. Once the archive has been generated, your device asks where to save the file.

Restoring

To restore from a `.brz` file, **import** it — see Importing Brains (Brain Archive). A brain archive restores as its own complete brain, and it keeps the identity of the brain it was made from.

If the Import Says "This brain already exists"

Because the archive keeps the original brain's identity, importing it with **Create a new brain** fails with **This brain already exists** while a copy of that brain is still there. In the desktop and mobile apps, that means a copy stored on this device for the account you're signed in with. On the web, it means the brain still exists in the cloud. TheBrain won't create a second brain with the same identity. In the desktop and mobile apps there are two ways forward:

- **Replace the copy on this device** — Delete the copy stored on the device with **Delete Local Brain** (see Deleting a Brain), then import the archive again with **Create a new brain**. If the copy you're about to delete holds anything you might still want, back it up first.
- **Bring the archive in as a copy** — Open a different brain (a new, empty one works well), then import the archive with **Add to …** selected instead of **Create a new brain**. The archive's thoughts, links, notes, attachments, and events are added to that brain with new identities, linked under its active thought. The archive's own brain settings are not applied.

If the Import Says You Don't Have Permission

An **Import failed** notification reading **This brain cannot be imported, because you do not have permission to access it.** means the archive was made with **Only allow permitted users to restore from exported file**, or on the web. That choice limits restoring to the accounts that had access to the brain when the backup was made; any other account is refused. To import it anyway:

- Sign in with an account that had access to the brain when the backup was made, and import the archive again.
- Or ask someone with admin rights on the brain to back it up again in the desktop or mobile app with **Allow anyone to restore from the exported file** selected, and import that archive instead.

Related Topics

- Importing Brains

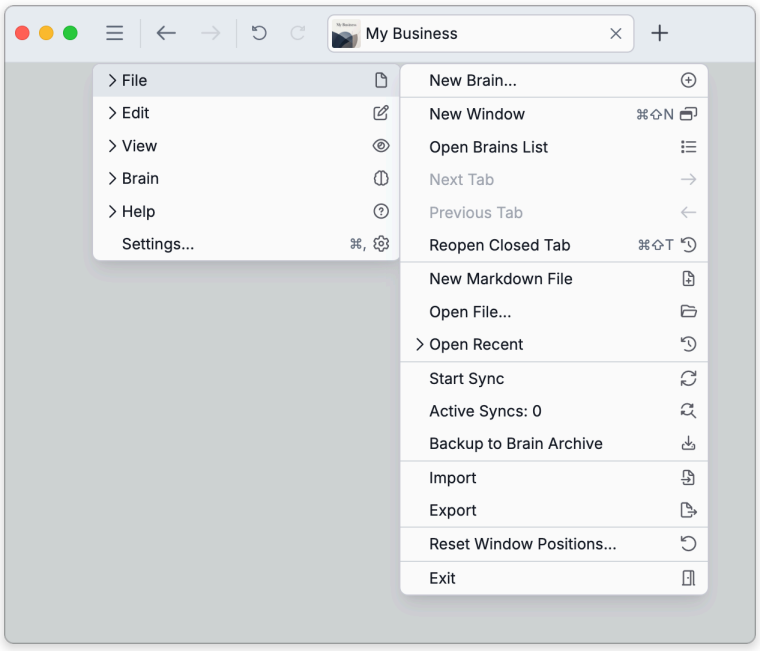
10.3 Exporting Brains

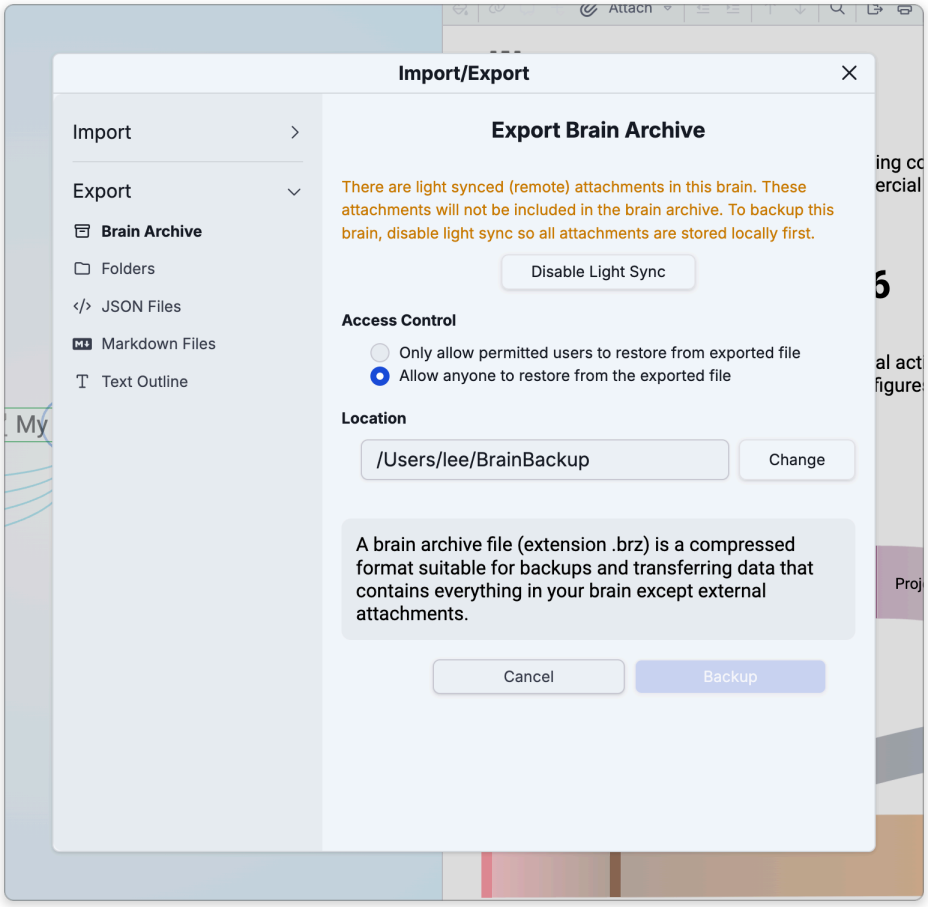
Overview

Exporting gets your content out of TheBrain in a portable format — for backups, for moving data elsewhere, or for sharing a copy. Different formats keep different amounts of structure, from a complete archive down to plain text. Exporting requires **admin** rights on the brain.

How to Export

1. Open **Main Menu > File > Export** (this opens the **Import/Export** dialog on the Export side). In the Mac menu bar the command is the **File > Export Brain** submenu, which has an item for each format.
2. Choose a format from the list on the left of the dialog.
3. Set any options, then click **Export** (**Backup** for a brain archive).





Formats

- **Brain Archive** (`.brz`) — a compressed copy of everything in the brain except external attachments; best for a faithful backup you can import again, and for transfers. (See Backup to Brain Archive.)
- **Markdown Files** — one `.md` file per thought that has a note, all in one folder, with note images and attachments in subfolders. The details are under *What the Markdown Files Export Creates* in this topic.
- **JSON Files** — a complete, structured export of your data. Markdown and JSON are the formats for using your data in other tools.
- **Text Outline** — an indented outline where indentation is the hierarchy.
- **Folders** — thoughts as folders and files on disk. External files are fully represented, as shortcuts or symbolic links, only in the desktop app.

Options

The options depend on the format:

- **Only export the selection** — limit the export to the thoughts you have selected (see Selecting Multiple Thoughts). Available for **Markdown Files**, **Folders**, and **Text Outline** (not JSON or Brain Archive).
  - The box is ticked for you when you open the dialog with thoughts selected in that brain, and it is grayed out when nothing is selected.
  - Exactly the selected thoughts are exported. The children of a selected thought are not included unless they are selected too.
  - In **Text Outline** and **Folders**, a selected thought whose parent isn't selected is placed at the top level.
- **Markdown Files** adds the most options: **Include title** (on to start with) and, under it, **Link title to thought** (off); **Convert to CommonMark** (off); **Include attachments** (on); and **Export thought links as** — **Relative links to exported files**, **Local `brain://` links** (the one selected to start with), or **Web URLs**.
- **JSON Files** exports with no extra options; **Brain Archive** has its own settings (see Backup to Brain Archive).

What the Markdown Files Export Creates

Everything goes into one folder. The brain's structure is not turned into subfolders.

- **Notes** — Each thought that has a note gets a file named after the thought, `<thought name>.md`. A thought without a note gets no file. Characters that aren't allowed in file names are replaced with underscores, and thoughts that share a name get `(2)`, `(3)`, and so on added.
- **Images** — Images used in notes are saved in an `md-images` subfolder.
- **Attachments** — With **Include attachments** on, attached files that are stored in the brain are copied into an `attachments` subfolder, web links are saved there as `.url` files, and links to a thought's attached files are listed at the top of its note. Attached folders and linked external files are not copied.
- **Title** — **Include title** puts the thought's name at the top of the file as a `# Heading`. **Link title to thought** makes that heading a link to the thought's web address.

- **Thought links inside notes** — These are written the way **Export thought links as** says. **Relative links to exported files** points a link at the other thought's `.md` file when that thought is part of the export, and leaves the link as it was when it is not.
- **Front matter** — A note's YAML frontmatter is kept at the top of the exported file.
- **Not exported** — The parent, child, and jump links between thoughts are not written anywhere in this format. Only the links inside notes are kept.

Standard Markdown and Convert to CommonMark

Exported Markdown is not always standard Markdown, because each note is exported in the Markdown format it is stored in:

- A note that is already saved as standard Markdown is exported as standard Markdown.
- A note that is still stored in TheBrain's older Markdown format is exported in that older format, unless you tick **Convert to CommonMark**. That option converts those notes to standard Markdown in the exported files, and leaves notes that are already standard as they are. It does not change the notes in your brain.

Convert to CommonMark is off to start with. A brain that uses standard Markdown can still hold notes in the older format that haven't been edited since the switch, so tick the option whenever the files are meant for other Markdown tools. See Standard Markdown Notes for the two formats.

Where the Export Is Saved

- **Desktop app** — When you click **Export**, a folder picker opens. It starts at the folder you last exported to on this computer, or at your Documents folder the first time.
  - A **Text Outline** is saved in the folder you pick as one file, named `<brain name> YYYY-MM-DD_HH-MM-SS.txt`.
  - **Markdown Files**, **JSON Files**, and **Folders** write their files straight into the folder you pick. If that folder isn't empty, TheBrain asks whether to save the export in a new subfolder named `<brain name> YYYY-MM-DD_HH-MM-SS` instead.
  - When the export finishes, the **Export complete.** notification has an **Open Export Location** link.
- **Web** — There is no folder to choose. When the export finishes, the **Export complete.** notification has a **Download** link. A **Markdown Files**, **JSON Files**, or **Folders** export is

delivered as a single **zip**.

A **Brain Archive** is saved differently — see Backup to Brain Archive.

- In the desktop and mobile apps, light-synced attachments that aren't stored locally are left out of a JSON export — the JSON panel shows a warning when this applies — and a brain archive can't be made at all until light sync is off (see Backup to Brain Archive). To include everything, disable light sync so all attachments are stored locally first.
- To export the **notes** of a thought or selection as a single document (PDF, HTML, Markdown, or text), use **Export Notes** from the notes editor's toolbar or the selection's Actions menu instead — it has its own preview with page size, margins, page numbers (offered on the desktop app only; the mobile apps' PDF export has no page-number option), text and image scale, per-type callout filtering, and (for PDF and HTML) a **Side bars on embeds** option for any embedded notes in the content (see Embedded Notes). On the web it directs you to the installed app. See Exporting and Printing Notes for every option.

Related Topics

- Copying and Duplicating Thoughts
- Selecting Multiple Thoughts

10.4 Crash Recovery

Overview

TheBrain's installed app remembers where you are as you work, and puts you back there every time it starts. That is true after an unexpected close as well — the app crashed, the power went out, you had to force it to quit: the next time you start TheBrain your session comes back on its own, without a prompt.

How It Works

On the **desktop** app, TheBrain saves your open windows and brain tabs as they change, and reopens them the next time it starts — the same way after a crash as after a normal quit. On **mobile**, the app returns you to your last view.

The Improper Shutdown Detected Prompt

You are not asked anything after an ordinary crash. TheBrain shows a prompt only when it has closed unexpectedly right after starting, several times in a row — a sign that something it reopens at startup may be what keeps it from starting. The prompt is titled **Improper Shutdown Detected**: *"It looks like TheBrain did not shut down properly last time. Do you want to restore the Brain tabs you last had open?"*

- **Yes** — TheBrain restores your tabs as usual.
- **No** — On the desktop app, TheBrain starts without reopening those tabs, so you can get back in when one of them is the cause.

A run that lasts longer than that, or that you quit normally, resets the count.

- Crash recovery restores your open **tabs/session**; it doesn't recover unsaved note text. For recovered note files (on mobile), see Note Recovery Files.
- Your brains' actual content is protected separately by auto-save and sync.

10.5 Note Recovery Files

Overview

If an error keeps the mobile app from saving a note, TheBrain saves what you wrote as a **note recovery file** and shows a **Note Save Failed** notification that says so. When such files exist on your device, TheBrain gives you a way to retrieve them, so a draft isn't simply lost.

Finding Recovery Files

On a phone, tap the settings button (the gear icon at the right end of the toolbar). The **Note Recovery Files** submenu appears in the menu's **Support** group — and only when recovery files

actually exist on the device. From there you can:

- **Send Recovery Files** — Package the recovered files and email them to **TheBrain support** (your account email is included so they can help), or — if no mail account is set up on the device — share them via another app so you can send them wherever you need.
- **Clear Recovery Files** — Delete the recovery files after confirming ("Delete N note recovery file(s)? This cannot be undone.").



- For restoring your open brains after a desktop crash, see Crash Recovery.

Related Topics

- Writing and Formatting Notes

11 Help and Troubleshooting

11.1 Getting Help and Support

Overview

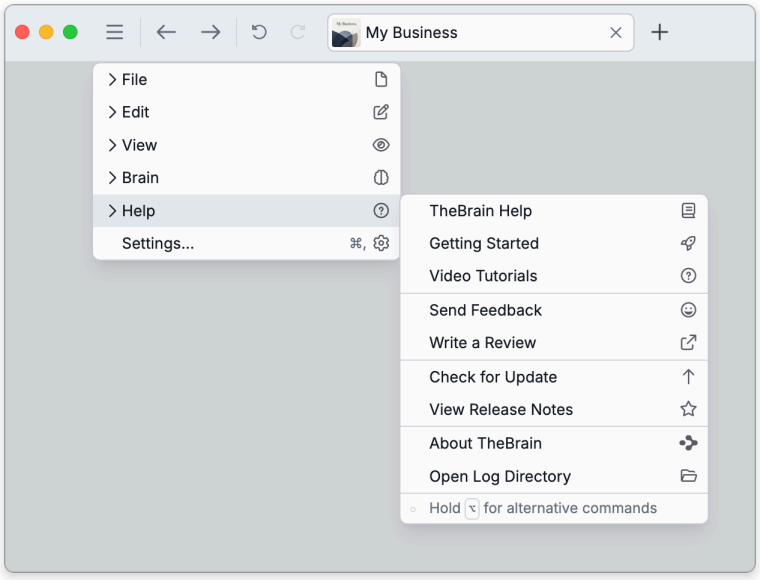
TheBrain's help commands are in two places that share most of their items: **Main Menu > Help**, and the **Help** group of the account menu at the top right. From there you can open TheBrain's help on the web, open the tutorials, send feedback, see which version you are running and read its release notes. When TheBrain support asks for a log file, the same menus get you to it. TheBrain support's address is **support@thebrain.com**.

Where the Help Commands Are

- **Main Menu > Help** — **TheBrain Help**, **Getting Started**, **Video Tutorials**, **Send Feedback**, **View Release Notes**, and **About TheBrain**. The desktop app adds **Write a Review**, **Check for Update** (see App Updates) and **Open Log Directory**.
- **The account menu** — Under its **Help** heading: **TheBrain Help**, **Video Tutorials**, **Send Feedback**, and **About TheBrain**. The desktop app adds **Write a Review**, and the mobile app adds **Email Log File**.
- **On a phone** — Tap the settings button (the gear icon at the right end of the toolbar). The menu that opens has a **Support** group with **TheBrain Help**, **Interactive Tutorials** (while a brain is open), **Video Tutorials**, **Send Feedback**, and, in the mobile app, **Email Log File**. **About TheBrain** is just below that group.
- **The Mac menu bar** — On the Mac desktop app, the **Help** menu has **TheBrain Help**, **Getting Started**, **Video Tutorials**, **Send Feedback**, **Write a Review**, and **Open Log Directory**. **About TheBrain**, **Check for Updates...**, and **View Release Notes** are in the **TheBrain** menu.

TheBrain Help opens TheBrain's help brain, also named TheBrain Help, in your browser, at its thought **User Guide**. The help brain holds every help topic as a thought of its own, and **User Guide** holds all of them in one note, to read from start to finish, with a PDF of it attached. **Getting Started** starts the interactive walkthrough (see Onboarding Walkthrough), and **Video Tutorials** opens TheBrain's tutorial videos on the web. **Write a Review**, in the desktop app,

opens a web page in your browser where you can write a review of TheBrain. Now and then the desktop app also asks **Review TheBrain?**, with **Write a review**, **Don't ask again** and **Not now**; once you have chosen one of the first two, or used **Write a Review** in the menu, it stops asking. The mobile app instead asks now and then for a rating, with the App Store's or Google Play's own prompt, which the store decides whether to show.



How to See Which Version You Are Running

1. Choose **About TheBrain** from the account menu or from **Main Menu > Help** (on a phone, from the menu the settings button opens; on the Mac desktop app it is also in the **TheBrain** menu of the menu bar).
2. Read the line under the logo: **Version** followed by the number. A beta build of the desktop or mobile app shows **Beta** and the number instead, with the number of days until that build expires.

The same dialog has links to **Release Notes**, **License Agreement**, and **Third Party Notices**.

How to Read the Release Notes

Choose **Main Menu > Help > View Release Notes**, or click **Release Notes** in **About TheBrain**. When the desktop app offers you an update, the prompt also shows the release notes for the version on offer — see App Updates.

How to Send Feedback

Choose **Send Feedback**. It opens TheBrain's forums, `forums.thebrain.com`, in your browser. On TeamBrain enterprise servers, **Send Feedback** is not shown.

How to Send a Log File to Support

The installed apps keep a log file that helps support work out what went wrong. How you send it depends on the app.

On the Desktop App

1. Choose **Main Menu > Help > Open Log Directory**.
2. Your file manager opens and shows the log file, named `Output.log`, in its folder.
3. Attach that file to an email to **support@thebrain.com**.

Open Log Directory only shows you the file. It does not send anything.

On Phones and Tablets

1. Choose **Email Log File**. It is in the account menu, on a phone it is under **Support** in the menu the settings button opens, and it is also on the sign-in screen, for when you can't sign in.
2. TheBrain starts an email to **support@thebrain.com** with the log file attached. Add a description of the problem and send it.

If no mail account is set up on the device, TheBrain tells you so and opens the share sheet instead, so you can send the log file with another app.



- If the mobile app has saved note recovery files because a note could not be saved, you send those to support separately — see Note Recovery Files.

Related Topics

- Managing Your Account

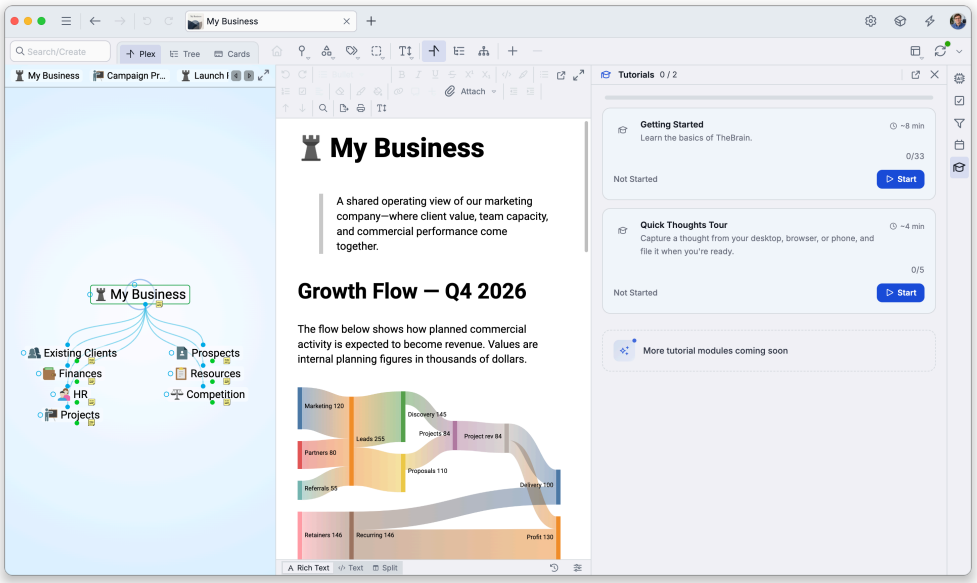
11.2 Tutorials

Overview

The **Tutorials** panel is home to TheBrain's interactive lessons. Each lesson is a module you can start, resume, or replay, and the panel tracks how far you've gotten through each one — so you can learn at your own pace and pick up where you left off.

Opening Tutorials

Open the **Interactive Tutorials** panel from the tools panel (its header reads simply **Tutorials**). Each module shows its status — **Not Started**, **In Progress**, or **Completed** — with how many steps you've finished, and buttons to **Start**, **Resume**, **Restart**, or **Replay** as appropriate.



On a phone there is no tools panel. Open a brain, tap the **settings** button at the right end of the toolbar (a gear icon), and choose **Support > Interactive Tutorials**; the panel opens in a dialog over the page. **Interactive Tutorials** is only offered while a brain is open.

Which Tutorials Are in the Panel

- **Getting Started** — The interactive walkthrough that has you build a first brain step by step (about 8 minutes; see Onboarding Walkthrough). It is not available on phones or tablets.
- **Quick Thoughts Tour** — A short video tour of capturing quick thoughts from your desktop, browser, or phone and filing them into a brain (about 4 minutes; see Quick Thoughts). It is listed when you are signed in and Quick Thoughts is available in the app you are using, and it also runs on phones and tablets.

The panel lists only the tutorials that can run on the device you are using, so on a phone or tablet it shows the **Quick Thoughts Tour** alone. You can also start that tour with **Take the tour** on the card the Quick Thoughts panel shows while your inbox is empty, until you have completed the tour.



- Below the list, the panel shows a "More tutorial modules coming soon" note.
- Separately, **Video Tutorials** (in the Help menu) open TheBrain's tutorial videos on the web — those are external videos rather than the in-app interactive lessons here.

Related Topics

- Cerebro — TheBrain's AI Assistant

11.3 Onboarding Walkthrough

Overview

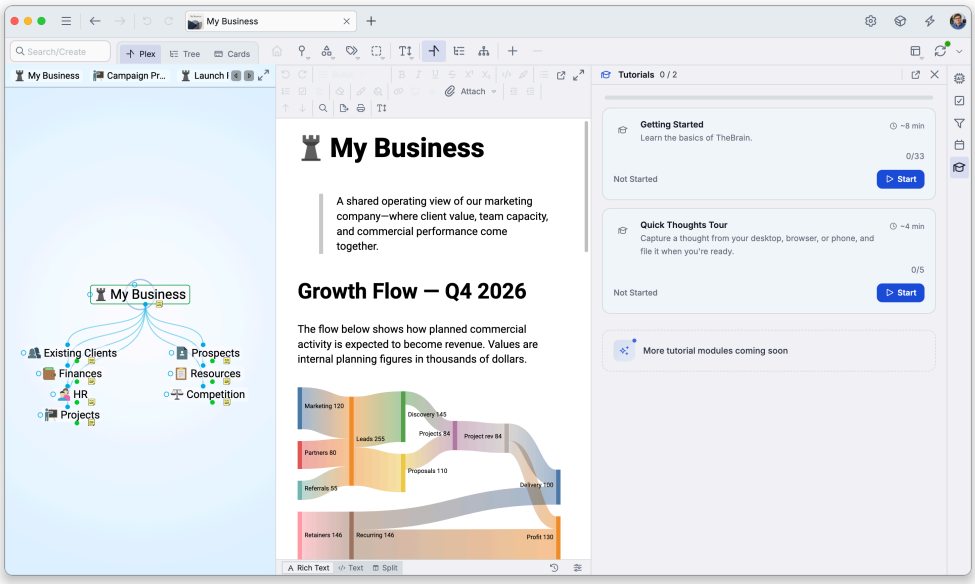
The **Getting Started** walkthrough is an interactive, in-app tour that teaches the basics of TheBrain by having you do them — create your first brain, add and link thoughts, and meet the main parts of the interface. It's the fastest way for a newcomer to get oriented. The walkthrough runs on the desktop and web apps; it isn't available on phones or tablets, whether in the mobile apps or in a browser.

Starting the Walkthrough

The walkthrough does not start by itself, even for a new user. You start it in one of these ways:

- **Get Started** — While you have no brains yet, the brains list shows a **Welcome to TheBrain** screen with a **Get Started** button, which launches the walkthrough. You see this screen after you sign in or continue as a guest; the button is not on the login screen.
- **Main Menu > Help > Getting Started** — Available at any time. It always begins again at the first step.
- **The Tutorials panel** — Choose **Start**, or **Resume** to continue a run you left unfinished (see Tutorials).

It takes about **8 minutes**. If you aren't signed in, as when you use TheBrain as a guest, the walkthrough first asks you to sign in so that Cerebro can help you along the way: choose **Login** to sign in, or **No thanks** to go on without it.



As you go, use **Back** and **Next** to move between steps, **Skip** to jump ahead, and **Done** to finish. Your progress is remembered, so you can leave and resume where you left off. An unfinished run can also pick up again when you return to the brains list, if the step you stopped on belongs there.

What It Covers

The tour walks through creating and naming a brain, the Plex, creating and linking thoughts (children, parents, and jumps), the content area and notes, the thought header, attachments, the toolbars, and an introduction to **Cerebro**, TheBrain's AI assistant. It ends by letting you keep the brain you built or start fresh.



- For the broader set of interactive lessons, see Tutorials.

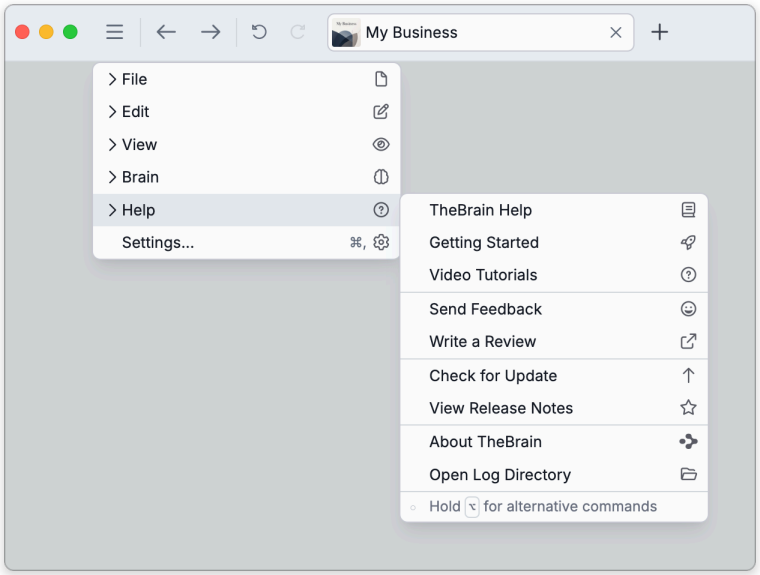
11.4 App Updates

Overview

The desktop app has a built-in updater that brings you fixes and new features. You can check for an update on demand, choose how cautious or cutting-edge your updates are with an **update channel**, and decide whether it checks for updates each time it starts. (The web app is always up to date — there's nothing to install. On mobile, update through the **App Store** or **Google Play**; there's no in-app updater or Updates settings tab.)

Checking for Updates

Choose **Main Menu > Help > Check for Update** (on the Mac desktop app it is also **TheBrain > Check for Updates...** in the menu bar). TheBrain checks your channel and, when a newer version is found, shows a prompt with that version's number and release notes. Click **Download**; when the download is ready, TheBrain offers to restart to finish installing. (Installing is always a manual step: you download, then confirm the restart.) When an update can't be downloaded inside the app, the button reads **Learn More** instead and opens the download page in your browser. If you're already current, it tells you so.



Which Version You Have

To see the version you are running now, open **About TheBrain**, in the account menu at the top right or in **Main Menu > Help** (on the Mac desktop app, in the **TheBrain** menu of the menu bar). **View Release Notes**, in **Main Menu > Help**, opens the release notes. See Getting Help and Support.

Update Settings

In **Settings > Device > Updates** you can set:

- **Check for updates on startup** — whether the app looks for updates each time it launches: **Always**, **Only free updates**, or **Never**.
- **Update channel** — **Stable** (recommended), **Beta** for earlier access to new features, or **Alpha** for the earliest, least-tested builds (flagged "experts only").

On Linux, when TheBrain is installed as a `.deb` or `.rpm` package, updates go through your **system package manager** (for example `sudo apt upgrade` or `sudo dnf upgrade`) rather than the in-app updater, and these two settings are hidden.

- App updates keep the *software* current; your brains stay current through sync (see Syncing Brains).

- Staying up to date can matter for opening brains too: a brain updated by a newer version of TheBrain on another device may refuse to open in an older copy — the app says **This brain needs a newer version of TheBrain** and names the version required.

11.5 Data Integrity Scan

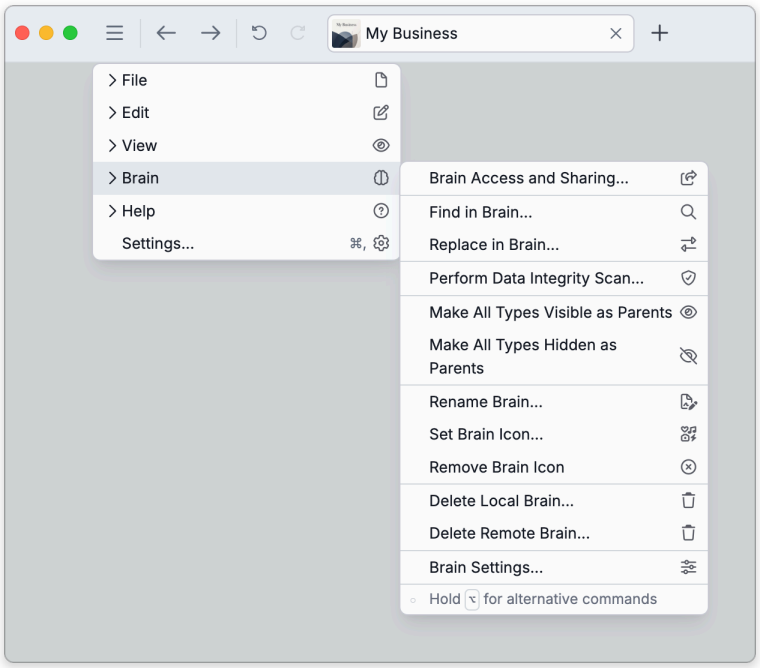
Overview

Over time, and especially after syncing across devices or after a troubled import, a brain can pick up small inconsistencies — a missing attachment file, an illegal name, a broken link. The **Data Integrity Scan** checks a brain for these errors and repairs them, helping keep a brain healthy. It's available on the desktop and mobile apps, requires **admin** rights on the brain, and works on a brain that is on this device (a brain that is only in the cloud has to be downloaded first).

How to Run a Scan

1. Open **Main Menu > Brain > Perform Data Integrity Scan**. You can also right-click the brain in the brains list and choose it under **Maintenance**; on a phone, tap the menu button at the left end of the toolbar and look under **More Actions** on the **Actions** tab.
2. The scan starts as soon as the dialog opens, without a confirmation — it can take a while on a large brain.
3. When it finishes, review the results. Most issues are already fixed by then; anything needing your decision is listed so you can select it and resolve it.

Restart Scan runs the scan again.



What It Checks

The scan looks for problems such as missing or duplicate attachment files, illegal attachment names, invalid characters in thought names and labels, broken or invalid links, a missing home thought, and similar structural issues — repairing what it safely can.

What It Changes on Its Own

The scan does not ask before each repair. These are made automatically, and each is reported in the results list or under **Additional Messages**:

- **Attachments whose file is gone** — For a file stored in the brain, the attachment entry is removed when the file is missing on this device and, for a synced brain, missing in the cloud as well. A brain that is only on this device has no cloud copy to check, so the entry is removed directly.
- **Duplicate attachment entries** — When two entries on the same thought or link point to the same file, the newest is kept and the other removed.
- **Invalid links** — A link from a thought to itself, or to a thought that no longer exists, is deleted, and duplicate links between the same two thoughts are merged into one.
- **Partly deleted items** — A thought, link, or attachment that a failed delete left half-removed is restored.

- **Thought names** — An empty name becomes "Repaired Thought" followed by a few characters, line breaks and tabs in a name are replaced with spaces, and names and labels that are too long are shortened.

Two kinds of finding wait for you: an attachment with an unsafe name, which offers **Rename** (and **Delete**, when the name contains illegal characters), and a missing home thought, which offers **Create Home Thought**.

For a synced brain, the scan has to reach the cloud before it removes an entry for a missing file. While you are offline it leaves those entries alone and reports that the server could not be checked.



- TheBrain sometimes points you here directly — for example, a sync error about attachments with unsafe names offers a **Run Scan** button, and failed attachment downloads suggest running a scan.
- In some desktop menus this command appears as **Verify Data Integrity** rather than "Perform Data Integrity Scan" — it's the same scan.
- A separate maintenance task rebuilds the *search index* rather than checking data — see Rebuilding the Search Index.

Related Topics

- Syncing Brains
- Brain Statistics