The Series Catch-Up & Recap Journal

Return to any series after months - or years - away

Free sample - three real pages: The Catch-Up Method, Book Recaps I (Books 1-3) and Open Threads & the 'Previously On...' Briefing. Print at 100% on US Letter or A4.

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How This Journal Works - The Catch-Up Method

Four steps, in order, per series (journal p.3). An evening per series, most of it with a cup of something and your old copies. Then the next book opens like a door, not a wall.

1. RECAP - rebuild the story so far.

Kit page 1 maps the series; kit pages 2-3 rebuild each book you finished into a tight recap: what happened in ten lines, how it ended, and what future-you must not forget. Work from evidence, not vibes. A recap is a reconstruction record - you are allowed to look things up on your side of the Spoiler Line; that is the entire point.

2. CAST - rebuild the people.

Kit page 4: every character who matters, who they are in one line, whether they're alive, dead, missing or unknown, what they were last seen doing, and who they're tied to. Plus the world refresher: the rules, places and timeline facts the next book will assume you know.

3. THREADS - rebuild the tension.

Kit page 5, top half: everything the author has left hanging - mysteries, prophecies, debts, promises, feuds, the object that vanished in book one. Planted in which book, moved forward where, still open or paid off.

4. RE-ENTRY - write the briefing, then read it.

Kit page 5, bottom half: distill the whole kit into a one-page 'Previously On...' written by past-you, for future-you, in plain language. Read it - plus the Spoiler-Safe Quick Check beside it - in the ten minutes before you open the next book. Then open it.

The Evidence Kit (where recaps honestly come from):

- Your own traces first: highlights, notes, old messages where you live-texted the plot to a friend, the review you wrote at the time, the bookmark still sitting in book two.
- The books themselves: chapter titles, the first and last page of each chapter, maps, glossaries, dramatis personae. Skimming your finished books is evidence-gathering, not rereading - twenty minutes a book is plenty.
- Memory, labelled as memory: anything written from memory alone gets a small m in the margin. When a memory entry and a checked entry disagree later, the checked one wins.
- Outside help, inside the line only: a friend who has read exactly as far as you, or a recap source covering only the books you finished. If a source runs past your stopping point, it is not a source. Close the tab.

> **The Spoiler Line (the journal's one law):**
> Nothing from a book you haven't finished gets written in this journal - no wiki summaries 'just for the ending,' no finale rumours, no 'quick checks' of what happens next. Every page is built from your side of the line. Break the line and the briefing stops being safe to read; keep it, and you can trust every word in the kit at 11 p.m. on re-entry night.

A full kit takes about an evening. The briefing takes ten minutes to read. Compare: rereading the series so far was going to take a month, which is why it was never going to happen.

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Book Recaps I (Books 1-3)

The heart of the kit (kit p.2). Rebuild each book from your evidence kit: your traces first, the book's own chapters and headings second, memory last and labelled. Write for the reader you will be on re-entry night - tired, keen, and missing exactly this.

Book #1 - Title: _____ Year: _____ I finished it: _____

What happened, in ten lines (plot only - if it didn't move the story, it doesn't get a line):

How it ended (the final state of things, stated flatly):

The cliffhanger / open door it left (if it ended clean, write 'ended clean'):

Future-me MUST remember (3 max - names, objects, promises, wounds, revelations): 1.

2.

3.

One scene that will bring it all back:

Recap built from: [ ] my notes/highlights [ ] the book itself (skim) [ ] memory [ ] a within-the-line source

Book #2 - Title: _____ Year: _____ I finished it: _____

What happened, in ten lines (plot only - if it didn't move the story, it doesn't get a line):

How it ended (the final state of things, stated flatly):

The cliffhanger / open door it left (if it ended clean, write 'ended clean'):

Future-me MUST remember (3 max - names, objects, promises, wounds, revelations): 1.

2.

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3.

One scene that will bring it all back:

Recap built from: [ ] my notes/highlights [ ] the book itself (skim) [ ] memory [ ] a within-the-line source

Book #3 - Title: _____ Year: _____ I finished it: _____

What happened, in ten lines (plot only - if it didn't move the story, it doesn't get a line):

How it ended (the final state of things, stated flatly):

The cliffhanger / open door it left (if it ended clean, write 'ended clean'):

Future-me MUST remember (3 max - names, objects, promises, wounds, revelations): 1.

2.

3.

One scene that will bring it all back:

Recap built from: [ ] my notes/highlights [ ] the book itself (skim) [ ] memory [ ] a within-the-line source

Stopped inside a book? Recap it only up to your stopping point, mark the block 'partial - to the line', and write nothing past where you closed it. The rest of that book is next-book territory, and its surprises are still yours.

A book you finished but cannot rebuild even from evidence: write the block anyway, honestly - 'what happened' may hold only four lines. Four true lines beat a confident invention. Mark the gap; the briefing (kit p.5) will route around it.

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Open Threads & The 'Previously On...' Briefing

The kit's payoff page (kit p.5): every loose end the author has left hanging - and the one-page briefing, written by past-you, that future-you reads in the ten minutes before opening the next book.

Part A - The Open Threads Tracker

Write the thread the way the books so far pose it - 'who took the tide-key,' never a guess dressed as a fact. Theories are welcome in the margin, marked with a ? - briefings run on facts; margins run on hunches.

The thread (mystery / prophecy / debt / promise / vanished object)	Planted in book #	Last moved in book #	Status: open / paid off / gone quiet

The thread I'm most impatient about:

Part B - The Spoiler-Safe Quick Check

Six questions, answerable only from books you've finished - the test that your memory is loaded before you trust it. Answers in brackets, small, beneath each. All six right: open the book. Any wrong: re-read only the part of this kit the question points to.

Q1. **(Answer: _____ - if wrong, re-read kit p. __)**

Q2. **(Answer: _____ - if wrong, re-read kit p. __)**

Q3. **(Answer: _____ - if wrong, re-read kit p. __)**

Q4. **(Answer: _____ - if wrong, re-read kit p. __)**

Q5. **(Answer: _____ - if wrong, re-read kit p. __)**

Q6. **(Answer: _____ - if wrong, re-read kit p. __)**

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Part C - The 'Previously On...' Briefing

Write this LAST, when the whole kit is built, in plain language and the present tense of the story, as if a kind friend who loves this series had exactly one page to get you back inside it. About 200 words. Cover, in this order: where the story stands - who matters and their honest statuses - what is unresolved and hot - the last thing that happened. No opinions, no review - briefing only.

PREVIOUSLY ON _____ (series name) - written (date): _____ - read before opening book # _

Before I open the next book, also re-read: [ ] Nothing - the briefing is enough [ ] Kit p.4 (the rules) [ ] The last chapter of

Re-entry date: _____ Briefing verdict afterwards: [ ] Walked straight back in [ ] Mostly - stumbled on:

This free sample holds three real pages of The Series Catch-Up & Recap Journal (44 pages: the Catch-Up Method, My Series at a Glance, the Master Release Watch, six complete five-page Series Kits - Overview & Story So Far, Book Recaps I & II, Who's Who & The World, Open Threads & the 'Previously On...' Briefing with its Spoiler-Safe Quick Check - the Reading Order Decoder, the New-Book Ritual, Series Finale Debriefs and the Caught-Up Shelf - US Letter, A4 and tablet editions). Its opposite-number companion is Read It Again - The Reread Journal. Both live at pagelyra.vercel.app

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