STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE

Build an AI That Never Forgets

Claude Code + Obsidian, step by step

Set up a personal AI with permanent memory,
a knowledge vault it keeps organised for you,
and a one-click way to feed it anything you find online.

Beginner · 45–60 min · Claude Code + Obsidian · Claude Pro (~£18/mo)

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One system at a time. Built, not theorised.

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The Game Plan

Every chat AI you have ever used forgets you the moment you close the window. This guide fixes that. You will connect Claude Code (an AI that can read and write files on your computer) to Obsidian (a free note app that stores everything as plain text). The notes become the AI's memory. Close it, reopen it next week, and it picks up exactly where you left off — your preferences, your projects, your reminders.

Where this idea comes from

The wiki half is Andrej Karpathy's "LLM Wiki" idea. Rather than organising notes by hand, you feed raw material into a folder and let an AI coding agent act as the system's engineer: it reads what you dropped in, writes cross-linked wiki pages in its own words, and keeps a master index current. You supply the raw material; the agent does the filing.

The memory half is Jared Rhod's AI Memory Vault — the trick of pointing the AI's own memory at your Obsidian vault so it remembers you between sessions instead of starting cold every time.

This guide puts the two together and builds them by hand, so nothing is a black box.

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NOTE

Credit where it is due: the wiki concept is Andrej Karpathy's LLM Wiki; the permanent-memory setup follows Jared Rhod's free AI Memory Vault (youtube.com/watch?v=eLoDzz-aRY8). Neither is a product you buy — both are ideas you assemble yourself, which is exactly what you are about to do.

Who this is for

Non-technical people. If you can install an app and copy-paste, you can do this. No coding. And if the terminal puts you off, there is a desktop-app route in Step 2 that avoids it entirely.

Why it works

- Claude Code automatically reads a file called CLAUDE.md every time it starts — that file becomes your AI's permanent rulebook.
- Memory is stored as ordinary notes you can open, read and edit in Obsidian. No black box — you can literally watch your AI's brain grow.
- Everything lives on your own computer, not in someone else's cloud.

What You Need

Item	What it's for	Cost
Claude Pro subscription	Powers Claude Code, the AI itself	~£18/month
Claude desktop app	The no-terminal way to run Claude Code (Step 2, Route A)	Free with your plan
Obsidian	The note app — your AI's memory	Free
Obsidian Web Clipper	Browser extension to save web pages into the vault	Free
A computer	Windows or Mac, either works	—

Set aside 45–60 minutes. You will finish with a working system, not homework.

STEP 01

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Install Obsidian and Create Your Vault

Go to obsidian.md and download Obsidian for your computer. Install it and open it. Click Create new vault, give it a name (something like "My vault"), and choose where it lives — Documents is fine. That's it: a vault is just a folder of text files with a nice app on top.

TIP

Everything you and your AI create will be plain markdown files inside this folder. You own them. If you stopped using every tool in this guide tomorrow, your notes would still open in any text editor.

STEP 02

Connect Claude to Your Vault

You need Claude Code — the version of Claude that can read and write files on your computer. Ordinary chat Claude cannot do this; it only talks. There are two ways to get it, and they end up in the same place. Pick one.

Route A — The Claude desktop app (no terminal)

The gentler route. Download the Claude app from claude.ai/download, install it, and sign in with your Claude account. Claude Code is built into the desktop app, so there is nothing else to install. Start a Claude Code session in the app, and when it asks which folder to work in, choose your vault folder from Step 1. Approve the permission prompt so it can read and write there. Done — skip to Step 3.

Route B — The terminal

Go to claude.com/claude-code and follow the install instructions for your computer (copy the command shown, paste it into Terminal on Mac or PowerShell on Windows, press Enter). Then boot your AI from inside the vault folder by pasting these two lines, changing the path to wherever you created your vault:

```
cd "C:\Users\YourName\Documents\My vault"
claude
```

First boot only: pick a colour theme, choose to log in with your Claude account (option 1), approve the login in your browser, accept the recommended settings, and say yes when it asks to trust the folder. You are now talking to your AI — and it can see your vault.

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BEFORE YOU CONTINUE

Whichever route you took, make sure you are on the smartest model your plan offers before running the setup prompts — use the model selector in the desktop app, or type /model in the terminal. Setup is a one-off job. It makes no sense to do it with a weaker model when a better one is included in your plan.

TIP

Every prompt in this guide works identically on both routes. The only difference is how you start the session: opening the app and choosing the folder, or typing two lines in a terminal.

STEP 03

Teach It the Folder Structure

Now you give your AI its filing system and its standing orders. The design is deliberately simple: one folder is the inbox (raw), one folder is the organised knowledge (wiki), and the folder a file sits in tells you its status. Nothing gets processed twice, nothing gets lost, and you can see the state of everything at a glance in Obsidian.

- raw/ — the drop zone. Anything you want the AI to read goes here: articles, transcripts, notes, files containing just a link.
- raw/_processed/ — where sources move after the AI has read them. Originals are archived, never deleted.
- wiki/ — the AI's organised insight notes, linked together like a personal Wikipedia.
- index.md — the master map. Every wiki note gets a line here.
- ideas.md — an idea pipeline the AI feeds as it reads.
- log.md — a history of everything ever processed.
- CLAUDE.md — the rulebook. Claude Code reads this automatically at the start of every session, which is what makes the whole system stick.

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PROMPT — COPY & PASTE INTO CLAUDE CODE

Set up this folder as my personal knowledge vault. Create: a raw/ folder (drop zone for unprocessed sources), raw/_processed/ (where sources are moved after processing), a wiki/ folder with subfolders topics/, playbook/, audience/ and channel/ (for organised insight notes), index.md (a master map listing every wiki note), ideas.md (an idea pipeline with Hot, Backlog, Made and Killed sections) and log.md (a processing history, newest first). Then write a CLAUDE.md file at the vault root instructing you to follow this protocol in every future session: when I say "ingest", read each file in raw/, distil it into short, practical wiki notes connected with [[wikilinks]], prefer enriching an existing note over creating a near-duplicate, add worthwhile ideas to ideas.md, update index.md, record what you did in log.md, then move the source file into raw/_processed/. If a new source contradicts an existing note, record both claims and flag it rather than overwriting. Keep notes short, concrete and in plain English. Confirm the structure once it is built.

MAKE IT YOURS

The four wiki subfolders here suit a content creator (topics, playbook, audience, channel). Swap them for whatever fits your world — clients, recipes, research, property — by editing the prompt before you paste it.

STEP 04

Switch On Permanent Memory

Claude Code keeps a small memory folder of its own, hidden away in a system directory you would never look in. This step redirects it into your vault, so the single source of truth for everything your AI knows sits where you can see it in Obsidian. It also adds daily notes — a diary the AI writes as it works — so every session ends with a record of what was done and what is still open.

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PROMPT — COPY & PASTE INTO CLAUDE CODE

Give yourself permanent memory inside this vault. Create a memory/ folder (one fact per note, with an INDEX.md listing every memory) and a daily/ folder (one note per working day, named YYYY-MM-DD.md, with three headings: Done, Decisions, Open loops). Add these continuity rules to CLAUDE.md: at the start of every session, read memory/INDEX.md and the most recent daily note before the first task; during every session, update today's daily note as significant work completes rather than waiting until the end, and carry unresolved open loops forward from the previous note; whenever I state a durable preference, correction or fact worth keeping, write it to memory/ immediately and add a line to INDEX.md; if I edit a memory note directly, my edit wins. Finally, replace the contents of your native Claude Code memory file for this project with a short redirect stating that there is no separate memory layer and the single source of truth is this vault's memory/ folder. Show me the redirect file when you are done, then create today's daily note as the first entry, recording this setup.

TIP

Test it immediately: tell it "remember that I prefer short answers" and watch a note appear in memory/ inside Obsidian. That folder is your AI's brain — readable, editable, yours.

NOTE FOR DESKTOP APP USERS

The Claude app has its own chat memory in Settings, and it is a separate thing from this vault. Nothing syncs between them. Your vault memory is what Claude Code reads when it works in your folder — that is the one this guide builds, and the one you can see and edit.

STEP 05

Add a Private Personal Folder

Life admin needs a home too — car service dates, appointments, renewal reminders. It deserves a walled-off folder that the AI treats differently: never processed into the knowledge wiki, never referenced in anything it writes for other people, never published anywhere. Business information may flow in; personal information never flows out.

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PROMPT — COPY & PASTE INTO CLAUDE CODE

Create a personal/ folder for my private notes and reminders, and add these rules to CLAUDE.md: personal/ sits outside every other workflow — never ingest from it, never mention its contents in wiki notes or any content you produce, and never publish it. Keep one topic per note (for example Car.md or Health.md), with dated reminders under an "Upcoming" heading and lasting facts under a "Reference" heading. When I ask "anything coming up?", check personal/ for dated items and tell me what is due. Never store account numbers, policy numbers, card details or passwords anywhere in this vault — amounts and dates only. Start the folder with one note containing my first reminder, which is: [type your reminder here, e.g. "Car service booked Friday 28th at Millers Garage — ask them to check the brakes"].

KEEP OUT OF THE VAULT

Passwords, bank details, card numbers and account numbers do not belong in any note system an AI reads. Use a password manager for those. Amounts, dates and provider names are fine.

STEP 06

Install the Obsidian Web Clipper

This is how the vault gets fed without any effort. The Web Clipper is Obsidian's official browser extension — it saves any web page as a note, straight into your vault. Combined with your ingest protocol, reading something interesting becomes: clip it, carry on with your day, say "ingest" later.

- Open the Chrome Web Store and search for "Obsidian Web Clipper" (the official one, by Obsidian). Click Add to Chrome.
- Pin it to your toolbar, click its icon, then open its settings (the gear).
- Choose your vault, and change Note location from "Clippings" to "raw" — so clips land straight in your AI's inbox.
- On any article or video page: click the clipper icon, then Add to vault. Done.
- Next time you boot Claude Code, type: ingest

COMMON MISTAKE

Obsidian must be running for clips to save into the vault. If a clip seems to vanish, open Obsidian and clip again. And if you skip the settings change, clips land in a folder called Clippings — tell your AI to treat that folder as a second inbox, or just move the files into raw/.

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Validation

Prove to yourself the memory is real before you trust it. Close the terminal completely, reopen it, boot Claude Code from your vault folder again, and run through this checklist:

- ✓ Ask "what do you remember about me?" — it should answer from memory/, without you repeating anything
- ✓ Check daily/ in Obsidian — yesterday's note should list what you did and any open loops
- ✓ Clip any article, say "ingest" — a wiki note appears, the source moves to raw/_processed/, and log.md records it
- ✓ Ask "anything coming up?" — it should surface the reminder from your personal folder
- × It asks you to re-explain your setup or preferences from scratch

If any check fails, say so plainly in the session ("you didn't read your memory first") — the AI will fix its own CLAUDE.md rules when you point at the gap. That is the quiet superpower of this system: the rulebook is just a file, and the AI can edit it.

Keep Building

The vault you have is a foundation. Here is where it can go next — each of these is one conversation with your AI, in whatever order suits you:

- Name your assistant. Create a second folder beside the vault (not inside it), ask Claude Code to write a CLAUDE.md there giving the agent a name and pointing it at the vault's memory. Boot from that folder and you have a personal assistant — same brain, its own workspace.
- Track your tools and money. Ask for a stack/ folder with a Tool Stack note: every subscription, what it is for, what it costs, with a total at the top. Then add a private Costs note in personal/ for the household side.
- Teach it your voice. Add a brand/ folder holding your mission and how you like to write. Add a CLAUDE.md rule that everything it produces must follow those documents.
- Build the habit. Clip things all week, say "ingest" when you sit down, glance at ideas.md before planning anything. The system compounds — every week it knows more.
- Ask it to improve itself. Once a month, ask: "read your own CLAUDE.md — what rules are missing based on how we actually work?"

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BONUS

Everything in this guide was set up live in a single session — including the vault that produced this very PDF. The system documents itself: the session that built it is recorded in its own daily note.

Quick Reference

You want to	Do this
Boot your AI (app)	Open the Claude app → start Claude Code → choose your vault folder
Boot your AI (terminal)	cd "[vault path]" → claude
Pick the smartest model	Model selector in the app, or /model in the terminal
Feed it something	Clip with the Web Clipper, or drop any file into raw/
Process the inbox	Say: ingest
Make it remember a fact	Say: remember that [fact]
Check your reminders	Say: anything coming up?
See what it knows	Open memory/ and daily/ in Obsidian
Change how it behaves	Ask it to edit CLAUDE.md — or edit the file yourself

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