Your Home Rung

Practical AI Projects for a Smarter, Tidier, More Private Household

Companion figures for the audiobook

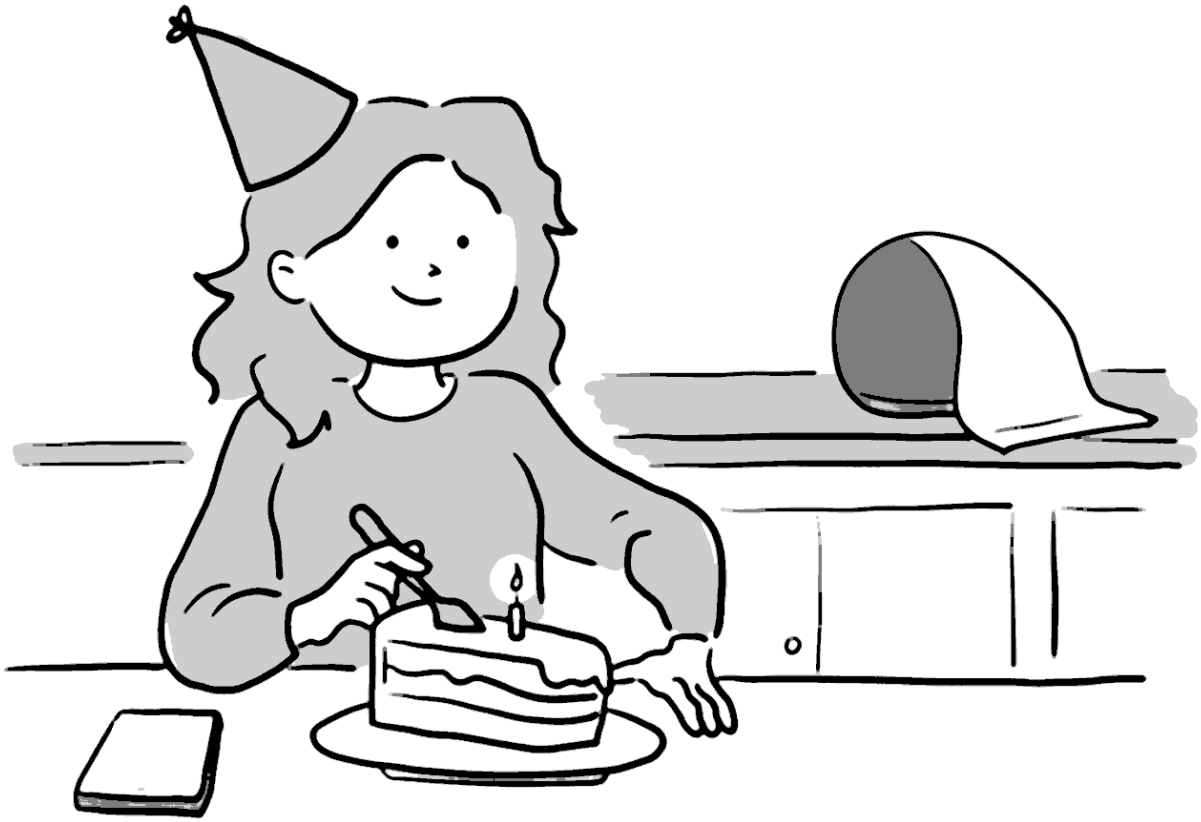
THOMAS LENNON

MIND BLOOM

About this PDF

This PDF holds every figure in the book, in the order you hear them. The narration names each figure by its number, so you can find it here while you listen. Each page shows the figure, its caption and a full description. After the figures come Glossary, For anyone who did not set this up, When technology is used to control someone and The ten checks, ready to read or print.

Figure 1.51: Cake first



The cake can go first.

Description

A cartoon of a woman at a kitchen table eating birthday cake, her phone face down beside her and a smart speaker still half wrapped in the pages of a road atlas.

TAB-01-01: THE FIVE QUESTIONS

Table 1.1: The five questions for your card.

DESCRIPTION

Table 1.1: The five questions for your card.

TAB-01-02: Where to look in Book 1

Table 1.2: Where each idea sits in Book 1.

Description

Table 1.2: Where each idea sits in Book 1.

Figure 2.1: See, Do, Undo inside the Ladder Loop

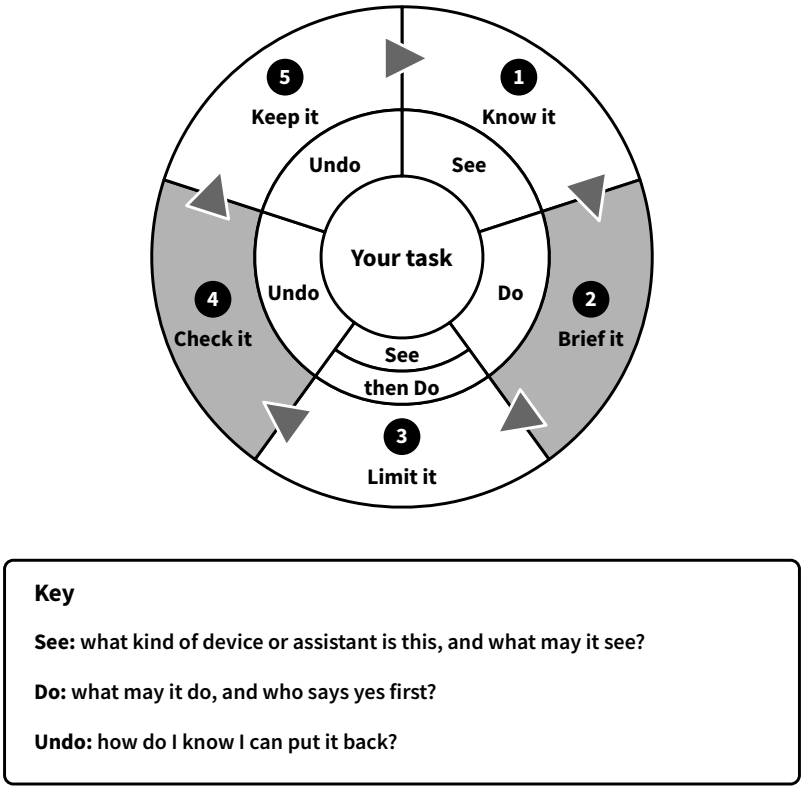


Figure 2.1: See, Do, Undo inside the Ladder Loop.

Description

A ring cut into five equal segments, read clockwise from the top: 1. Know it, 2. Brief it, 3. Limit it, 4. Check it, 5. Keep it, with Keep it leading back to Know it and the words Your task in the centre. Inside the ring runs a band of cells, one under each step. Under Know it the cell reads See. Under Brief it the cell reads Do. Under Limit it the cell is split in two and reads See then Do, because that step asks what it may see and what it may do. Under Check it and under Keep it the cells read Undo. A key outside the ring gives the three questions. See: what kind of device or assistant is this, and what may it see? Do: what may it do, and who says yes first? Undo: how do I know I can put it back?

Figure 2.2: Four routes through this book

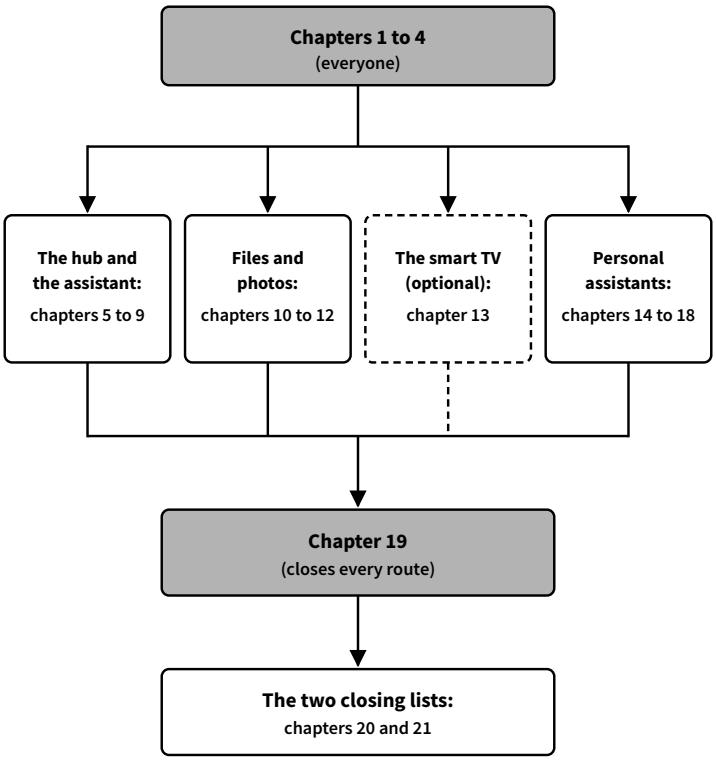


Figure 2.2: The four routes through this book.

Description

A map read from top to bottom. It starts with one box, chapters 1 to 4, which everyone reads. Four routes branch out side by side from it: the hub and the assistant, chapters 5 to 9; files and photos, chapters 10 to 12; the smart TV, chapter 13, marked optional; and personal assistants, chapters 14 to 18. The four routes join again at one box, chapter 19, which closes every route. One last box holds the two closing lists, chapters 20 and 21. The routes do not depend on each other, so you pick the one that is bothering you most.

Figure 2.51: The third call



The hall light again. Third call since lunch.

Description

A cartoon of a man at a pigeon show with a pigeon under one arm and a phone at his ear, a blank speech bubble coming from the phone while a row of pigeons in cages looks on.

Figure 2.52: Other people live here



A house has other people in it.

Description

A cartoon of a woman at a laptop, while behind her three family members each struggle with a different device: one with a lamp, one with a speaker and one with a thermostat.

TAB-02-01: A SAMPLE HOUSE RULES SHEET

Table 2.1: A sample house rules sheet with invented rows.

Description

Table 2.1: A sample house rules sheet with invented rows.

Figure 3.1: Three stages in one home

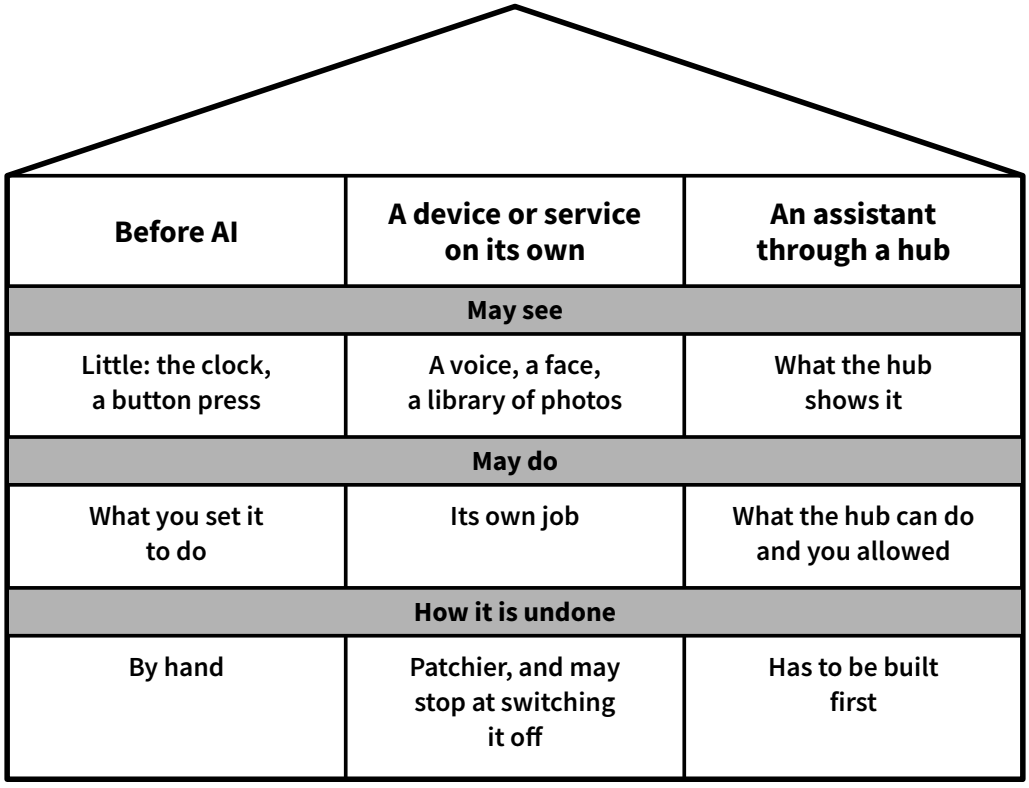
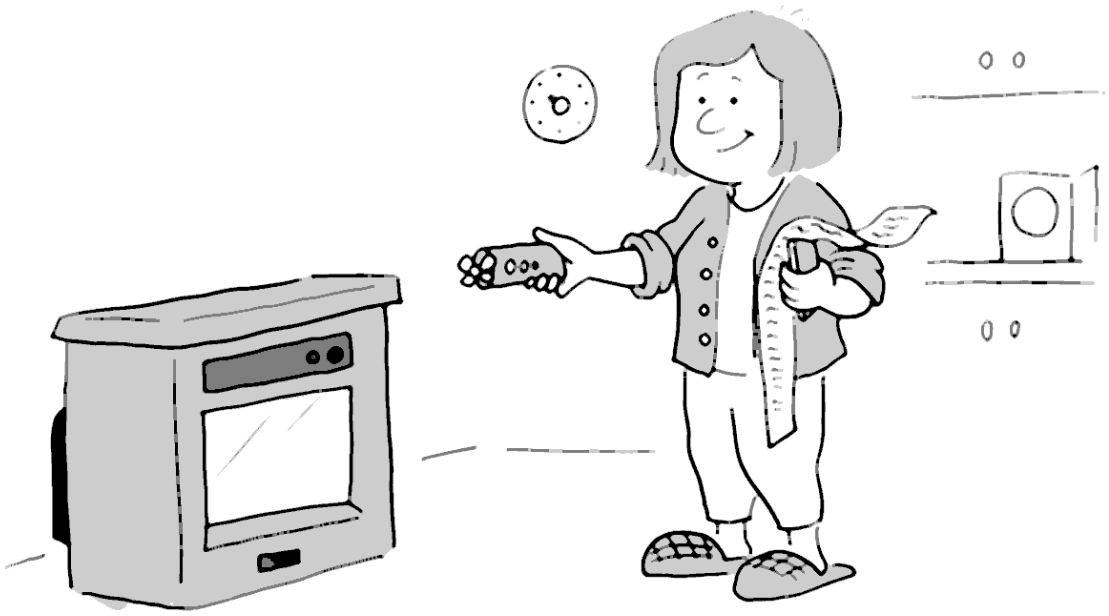


Figure 3.1: Three stages side by side in one home.

Description

The outline of one house holds three columns side by side, one for each stage of the smart home: the smart home before AI, a device or service working on its own, and an assistant acting through a hub. Under each column are three short lines: what it may see, what it may do and how it is undone. In the first column it may see little, such as the clock or a button press, it does what you set it to do, and you undo it by hand. In the second it may see a voice, a face or a library of photos, it does its own job, and the way back is patchier and may stop at switching it off. In the third it sees what the hub shows it, does what the hub can do and you allowed, and the way back has to be built first. The point: one home can hold all three stages, and each answers See, Do and Undo differently.

Figure 3.51: Never been introduced



The remote, the timer and the speaker have never been introduced.

Description

A cartoon of a woman pointing a remote tied with a hair bobble at an electric fire while scrolling down a long list on her phone, with a dial timer on the wall and a faceless speaker on a shelf.

Figure 4.1: Three ways a system can act, at home

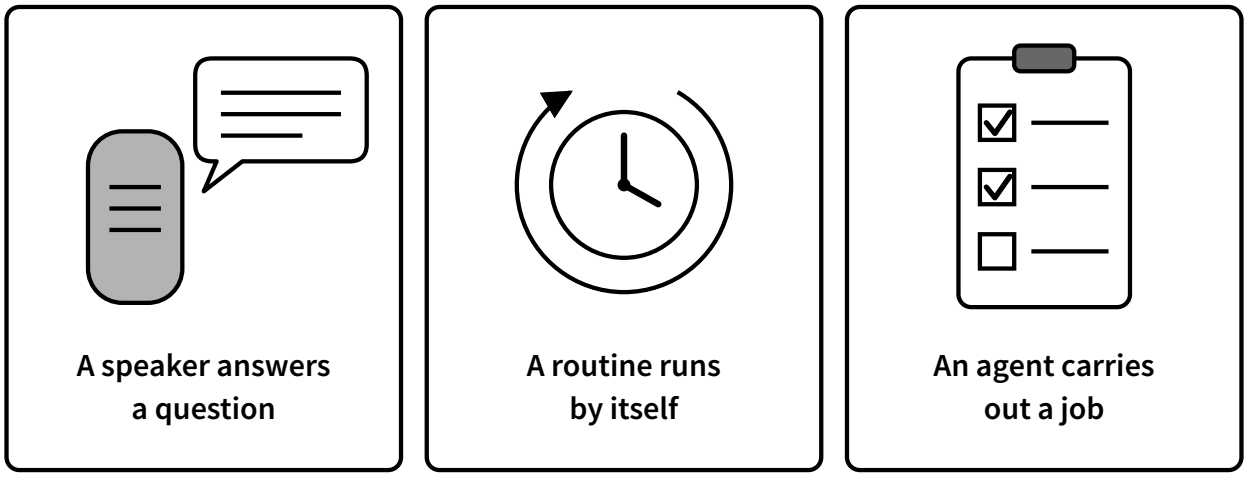


Figure 4.1: Three ways a system can act in your home.

Description

Three labelled panels side by side. The first shows a speaker that answers a question. The second shows a routine that runs by itself. The third shows an agent that carries out a job. The point: these are Book 1's three ways a system can act, applied to the home as a quick reminder.

Figure 4.2: A walk round one invented home

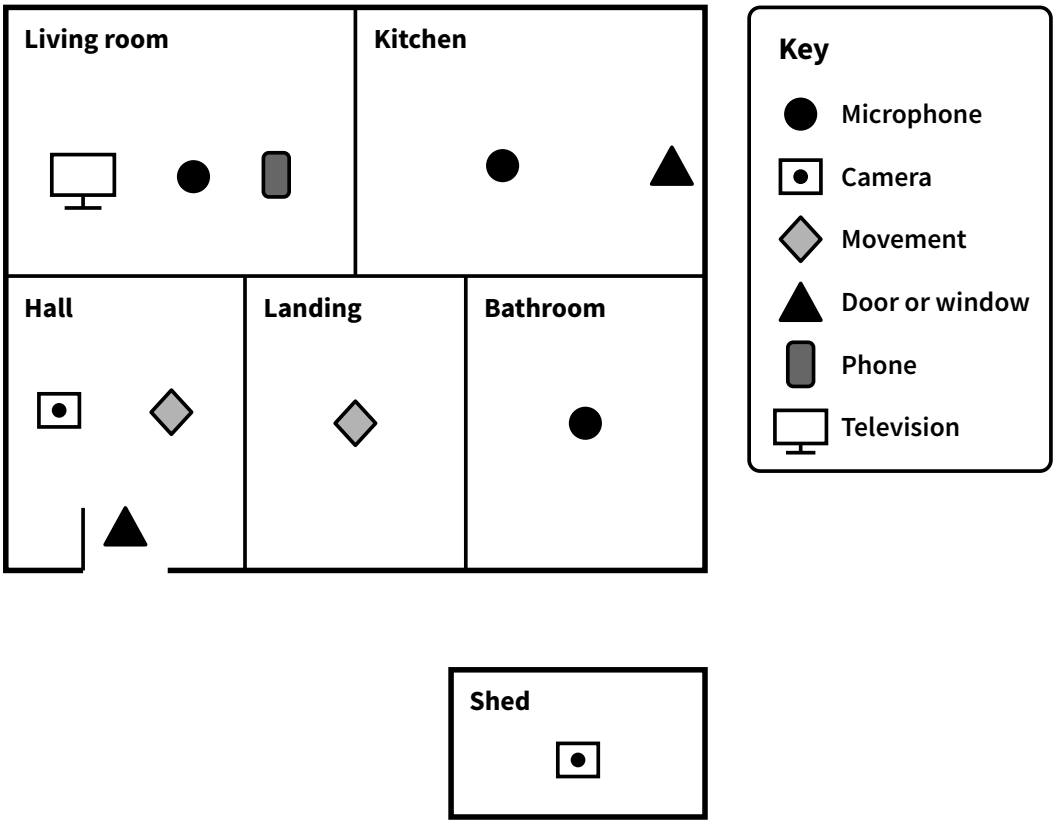


Figure 4.2: One invented home, walked room by room.

Description

A simple floor plan of a small invented home, drawn from the front door and read in the order of the walk-round, room by room. Each connected thing in a room is marked by a shape that stands for what it can sense: a microphone, a camera, movement, a door or window opening, your phone, or your television. Like things share a row, for example all the hall lamps on one line. The bathroom and the shed each hold something that would surprise the household. A small key explains the shapes. No brand, address or real name appears.

Figure 4.51: Still very welcome



The last tenant is, apparently, still very welcome.

Description

A cartoon of a woman in a hallway full of moving boxes, a rubber plant under one arm, frowning at a wall thermostat with a blank speech bubble coming from it.

Figure 4.52: Room four



Room four. The toothbrush has an app.

Description

A cartoon of a woman in a bathroom holding up an electric toothbrush with a puzzled look, while a small clipboard with a face makes a note.

tab-04-01: Kinds of sensor

Table 4.1: Kinds of sensor and what each can report.

Description

Table 4.1: Kinds of sensor and what each can report.

Figure 5.1: The router between your home and the internet

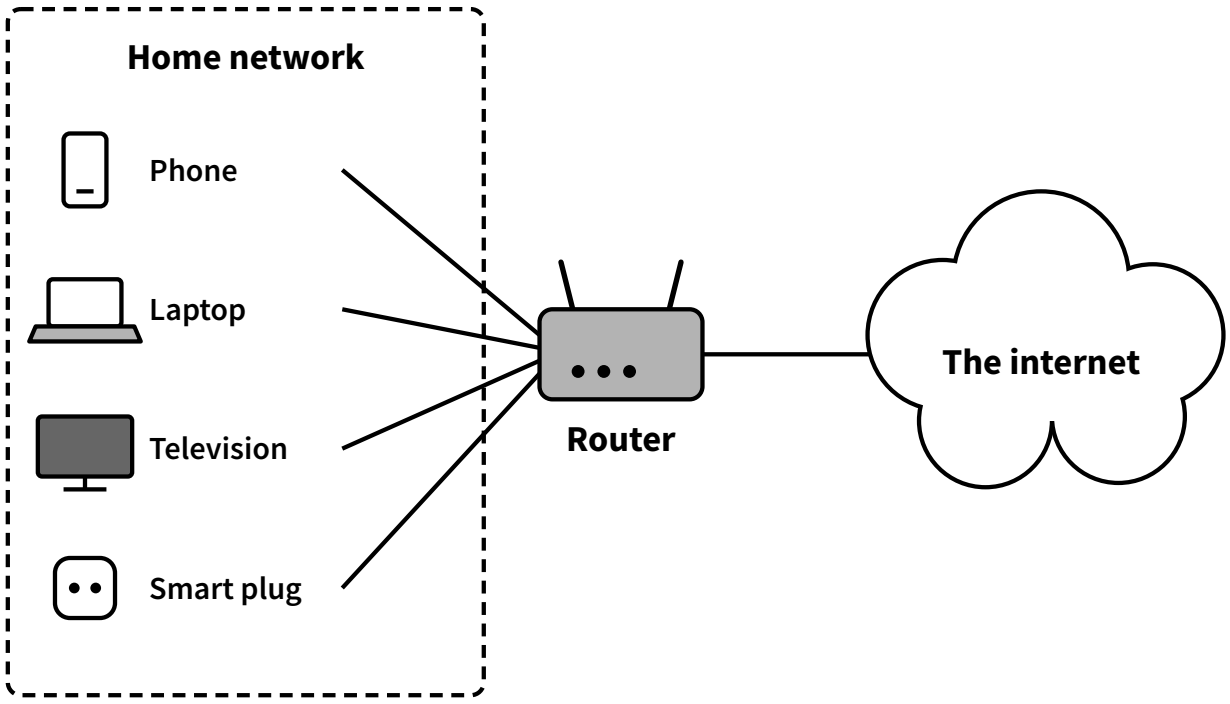


Figure 5.1: Everything on your home network reaches the internet through the router.

Description

A router sits in the middle of the picture. On the home side are a phone, a laptop, a television and a smart plug, each joined to the router by a line. On the other side is the internet, joined to the router by one line. The point: everything on your home network reaches the internet through the router, so it is the one place that everything passes.

FIGURE 5.2: TWO PASSWORDS, TWO JOBS

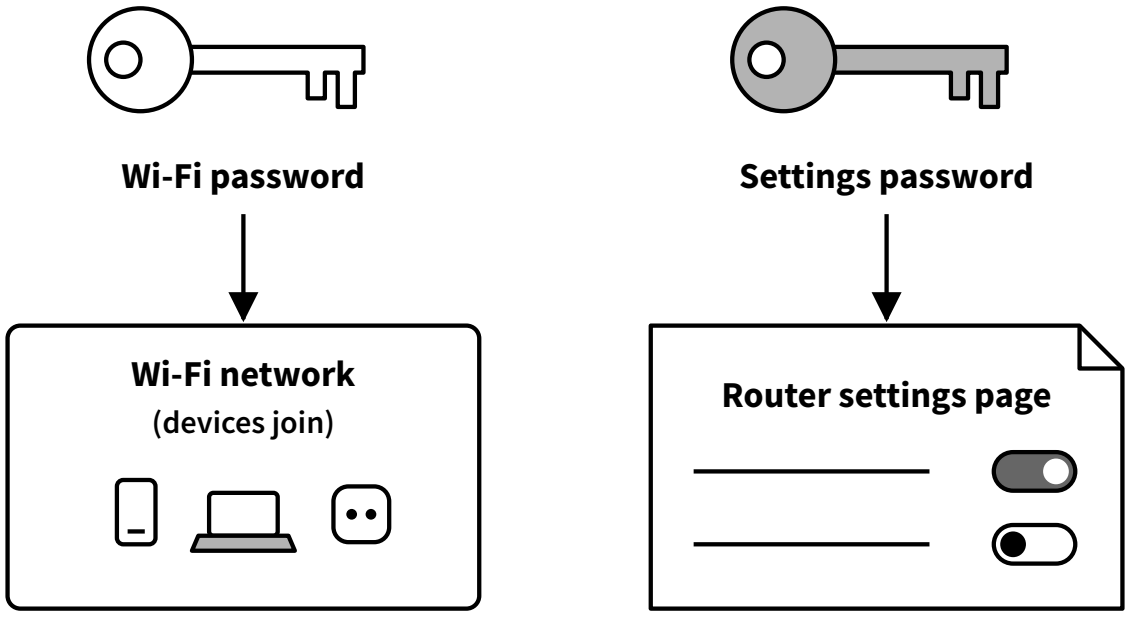


Figure 5.2: One password joins the network. The other changes the router.

DESCRIPTION

Two keys are drawn side by side, each with its own label. The first key, the Wi-Fi password, leads into the Wi-Fi network, where devices join. The second key, the settings password, leads into the router's own settings page, where a person changes how the router behaves. No password is shown. The point: one password lets a device join, and the other lets a person change the router.

Figure 5.3: Main and separate networks side by side

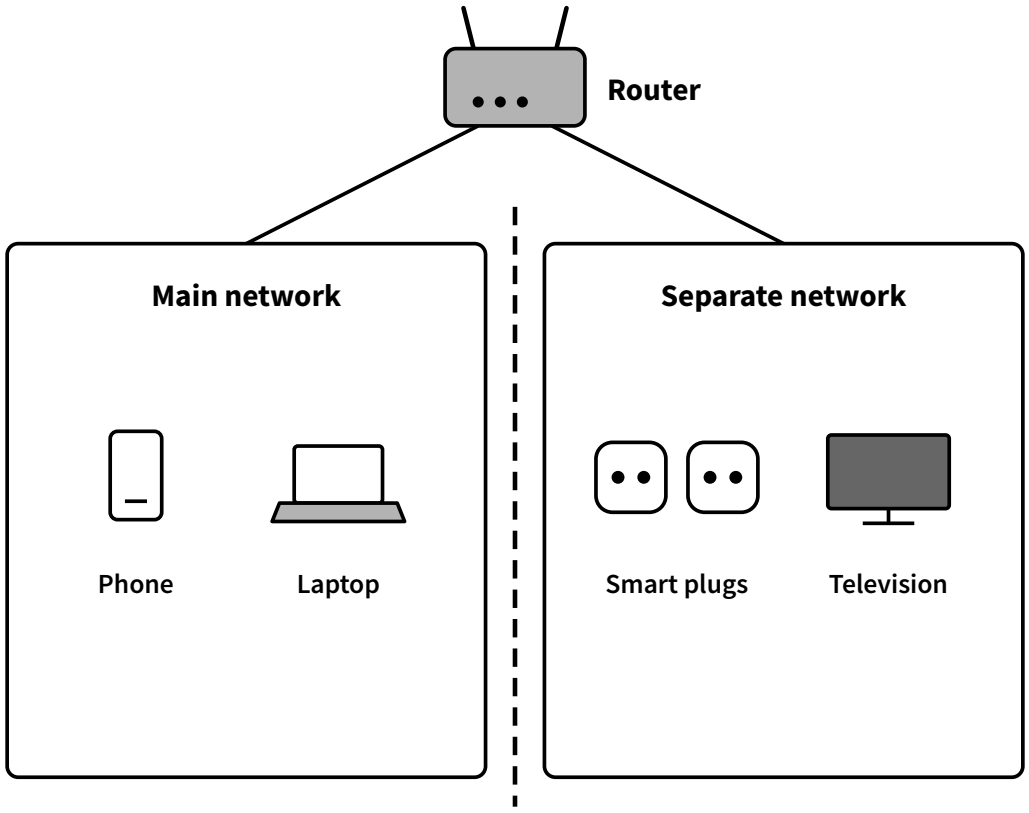


Figure 5.3: A separate network can keep devices apart, so plan where the hub sits.

Description

Two networks are drawn side by side, both coming from one router. The main network holds a phone and a laptop. The separate network holds smart plugs and a television. A dashed line between them marks the divide. The point: a separate network can keep devices apart, such as a plug away from your laptop, but it does nothing about what a device reports to its maker, because those reports still leave through the same router. The caption adds that you should plan where the hub sits; no hub is drawn, because the chapter's alt text draws none.

Figure 5.4: What still reaches out

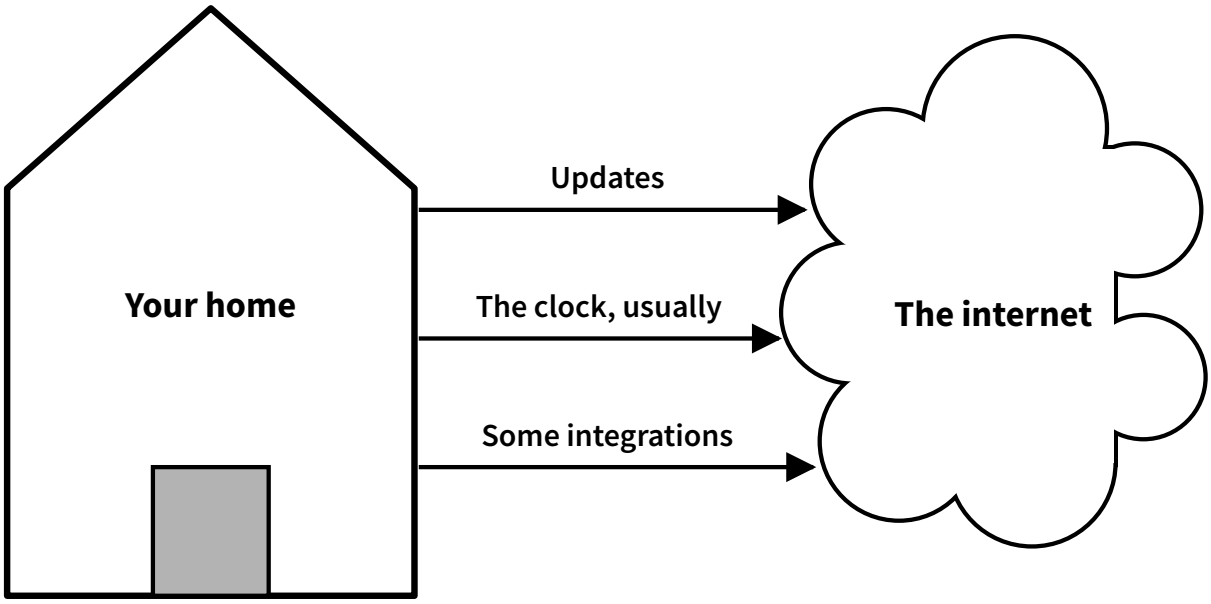
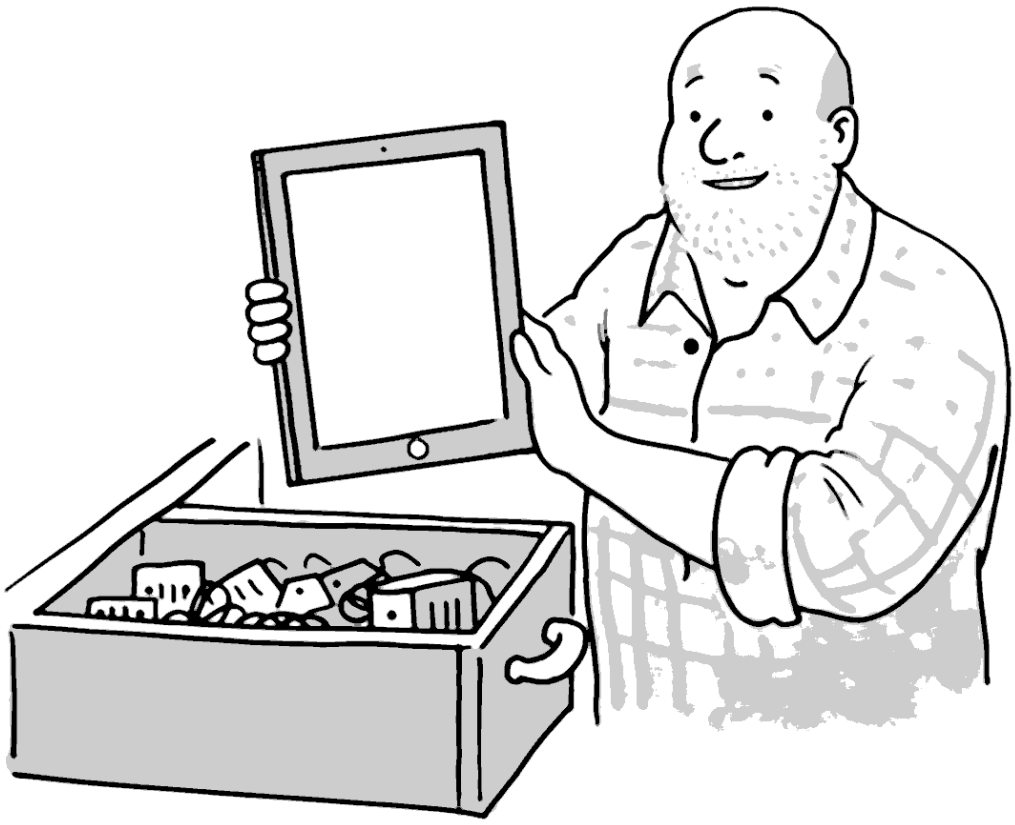


Figure 5.4: A local-first home still reaches out for a few things.

Description

A house is drawn with three labelled arrows going out of it to the internet. The first arrow is updates. The second is the clock, with the word usually, because a hub usually sets its clock over the internet but can still start without it. The third is some integrations. The point: even a local-first home reaches out for a short list of things.

Figure 5.51: Under the spare fuses



The mystery device, found under the spare fuses.

Description

A cartoon of a man at an open kitchen drawer full of fuses and string, holding up an old tablet with the expression of someone who has found treasure.

Figure 5.52: Two keys



Two keys, two doors. Neither belongs on the fridge.

Description

A cartoon of a woman standing between two doors holding two identical keys, a fridge covered in notes behind her.

FIGURE 6.1: WHERE THE DATA GOES ON EACH PATH

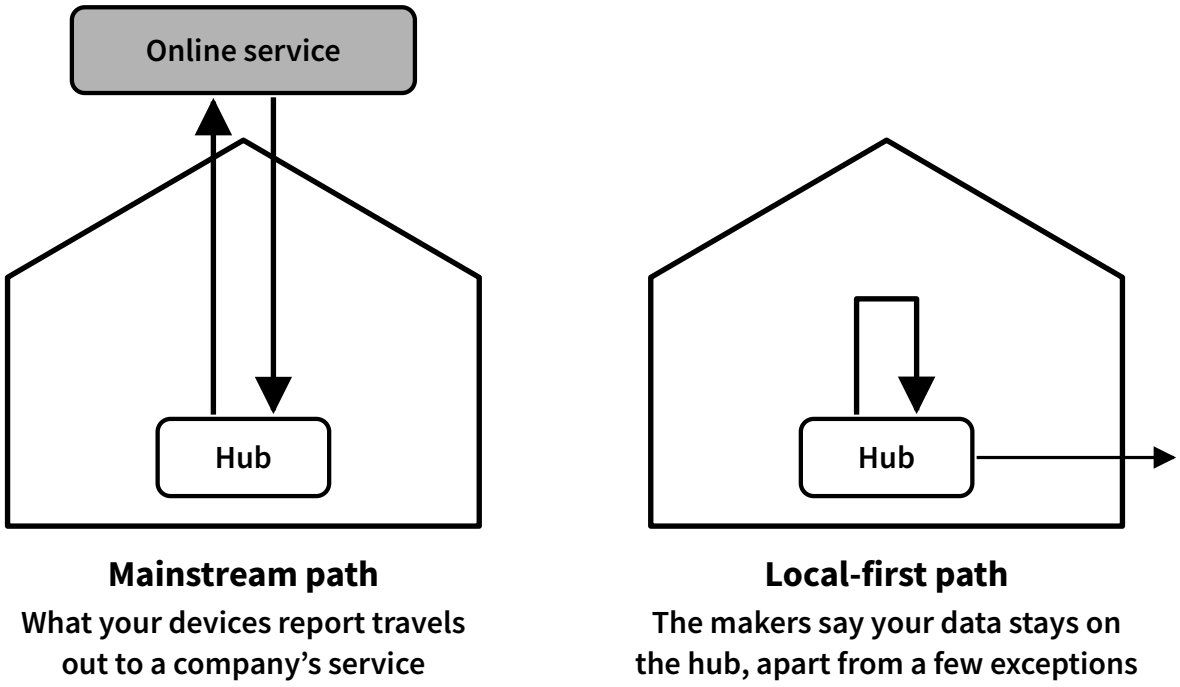


Figure 6.1: Where the data goes on each path.

DESCRIPTION

Two houses side by side, each with a hub inside. In the first, a line runs from the hub out to an online service and back. In the second, the line stays inside the house, with one thin line going out, left unlabelled. The point: on one path what your devices report travels out to a company's service; on the other the makers say your data stays on the hub, apart from a few exceptions.

FIGURE 6.2: THE SMALLEST USEFUL KIT

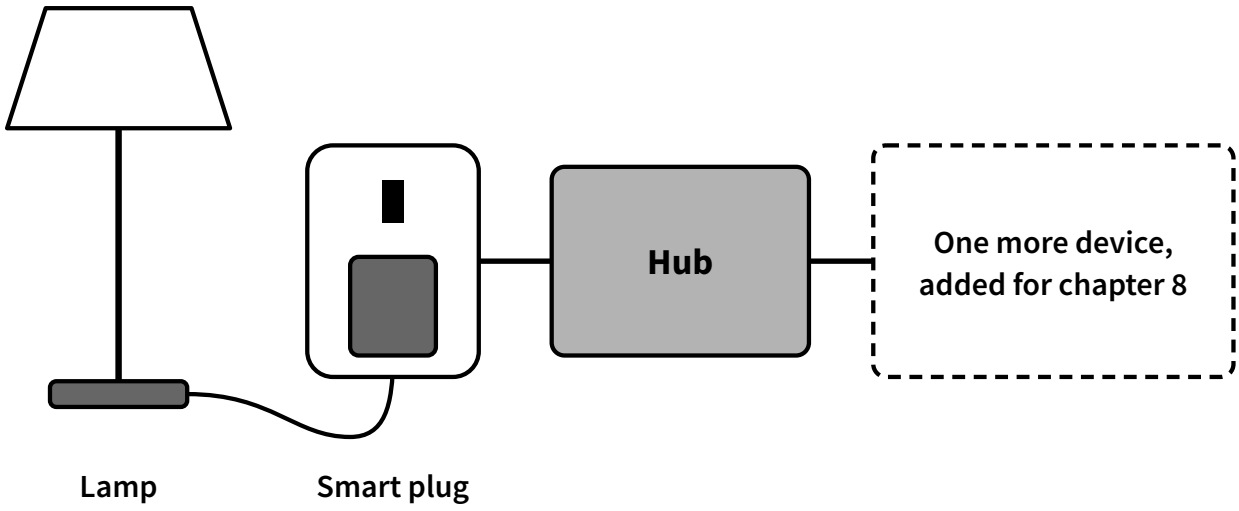


Figure 6.2: A hub, one smart plug, one lamp and one more device for chapter 8.

DESCRIPTION

A hub is drawn in the centre. One line runs from it to a smart plug, with a lamp drawn plugged into the plug. A second line runs from the hub to one more connected device, marked as added for chapter 8. The drawing does not say how the lines connect. The point: this is the smallest useful kit, and the extra device is there because the lamp stays out of the assistant's view in chapter 8.

Figure 6.51: Agree to what?



Agree. Agree. Agree. To what, exactly?

Description

A cartoon of a woman at an ironing board with a phone, a very long paper scroll running off the board and across the floor, and a half-finished jigsaw on the table behind her.

Figure 6.52: The smallest useful kit



A hub, a plug and a lamp. The rest can wait.

Description

A cartoon of a man staggering under a teetering tower of boxes, while a woman beside him calmly holds one small hub, one plug and one lamp.

TAB-06-01: THE TWO PATHS BY SEE, DO, UNDO

Table 6.1: The two paths against See, Do, Undo.

DESCRIPTION

Table 6.1: The two paths against See, Do, Undo.

Figure 7.1: Trigger, condition, action

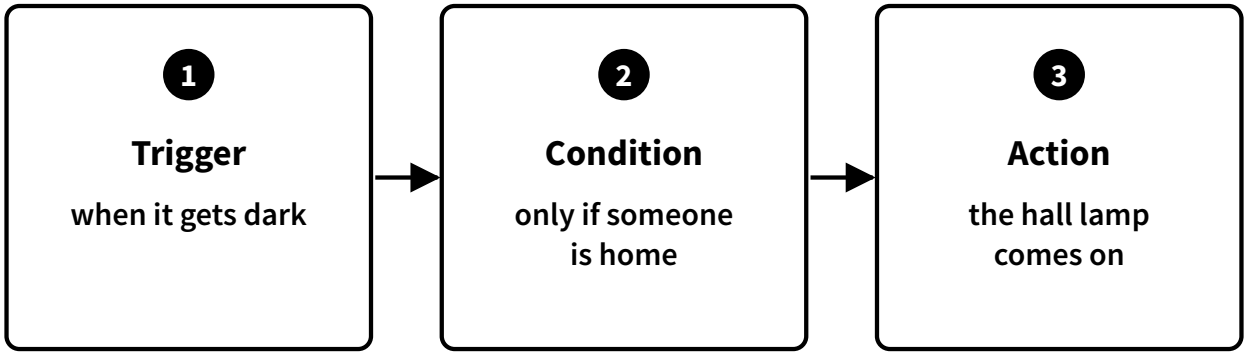


Figure 7.1: A routine has three parts: a trigger, a condition and an action.

Description

Three boxes in a row, numbered 1 to 3 and joined by arrows. Box 1, the trigger: when it gets dark. Box 2, the condition: only if someone is home. Box 3, the action: the hall lamp comes on. The point: a routine has three parts, a trigger, a condition and an action.

Figure 7.2: Dry run and real run

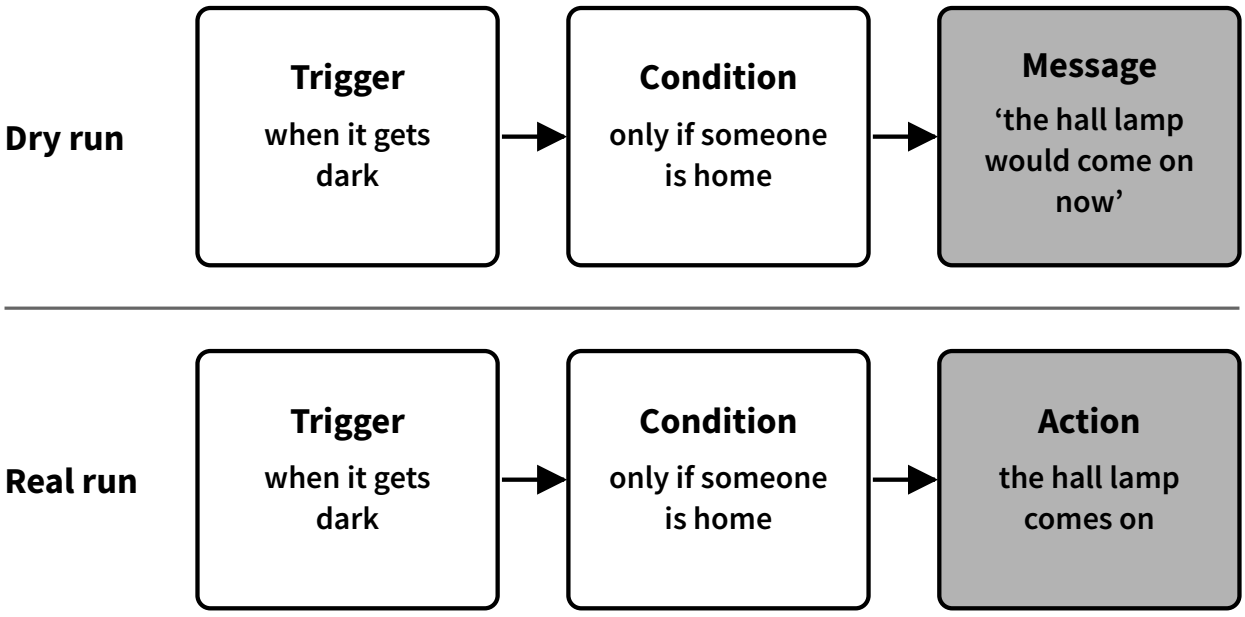
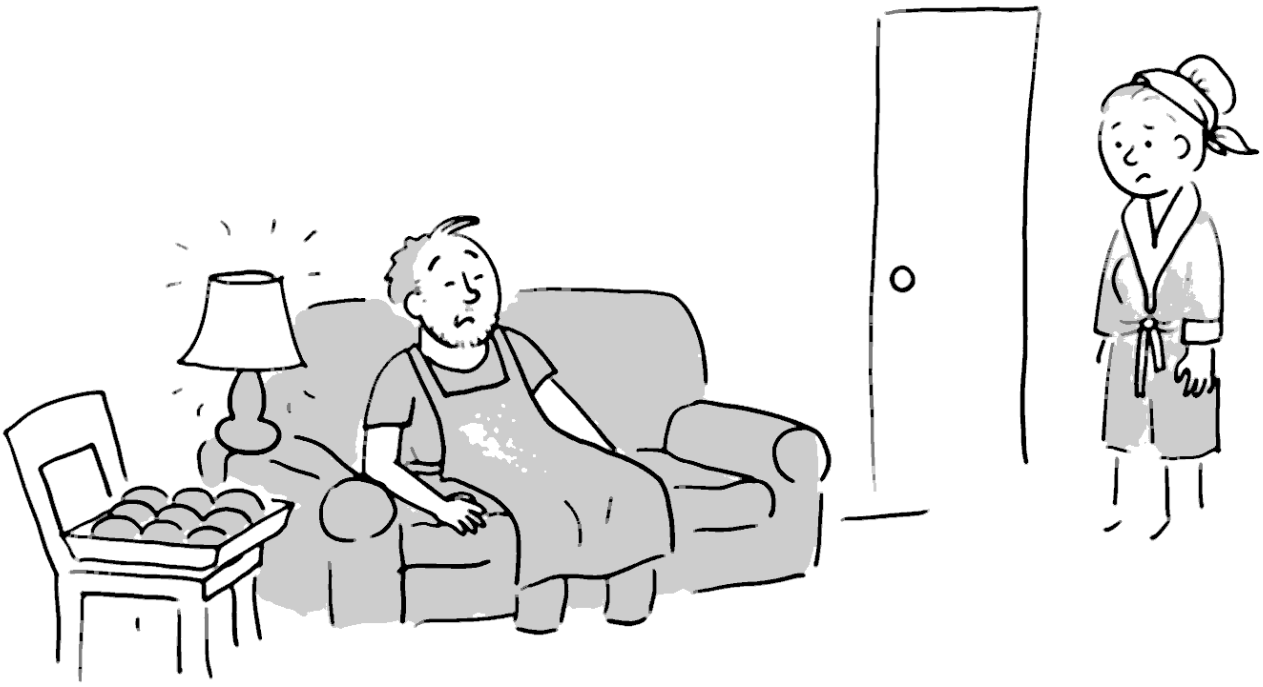


Figure 7.2: A dry run swaps the action for a message.

Description

Two rows of three boxes, one for the dry run and one for the real run. In both rows the first box is the trigger, when it gets dark, and the second is the condition, only if someone is home. In the dry run row the last box is a message saying the hall lamp would come on now. In the real run row the last box is the lamp coming on. The point: a dry run keeps the trigger and the condition and swaps only the action for a message, so nothing in the house is switched.

Figure 7.51: Dusk, as agreed



Dusk, as agreed. Nobody asked the night shift.

Description

A cartoon of a man in a baker's apron asleep on a sofa with a tray of bread rolls on the chair beside him, a lamp having just come on at his elbow, and a woman wincing in the doorway.

Figure 7.52: Still undefeated



The wall switch. Still undefeated.

Description

A cartoon of an elderly man raising one arm in triumph beside an ordinary wall switch, with the room's lamp lit behind him.

Figure 8.1: In view and out of view

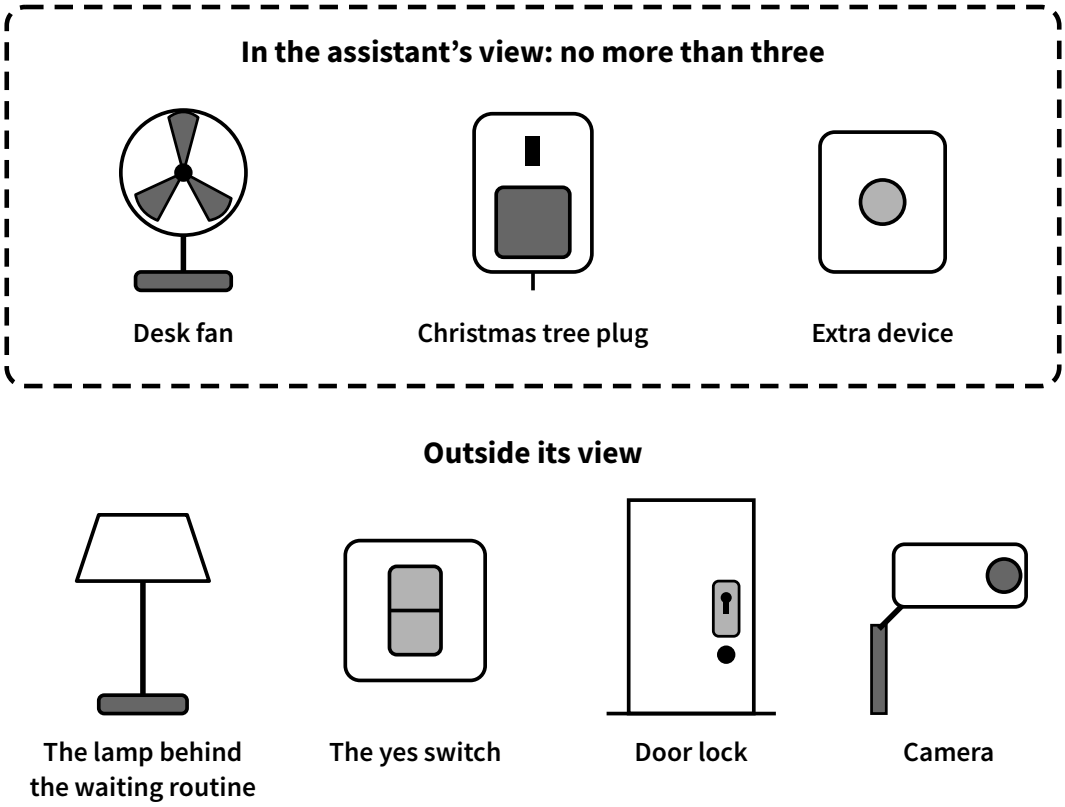


Figure 8.1: It can only act on what is in its view.

Description

A dashed boundary, headed 'In the assistant's view: no more than three', holds three devices: a desk fan, a Christmas tree plug and an extra device. Under the heading 'Outside its view' stand four things: the lamp behind the waiting routine, the yes switch, a door lock drawn on a door, and a camera. The point: the assistant can only act on what you put in its view, locks and cameras never go in, and the list needs looking after because new devices can appear on it by themselves.

FIGURE 8.2: REQUEST, ENFORCED YES, ACTION

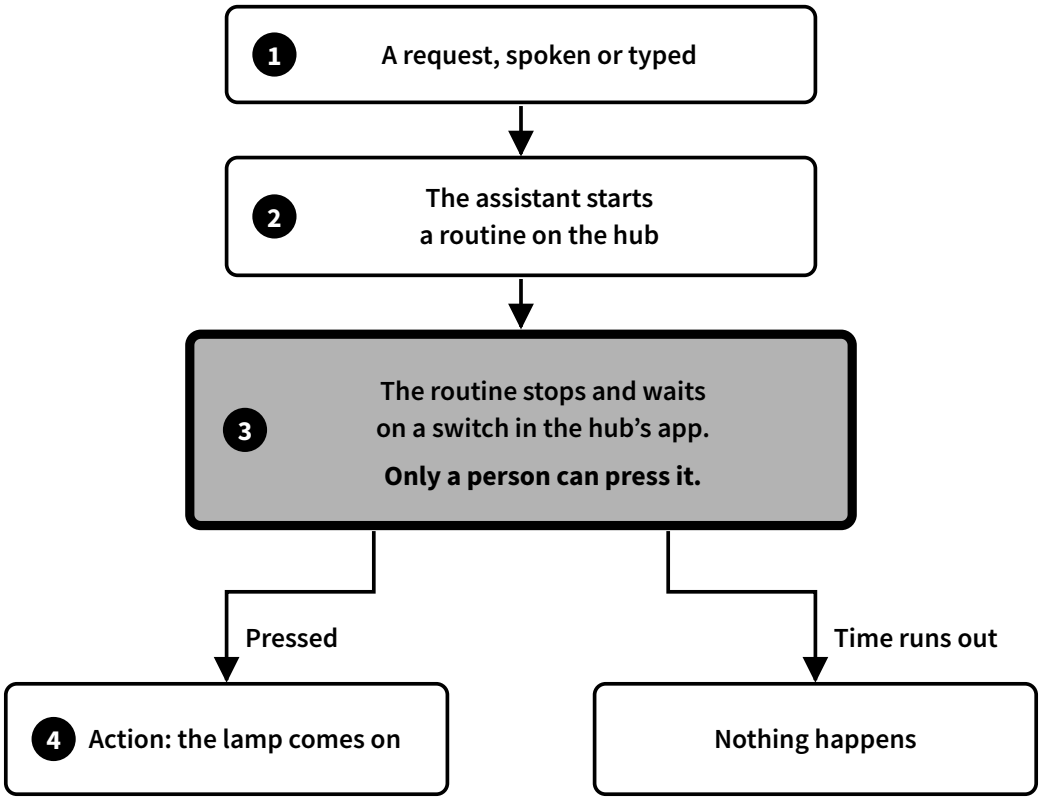


Figure 8.2: The hub holds the action until a person says yes.

DESCRIPTION

A flow in numbered boxes. 1. A request, spoken or typed, goes to the assistant. 2. The assistant starts a routine on the hub. 3. The routine stops and waits on a switch in the hub's app. That stop box is the heaviest shape in the drawing, and the switch is one that only a person can press. 4. Pressing it leads to the action, the lamp coming on. A second arrow leaves the waiting box for the case where time runs out, and it ends at a box saying nothing happens. The phone gets only a one-way notification, so no yes is shown being given there. The point: the yes belongs to the hub.

Figure 8.51: He did say everything



He did say everything.

Description

A cartoon of a house cut away to show two floors. Downstairs a man holds a bicycle with one wheel. Upstairs a woman at a desk stares at a frozen laptop in the middle of a video call.

Figure 8.52: Waiting for a yes



Hand on the handle, still looking back at her.

Description

A cartoon of a small clipboard with a face standing at a door, holding the handle but not turning it, looking back at a woman who is deciding.

Figure 9.1: What a hub backup holds

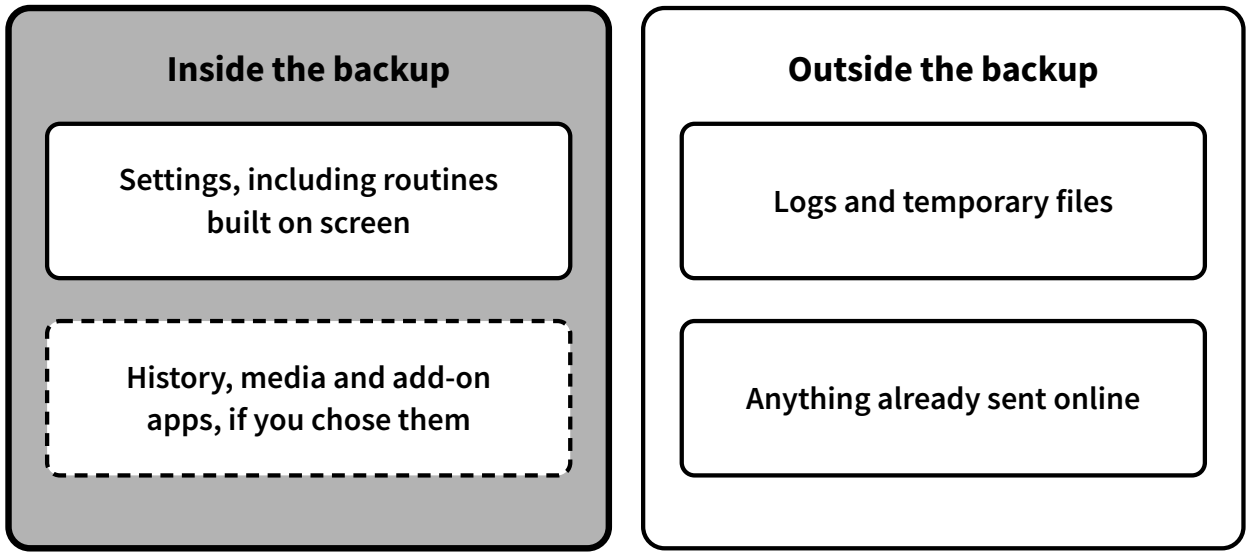


Figure 9.1: What a hub backup holds and what it leaves out.

Description

Two labelled groups side by side. The shaded group, Inside the backup, holds two boxes: settings, including routines built on screen, and, in a dashed box, history, media and add-on apps, if you chose them. The group Outside the backup holds two boxes: logs and temporary files, and anything already sent online. The assistant's connection, its list of devices and any linked accounts are not drawn in either group, because the maker does not say; the text tells you to check them after a restore. The point: a backup holds only what was true when it was made, so a restore does not bring everything back.

Figure 9.2: Only a restore proves a backup

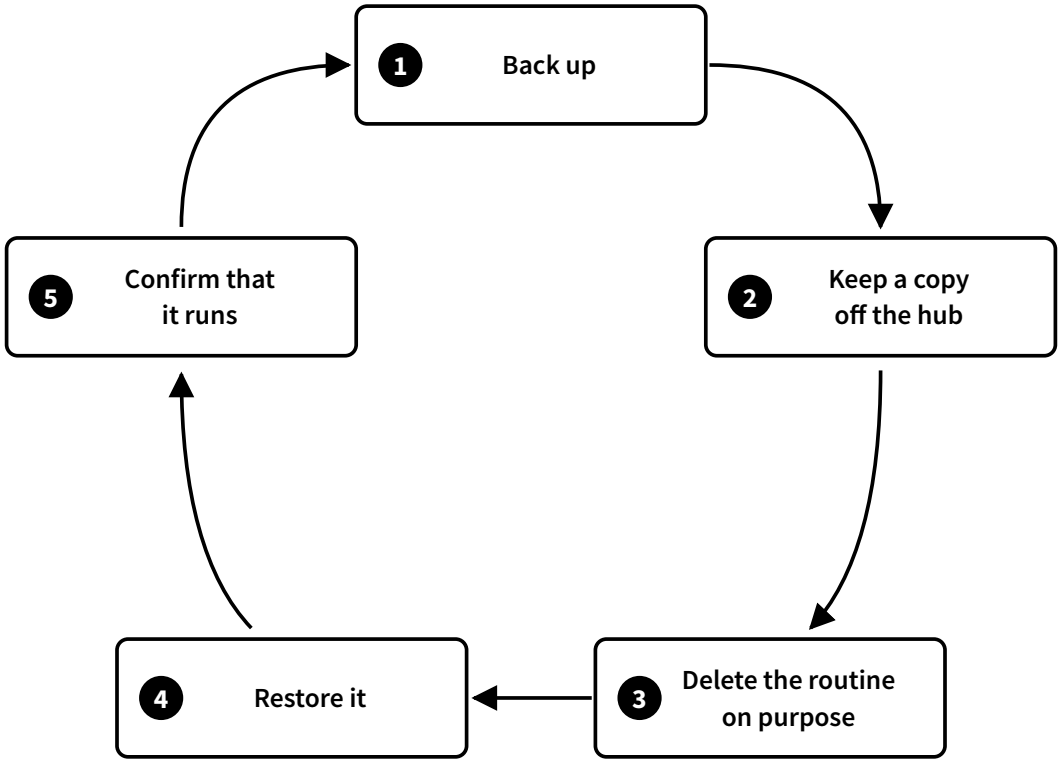


Figure 9.2: Only a restore proves a backup.

Description

Five numbered steps joined by arrows in a loop. 1. Back up. 2. Keep a copy off the hub. 3. Delete the routine on purpose. 4. Restore it. 5. Confirm that it runs. An arrow leads from step 5 back to step 1. The point: only a restore proves a backup.

Figure 9.3: What still works in each outage

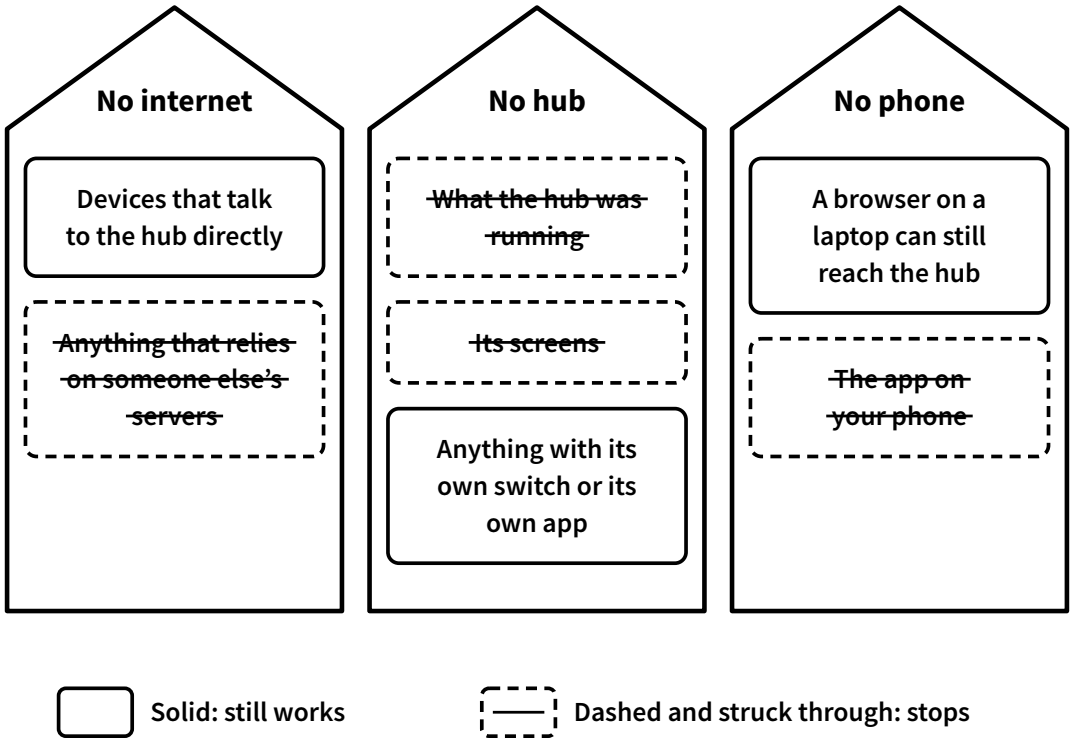
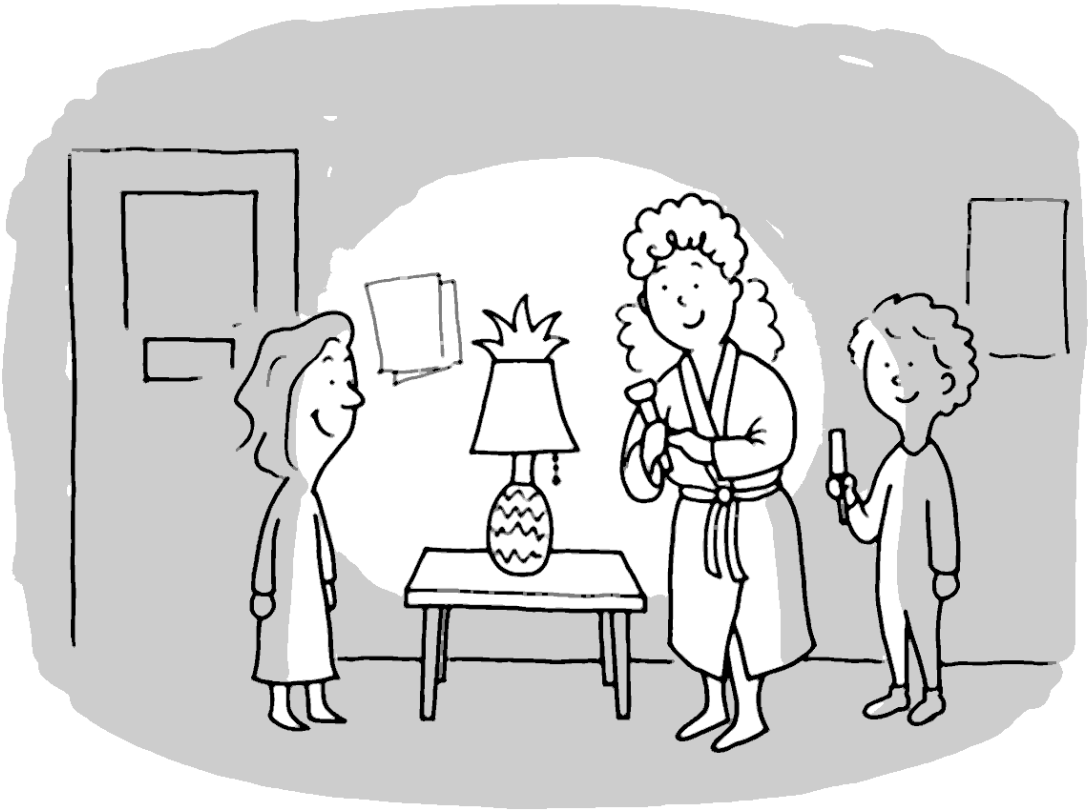


Figure 9.3: What still works when something is gone.

Description

Three small houses side by side, labelled no internet, no hub and no phone. In each, the things that still work are drawn in solid line and the things that stop are drawn dashed and struck through. With no internet, devices that talk to the hub directly keep going and anything that relies on someone else's servers stops. With no hub, what it was running stops and its screens with it, while whatever has its own switch or its own app still works. With no phone, a browser on another device can still reach the hub on the local-first path. The point: three outages to rehearse, each worth trying on a quiet afternoon.

Figure 9.51: The pineapple



The only lamp still working is shaped like a pineapple.

Description

A cartoon of a family gathered in a dark hallway around a single table lamp shaped like a pineapple.

Figure 9.52: Never opened



Packed, strapped on and never once opened.

Description

A cartoon of a man standing proudly in a garden wearing a parachute pack, with a very large unopened instruction manual under his arm.

Figure 10.1: The order that never changes

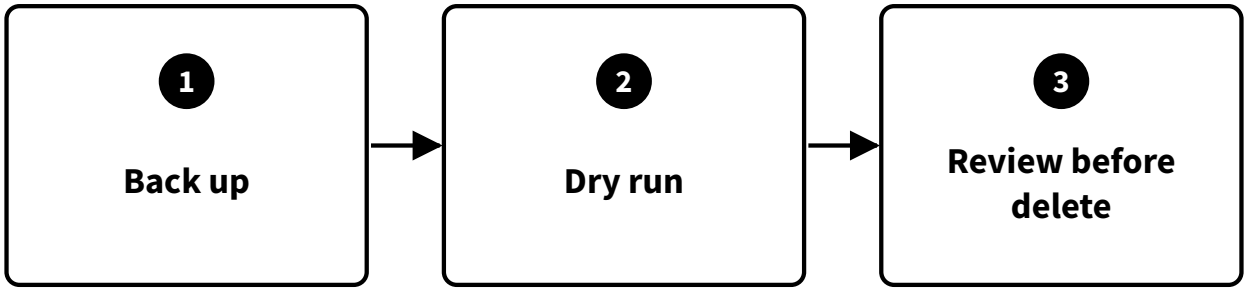


Figure 10.1: Back up, dry run, review before delete. Always in that order.

Description

Three numbered boxes in a row, joined by arrows. 1. Back up, which answers 'Can I get it back?' 2. Dry run, which answers 'What is it planning?' 3. Review before delete, which answers 'Am I sure?' The point: the order never changes.

Figure 10.2: A backup and a sync

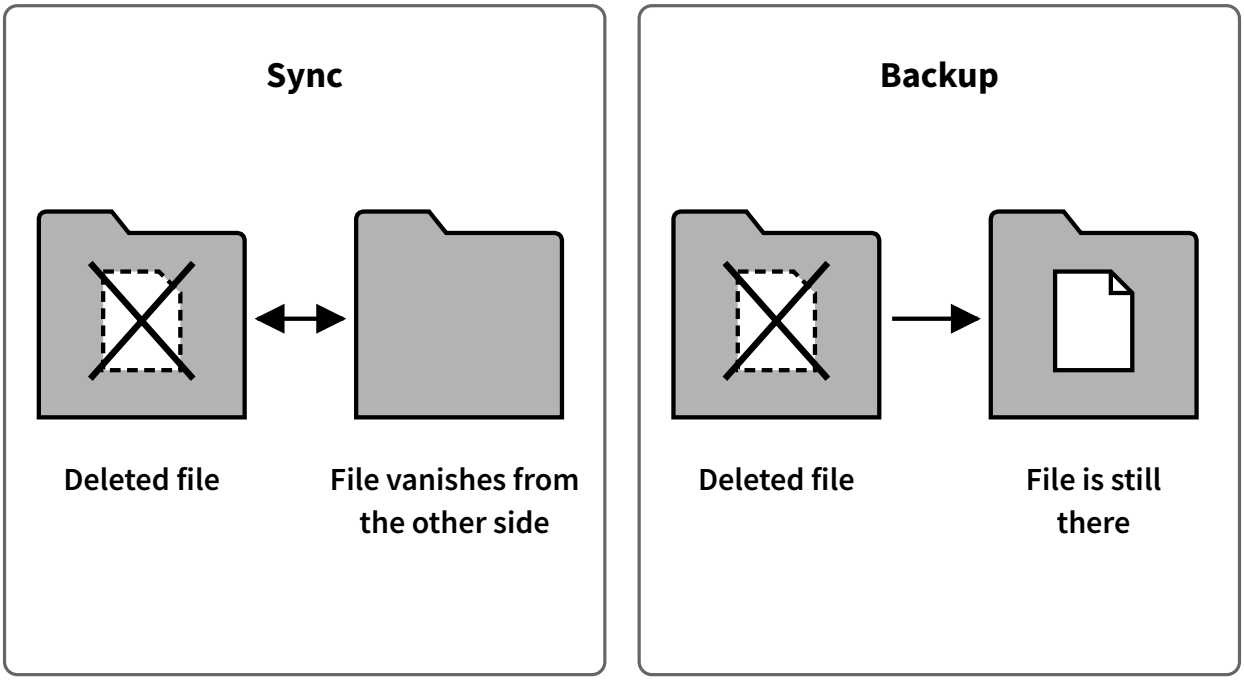


Figure 10.2: A sync copies your deletions too.

Description

Two pairs of folders, one pair labelled sync and one labelled backup. In the sync pair, a file is deleted on the left and has vanished from the right as well. In the backup pair, the file is deleted on the left and is still there on the right. The point: a sync copies your deletions too, and a backup keeps the file.

Figure 10.3: How many copies, and where

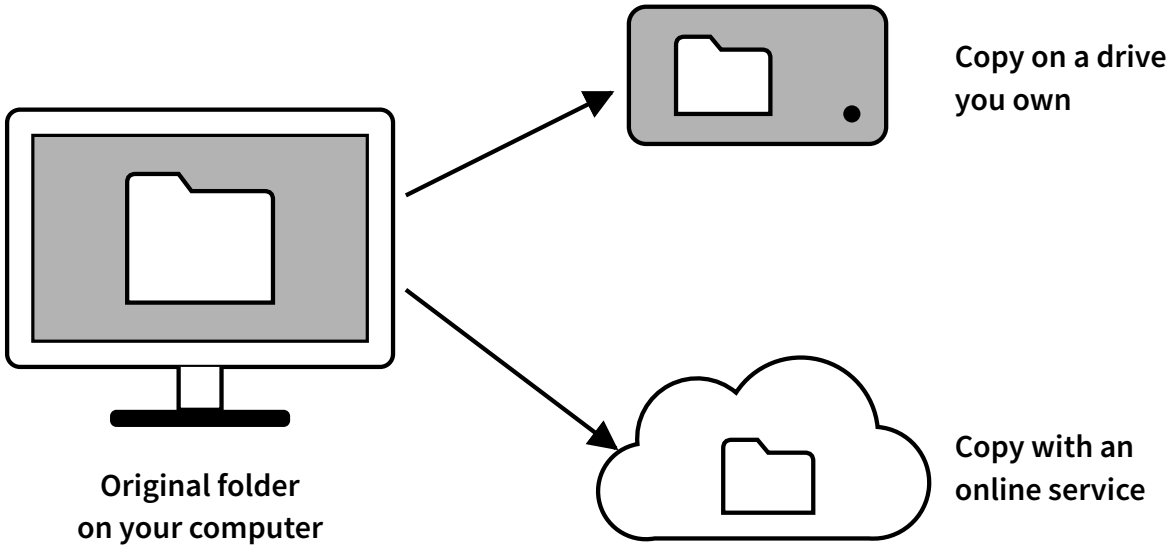


Figure 10.3: A simple rule of thumb for copies.

Description

Three items in a row, each labelled: the original folder on a computer, a copy on a drive you own, and a copy with an online service. An arrow runs from the original to each copy. The point: a long-standing rule of thumb is three copies of anything that matters, on two kinds of storage, with one kept somewhere else.

Figure 10.51: Very promptly

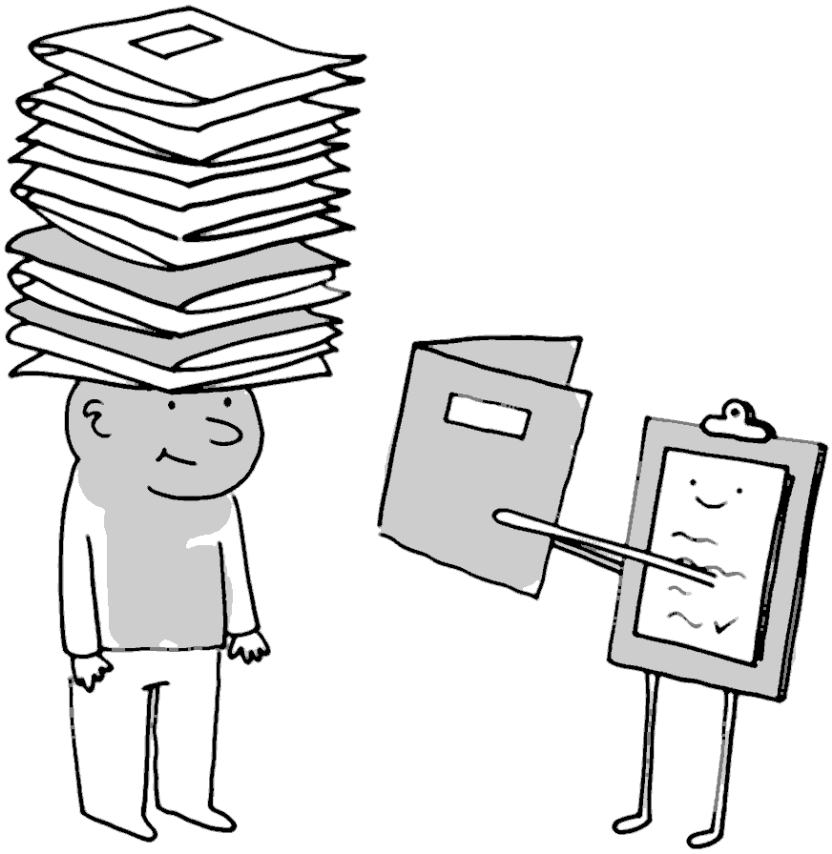


Same page, same bin, same second.

Description

A cartoon of a woman throwing a page into a bin at one desk, while at a second desk a small clipboard with a face throws away an identical page at the same moment.

Figure 10.52: One folder



The clipboard has picked one. The mountain can wait.

Description

A cartoon of a man with a mountain of paper folders piled on his head, while a small clipboard with a face holds out a single folder to him.

TAB-10-01: A DRIVE AND AN ONLINE SERVICE

Table 10.1: A drive you own and an online service.

DESCRIPTION

Table 10.1: A drive you own and an online service.

TAB-10-02: A SAMPLE DRY-RUN REPORT

Table 10.2: A made-up dry-run report.

DESCRIPTION

Table 10.2: A made-up dry-run report.

Figure 11.1: From brief to record

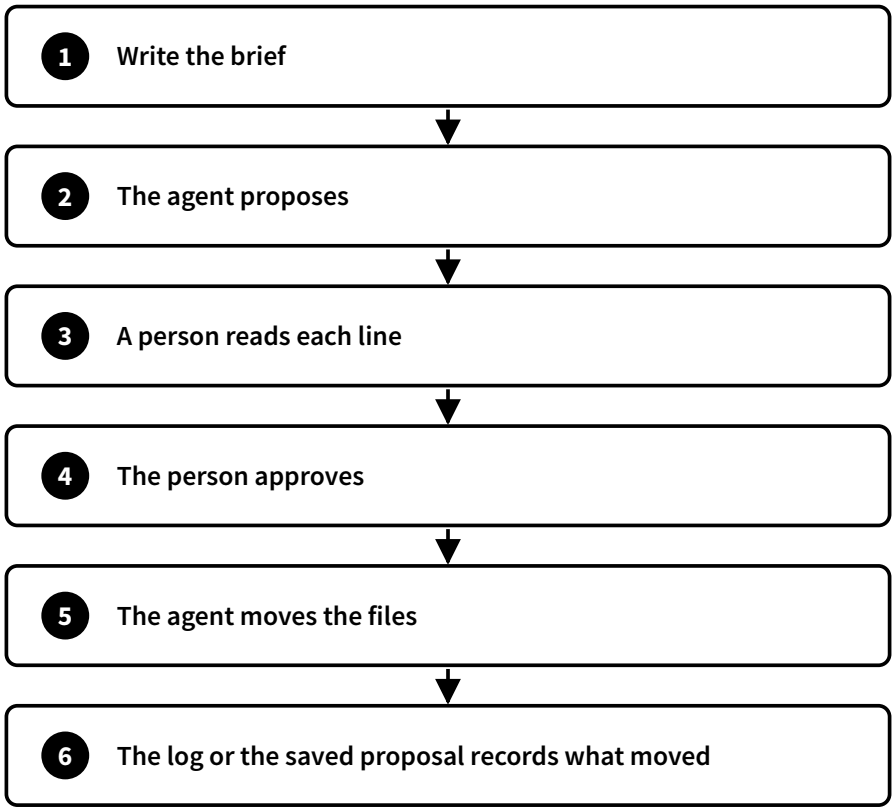


Figure 11.1: The agent proposes. A person says yes. Then it moves things, and the record is kept.

Description

Six numbered steps in order, from top to bottom, joined by arrows. 1. Write the brief. 2. The agent proposes. 3. A person reads each line. 4. The person approves. 5. The agent moves the files. 6. The log or the saved proposal records what moved. The agent has steps 2 and 5. The other four belong to you or to the record you hold.

Figure 11.2: The copy it cannot reach

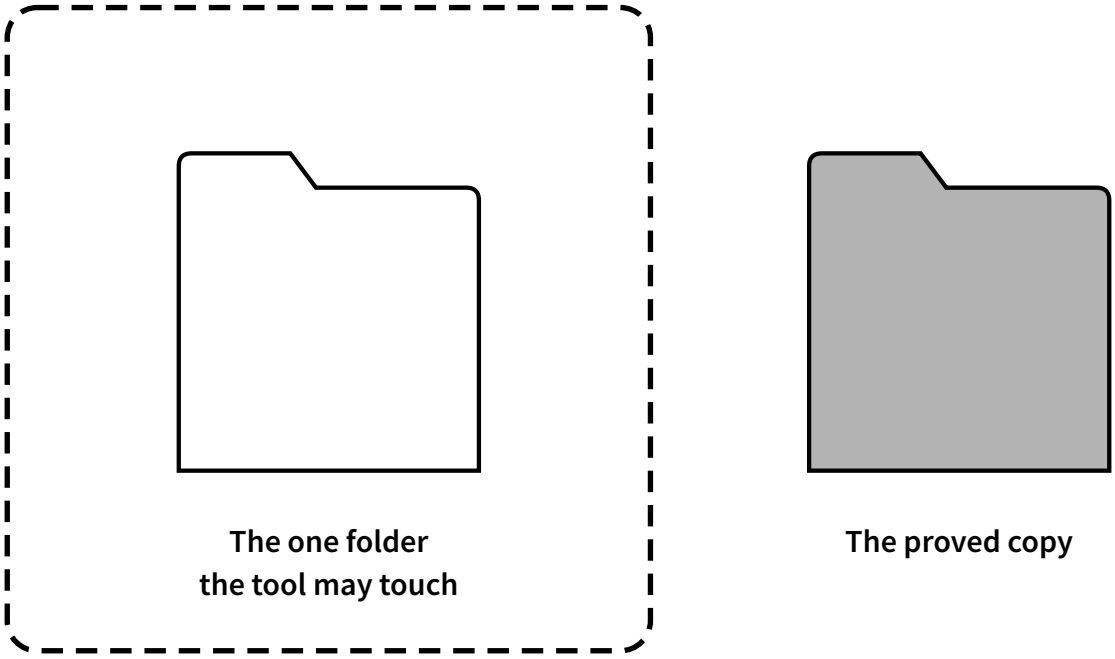


Figure 11.2: The proved copy sits where the tool cannot reach.

Description

A dashed boundary surrounds one folder, the only one the tool may touch. A second folder, the proved copy, sits outside the boundary and away from anything that syncs with it. The point: the proved copy belongs where the tool cannot reach.

Figure 11.51: Nearly not

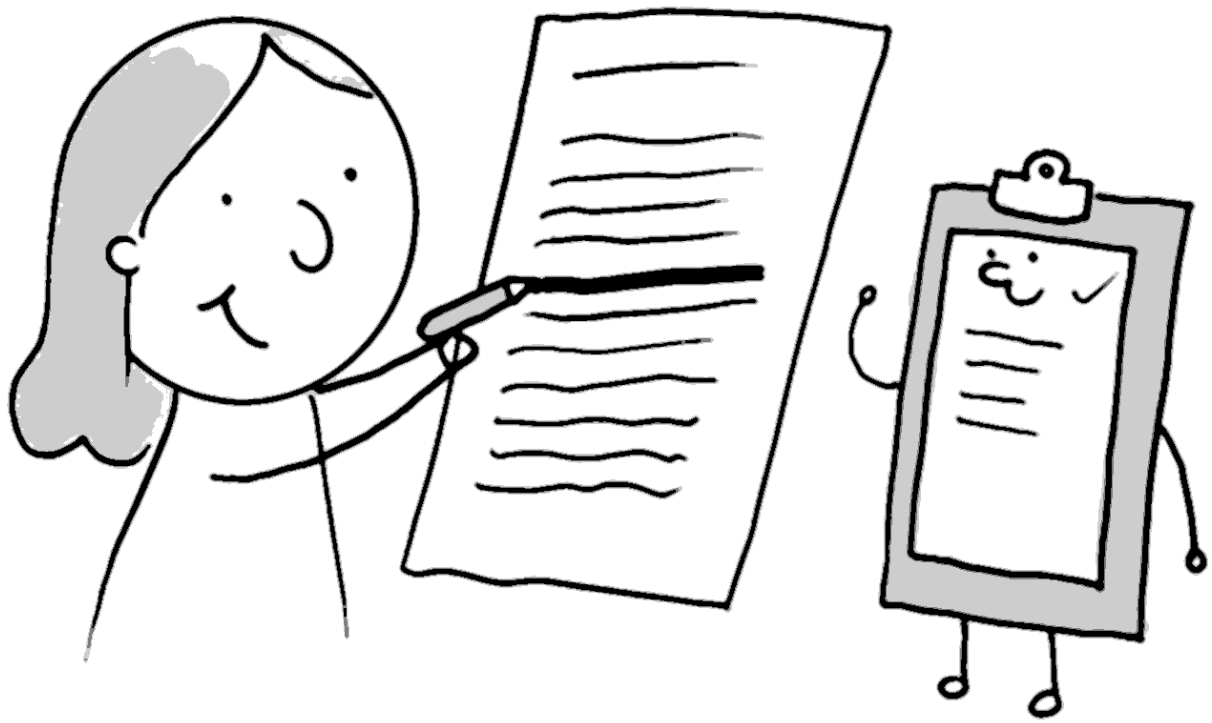


Eleven bus timetables safe. One tenancy agreement nearly not.

Description

A cartoon of a desk stacked with identical bus timetables, while a small clipboard with a face pauses, holding a document over a bin, beside a man with one hand raised.

Figure 11.52: Line fourteen



Line 14, no. The rest, yes.

Description

A cartoon of a woman drawing a firm line through one entry on a long paper list, while a small clipboard with a face looks on.

TAB-11-01: THREE ROUTES TO A PROPOSAL

Table 11.1: Three routes against See, Do, Undo.

DESCRIPTION

Table 11.1: Three routes against See, Do, Undo.

TAB-11-02: A PROPOSAL WITH A LINE REJECTED

Table 11.2: A made-up proposal with one line rejected.

Description

Table 11.2: A made-up proposal with one line rejected.

FIGURE 12.1: A SIMPLE FOLDER PLAN

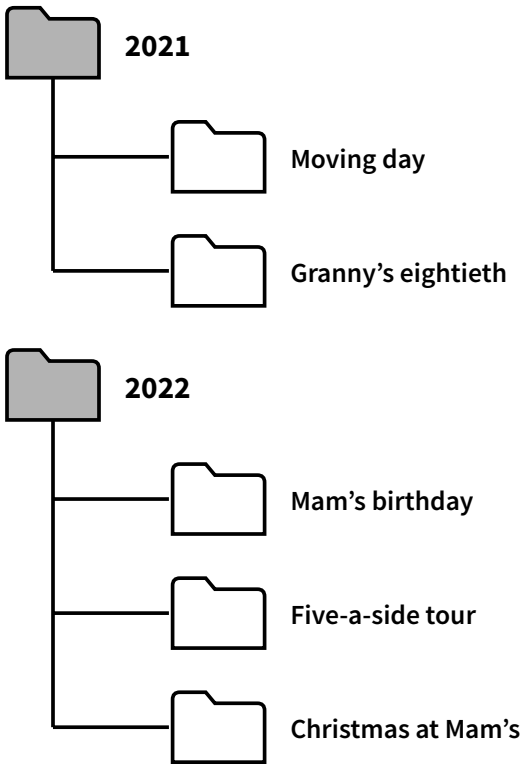


Figure 12.1: A folder plan by year and event.

DESCRIPTION

A folder tree two levels deep. At the top are two year folders. Inside each year folder are two or three folders named after invented events. The point: make a folder for each year and a folder inside it for each event, and stop at two levels.

Figure 12.2: Exact and near duplicates

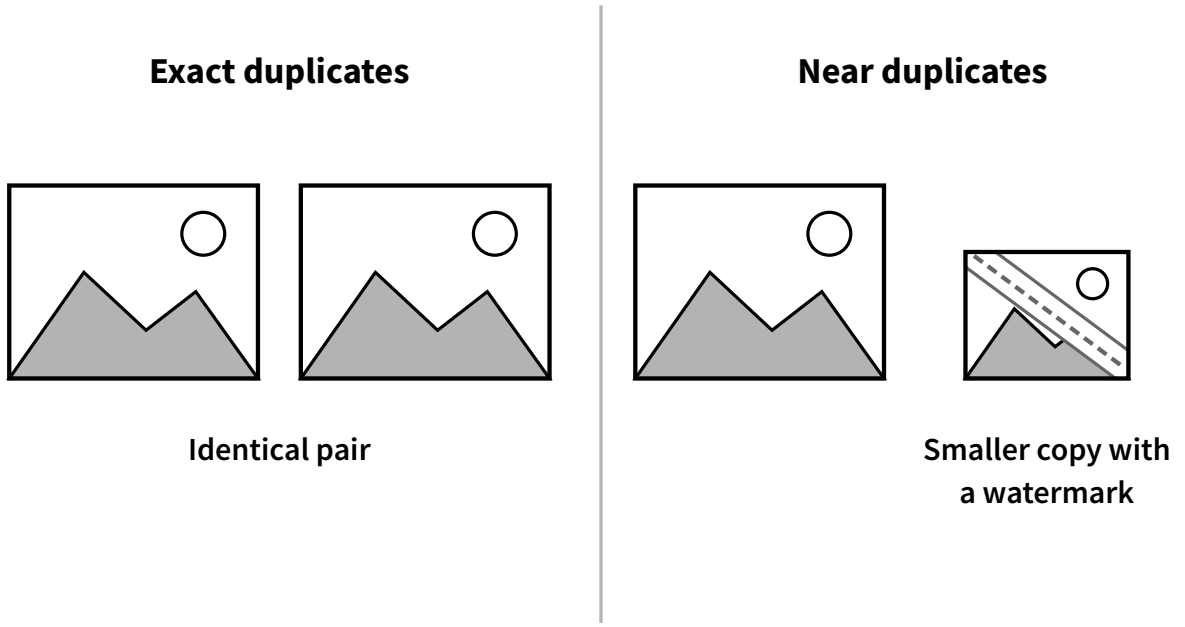


Figure 12.2: Exact duplicates are the same file. Near duplicates may be two moments.

Description

Two pairs of simple sketched photos, labelled exact duplicates and near duplicates. In the first pair the two photos are identical. In the second pair the copy is smaller and carries a watermark, so it only looks the same. The point: an exact duplicate is the same file twice, while near duplicates may be two moments, so slow down on those.

Figure 12.3: The holding folder

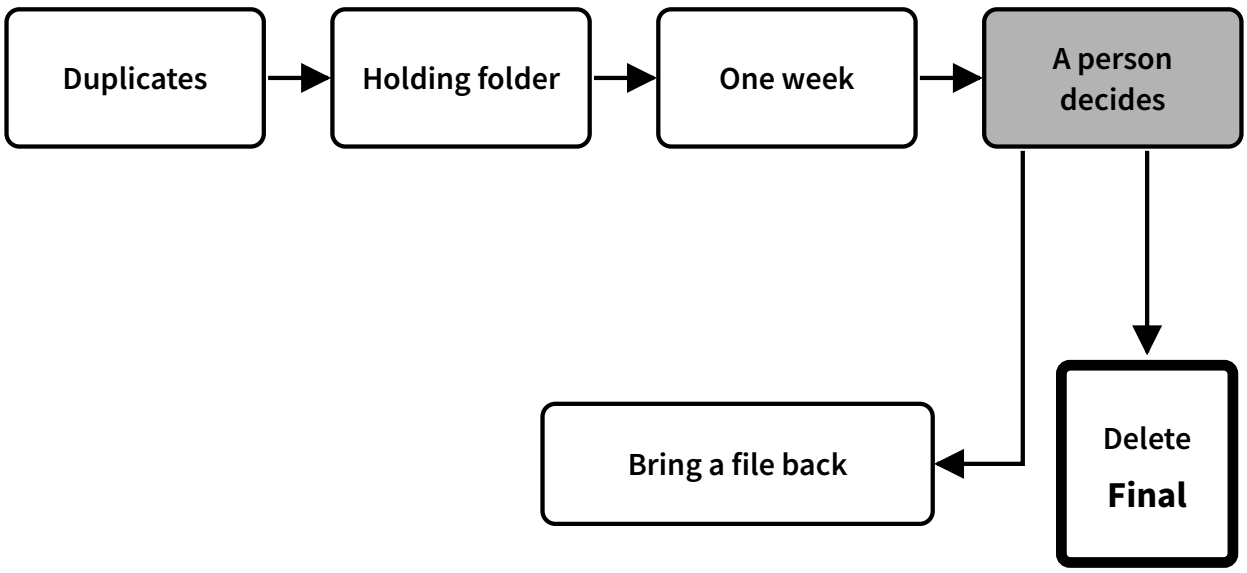
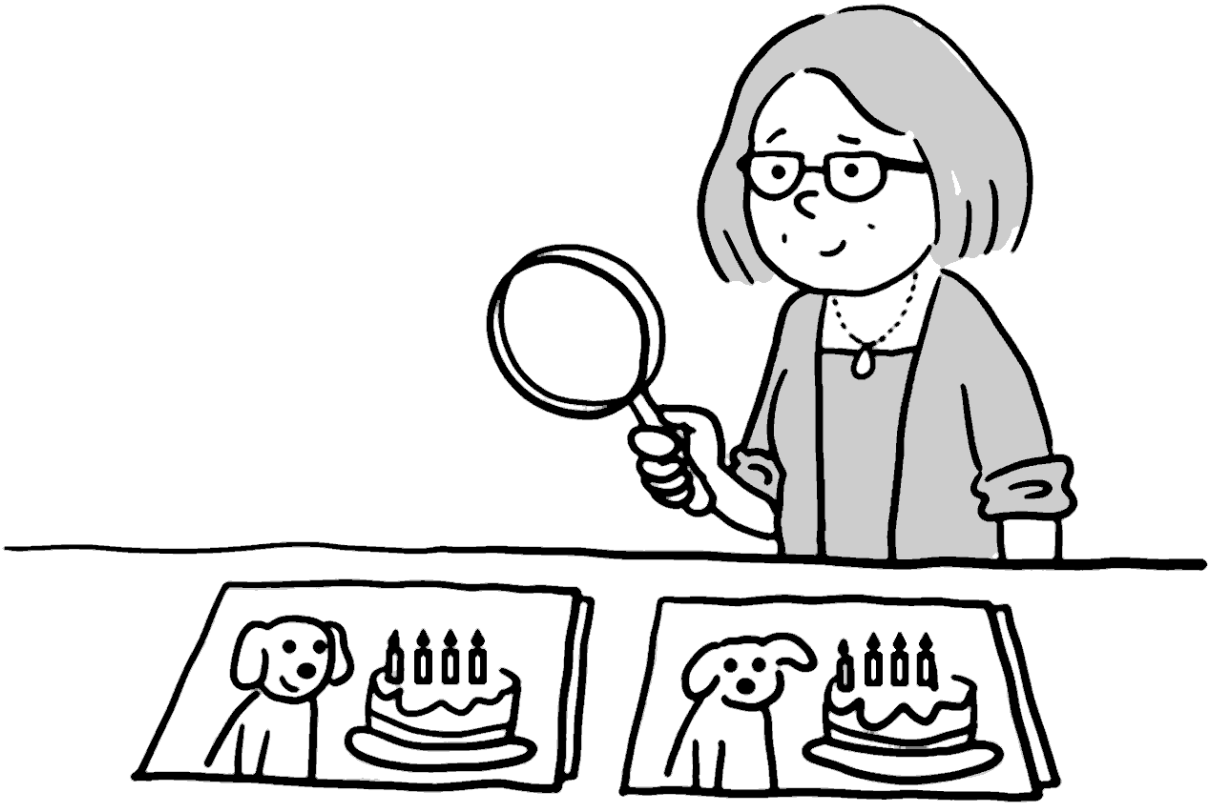


Figure 12.3: A week in the holding folder before anything is deleted.

Description

A flow from left to right. The duplicates go into a holding folder. After that comes a one week wait, then a box where a person decides. Two arrows leave the decision. One brings a file back. The other leads to delete, drawn as a heavy box with the word Final. The point: deleting is a separate, final step a person takes, after a week in the holding folder.

Figure 12.51: The dog noticed



Near duplicates. In one of them, the dog has just noticed the cake.

Description

A cartoon of a woman with a magnifying glass comparing two almost identical photographs of a dog beside a birthday cake.

Figure 12.52: Then, and only then



The clipboard has seen the calendar.

Description

A cartoon of a man reaching for a cardboard box on a shelf beside a wall calendar, while a small clipboard with a face raises one finger to stop him.

TAB-12-01: LOCAL-FIRST AND MAINSTREAM PHOTO TOOLS

Table 12.1: Two kinds of photo tool compared.

DESCRIPTION

Table 12.1: Two kinds of photo tool compared.

Figure 13.1: What a smart TV can report

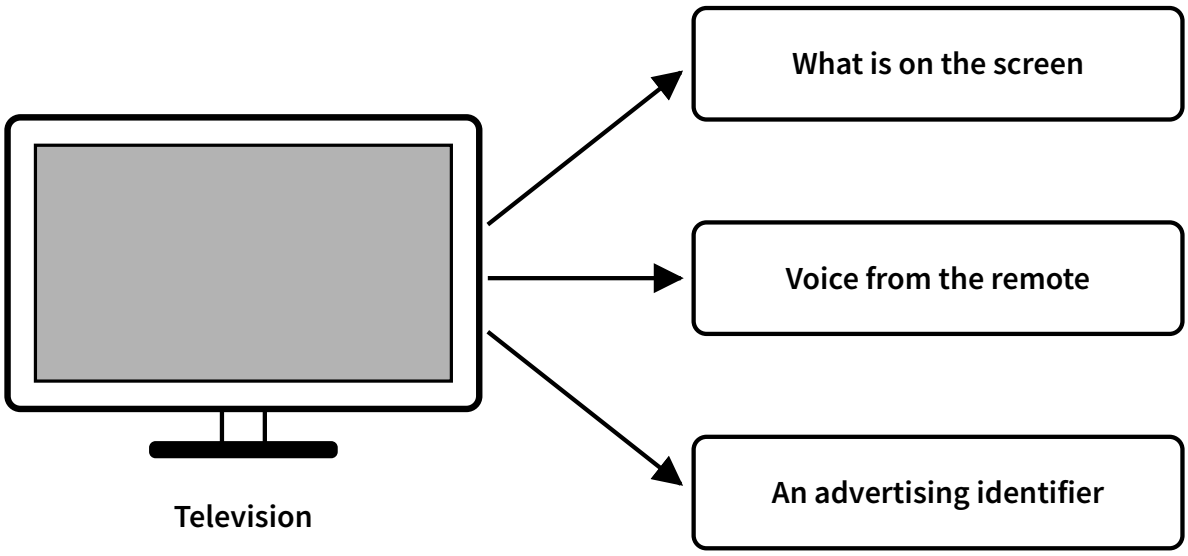
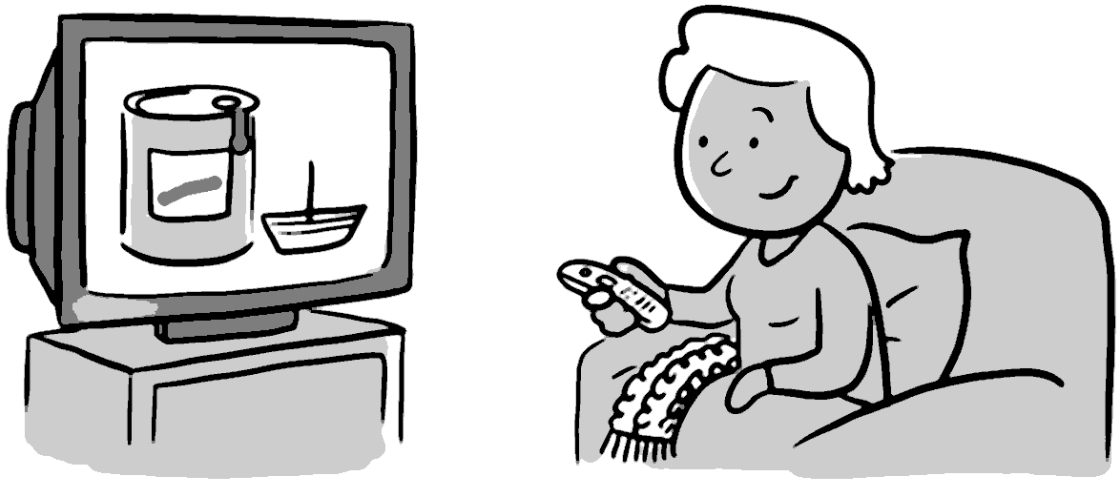


Figure 13.1: The kinds of thing a smart TV can report.

Description

A television is drawn in the middle, with three labelled arrows going out of it: what is on the screen, voice from the remote, and an advertising identifier. Nobody is drawn watching. The point: these are the kinds of thing a smart TV can report, if the options are on.

Figure 13.51: Plans for your hull



One programme about canal boats, and the television has plans for your hull.

Description

A cartoon of a woman on a sofa with a remote control, looking at a television that shows a large tin of paint and a small boat.

TAB-13-01: OLD VALUE, NEW VALUE

Table 13.1: Write the old value before you change it.

DESCRIPTION

Table 13.1: Write the old value before you change it.

Figure 14.1: One source at a time

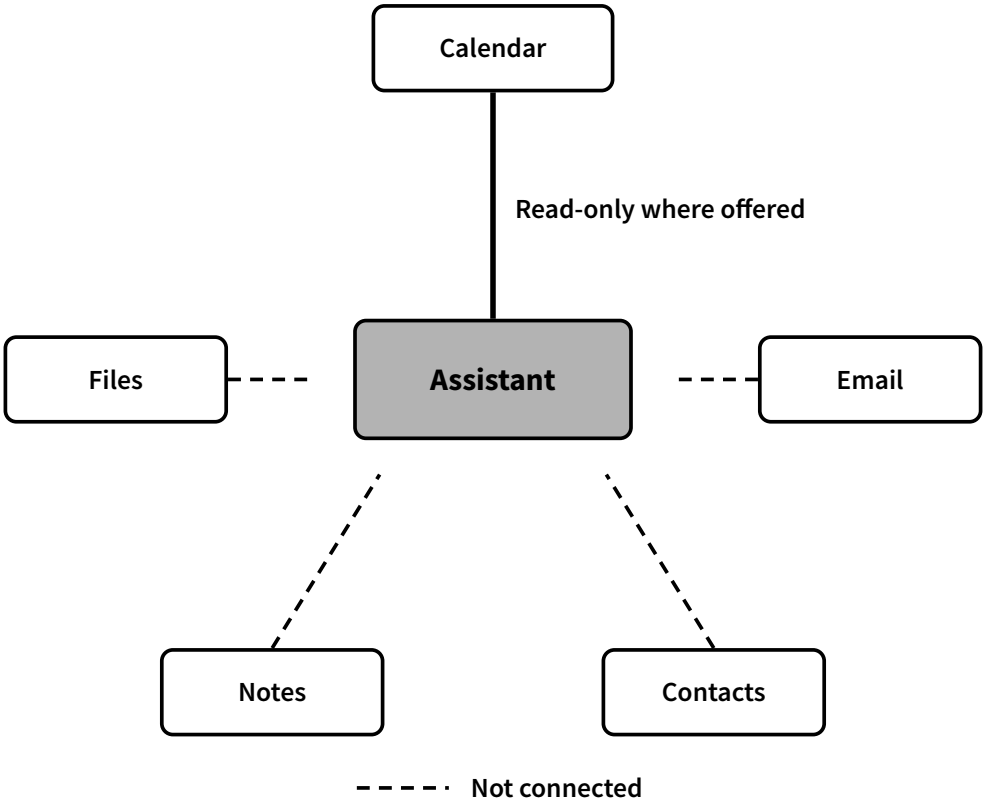


Figure 14.1: One source at a time, read-only first where offered.

Description

An assistant is drawn in the centre with five separate lines running out to a calendar, email, contacts, notes and files. The line to the calendar is drawn solid and marked read-only where offered. The other four lines are dashed and stop short of their boxes, and a small key says a dashed line means not connected. The point: each source gets its own yes, and you aim for one line connected and four left alone.

FIGURE 14.2: OTHER PEOPLE IN YOUR CALENDAR

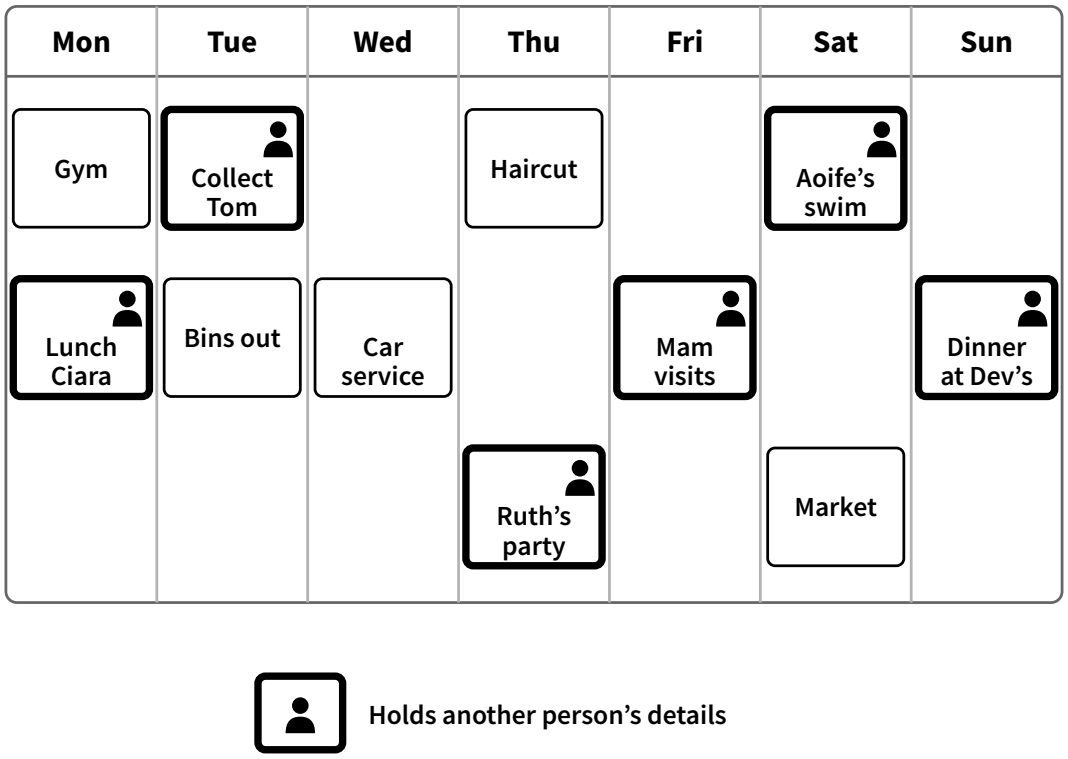
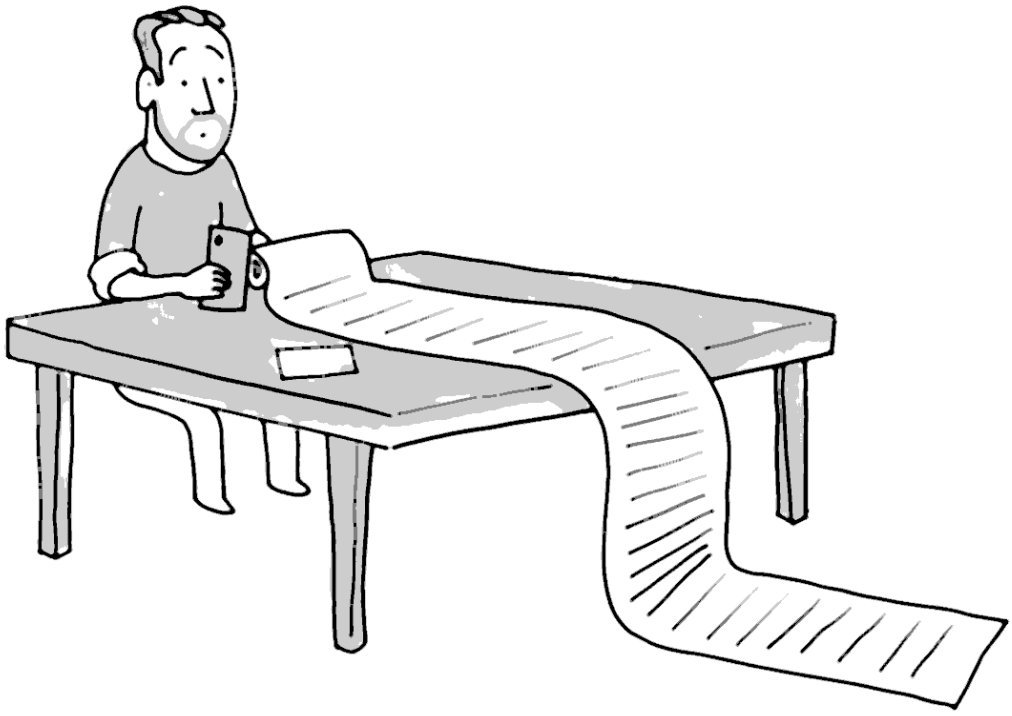


Figure 14.2: One person's calendar holds other people's details.

DESCRIPTION

A week of invented calendar entries, laid out day by day from Monday to Sunday. The entries that hold another person's details are marked with a heavier outline and a small person symbol, and a small key under the week says so: holds another person's details. Six entries are marked: Lunch Ciara, Collect Tom, Ruth's party, Mam visits, Aoife's swim and Dinner at Dev's. Five are not: Gym, Bins out, Car service, Haircut and Market. Every entry is invented, and none holds a health detail that could read as real. The point: one person's calendar holds other people's details, so connecting it shares them too.

Figure 14.51: Only the dentist



He only wanted the dentist's date.

Description

A cartoon of a man at a kitchen table looking startled as a long paper scroll of blank calendar lines unrolls from his phone and across the floor.

TAB-14-01: SOURCES AND THE LEAST ACCESS TO ASK FOR

Table 14.1: Sources and the least access to ask for.

DESCRIPTION

Table 14.1: Sources and the least access to ask for.

FIGURE 15.1: THREE CALENDARS INTO ONE

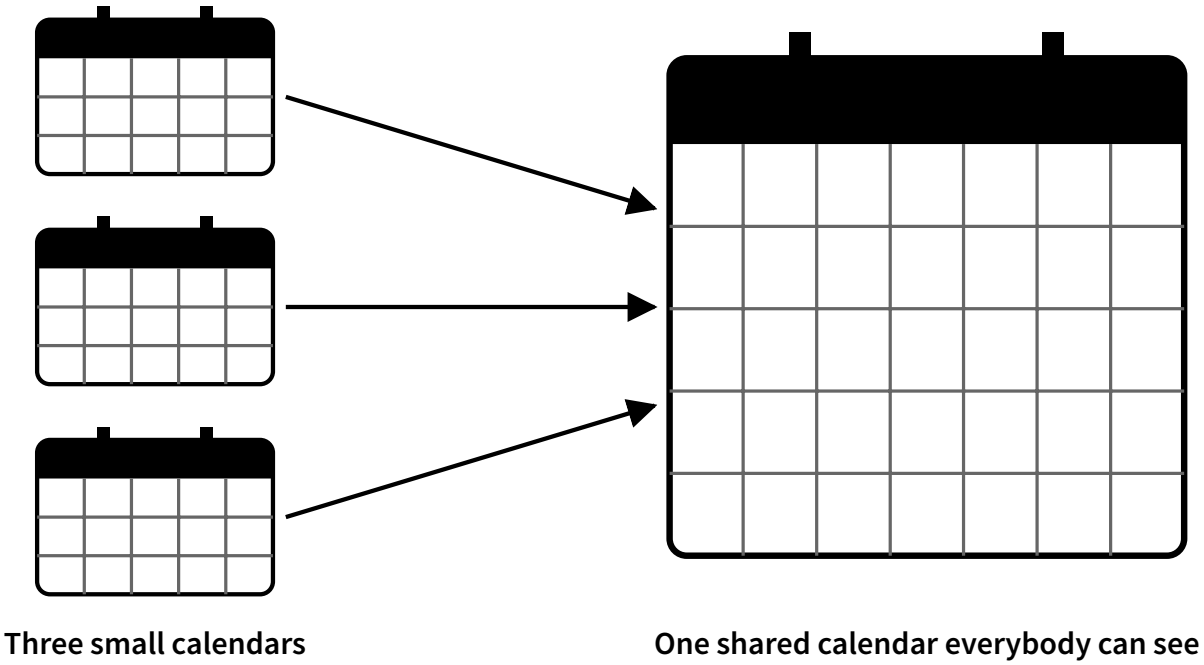


Figure 15.1: Three calendars become one that everybody can see.

DESCRIPTION

Three small calendars are drawn on one side, each with an arrow into one larger shared calendar on the other. The point: your separate calendars feed into one that the whole household can look at.

FIGURE 15.2: IT PROPOSES, A PERSON CHANGES

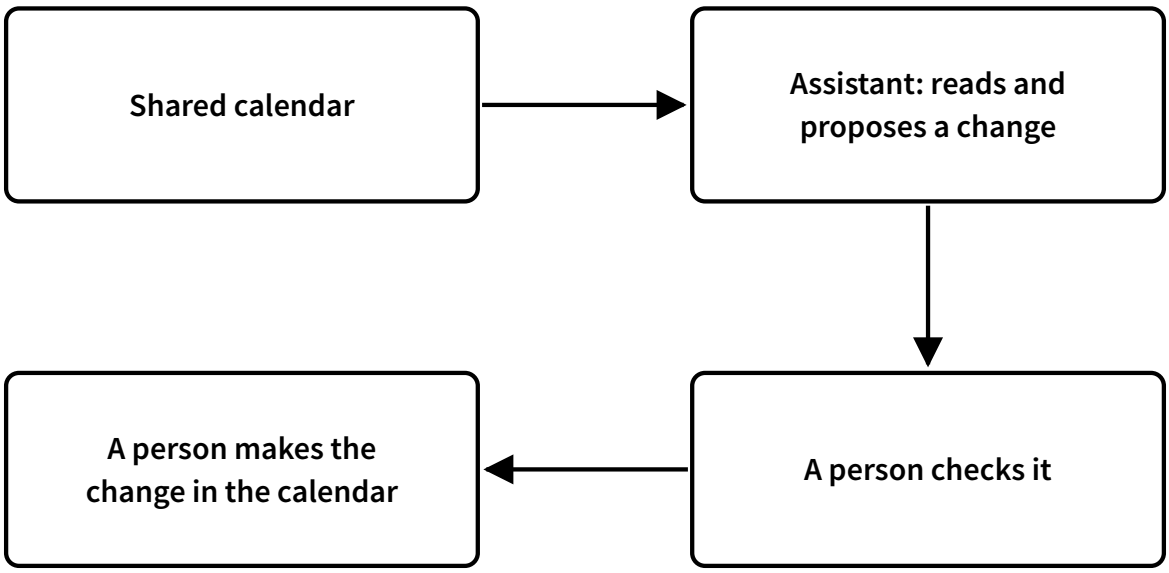
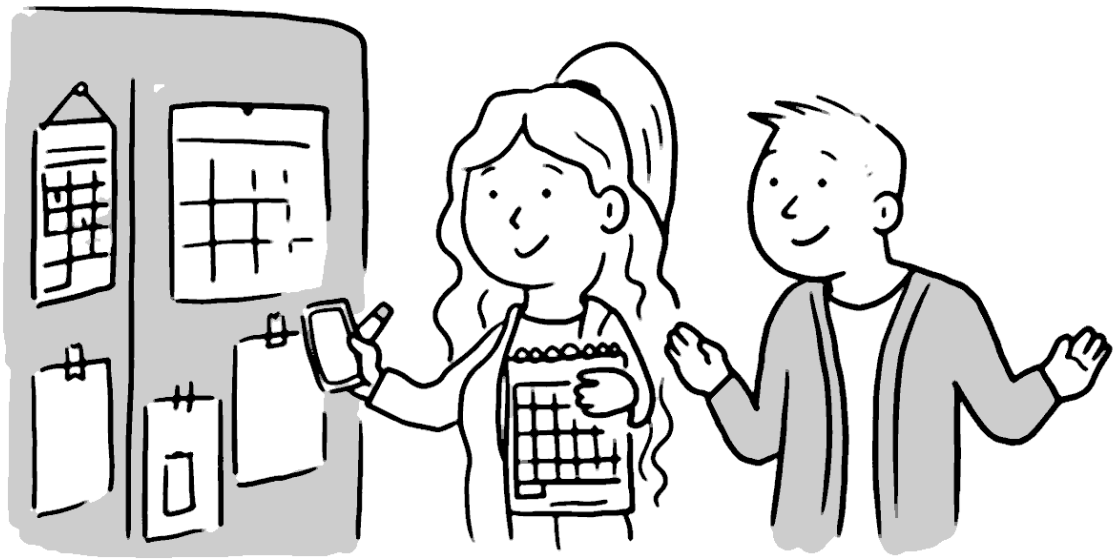


Figure 15.2: It reads and proposes. A person makes the change.

DESCRIPTION

A flow in four boxes joined by arrows. The shared calendar is read by the assistant. The assistant proposes a change. A person checks the proposal. The person makes the change in the calendar. The assistant never makes the change itself.

Figure 15.51: Possibly all three



Saturday: dentist, swimming gala or his mother's. Possibly all three.

Description

A cartoon of a woman holding a marker at a fridge door covered with a calendar, a phone and a free calendar held up beside it, while her partner shrugs.

Figure 15.52: No update needed



The fridge door has never once needed an update.

Description

A cartoon of an older man fixing a printed page to a fridge door with two round magnets, looking pleased with himself.

Figure 16.1: Meals, then the label

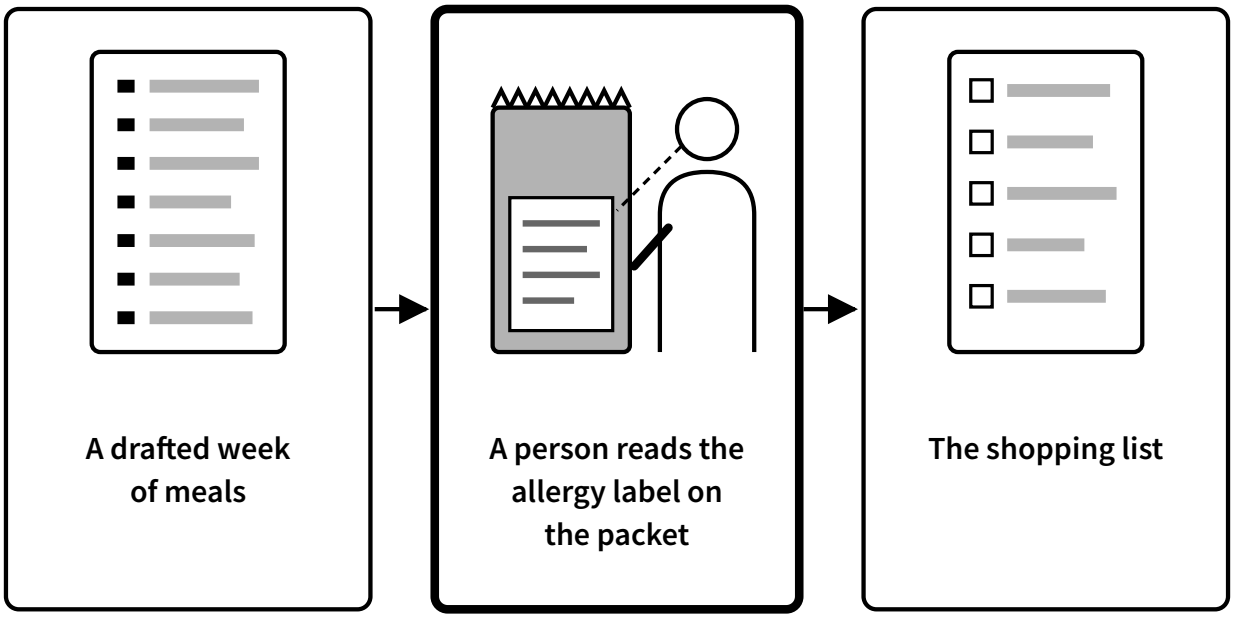


Figure 16.1: A person reads the label, every time.

Description

A flow in three boxes joined by arrows. A drafted week of meals goes to a person reading the allergy label on a packet, then on to the shopping list. The packet carries no brand. The point: a person reads the label, every time, between the plan and the shopping.

Figure 16.2: Who the speaker answers to

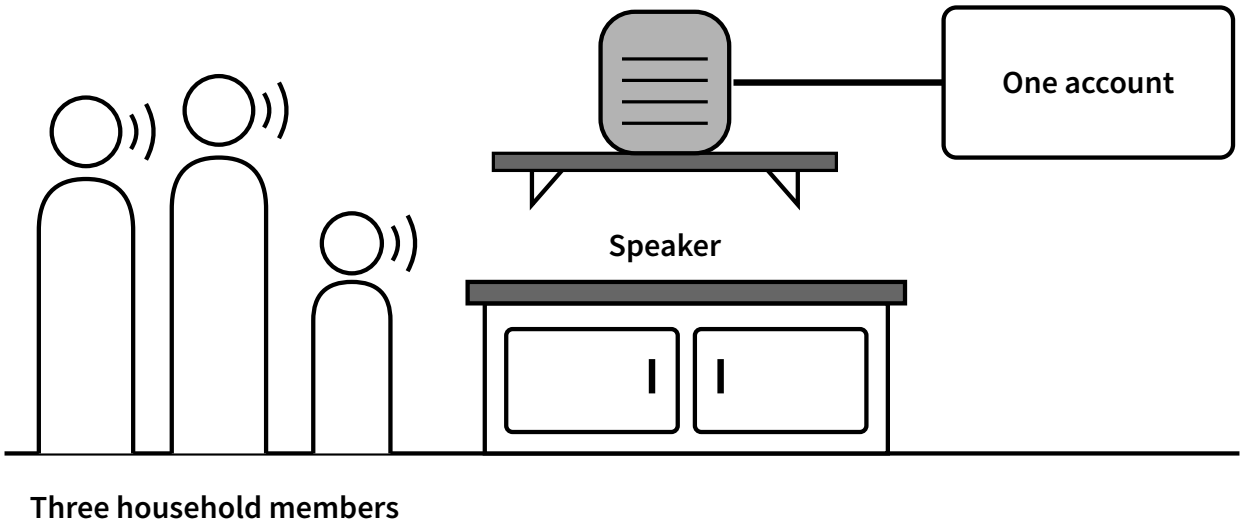


Figure 16.2: A shared speaker answers to the account behind it.

Description

A speaker, drawn with no face, stands in a kitchen. Three household members speak to it. One line runs from the speaker to a single labelled account. The point: a shared speaker answers to the one account behind it, whoever is speaking.

FIGURE 16.3: FROM A SPOKEN WORD TO THE HISTORY

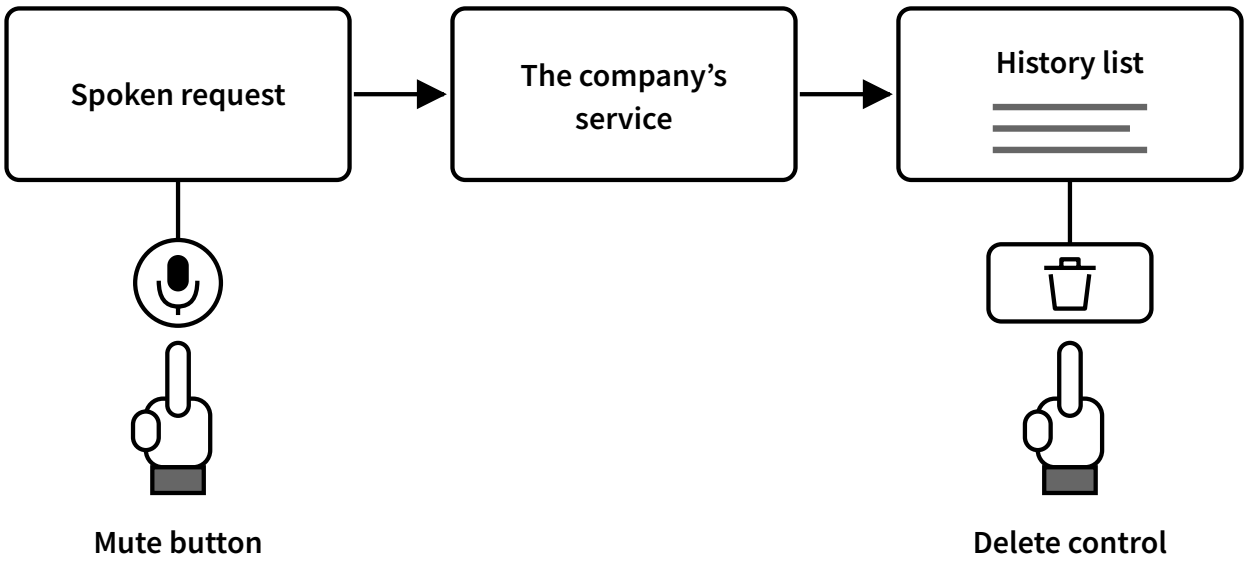
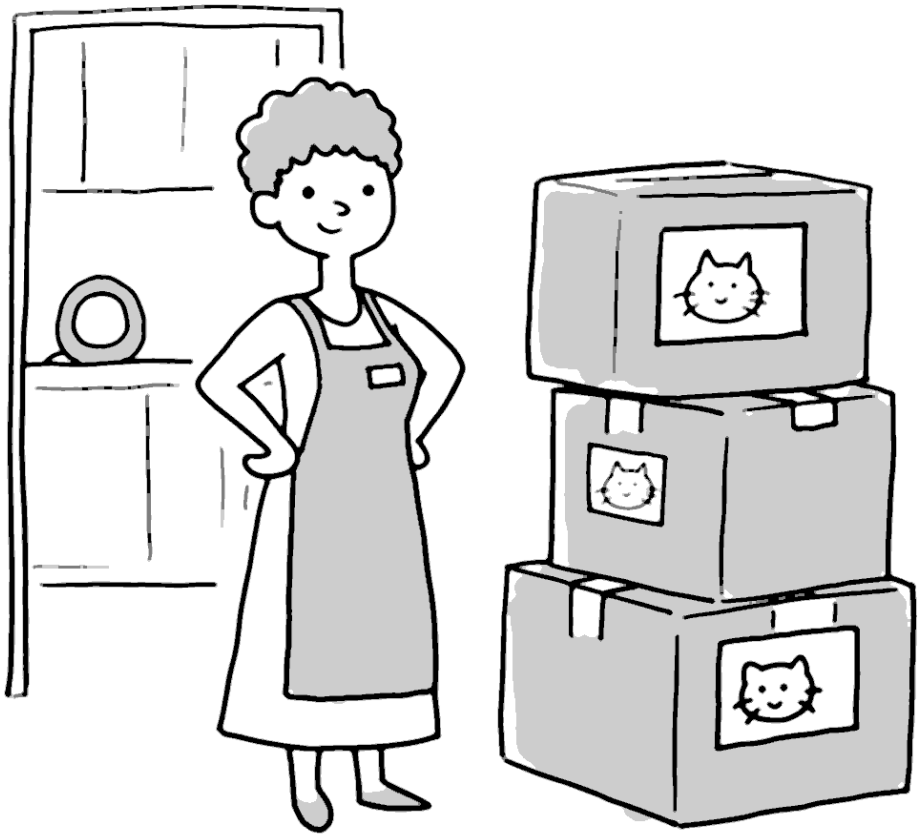


Figure 16.3: Where you can step in: the mute, the history and delete.

DESCRIPTION

A line of boxes runs from a spoken request to the company's service and then into a history list. A person's hand is marked at the mute button, at the start of the line, and at the delete control, at the end. The point: you can step in at the start with the mute and at the end with delete, and deleting later depends on the company.

Figure 16.51: No cat

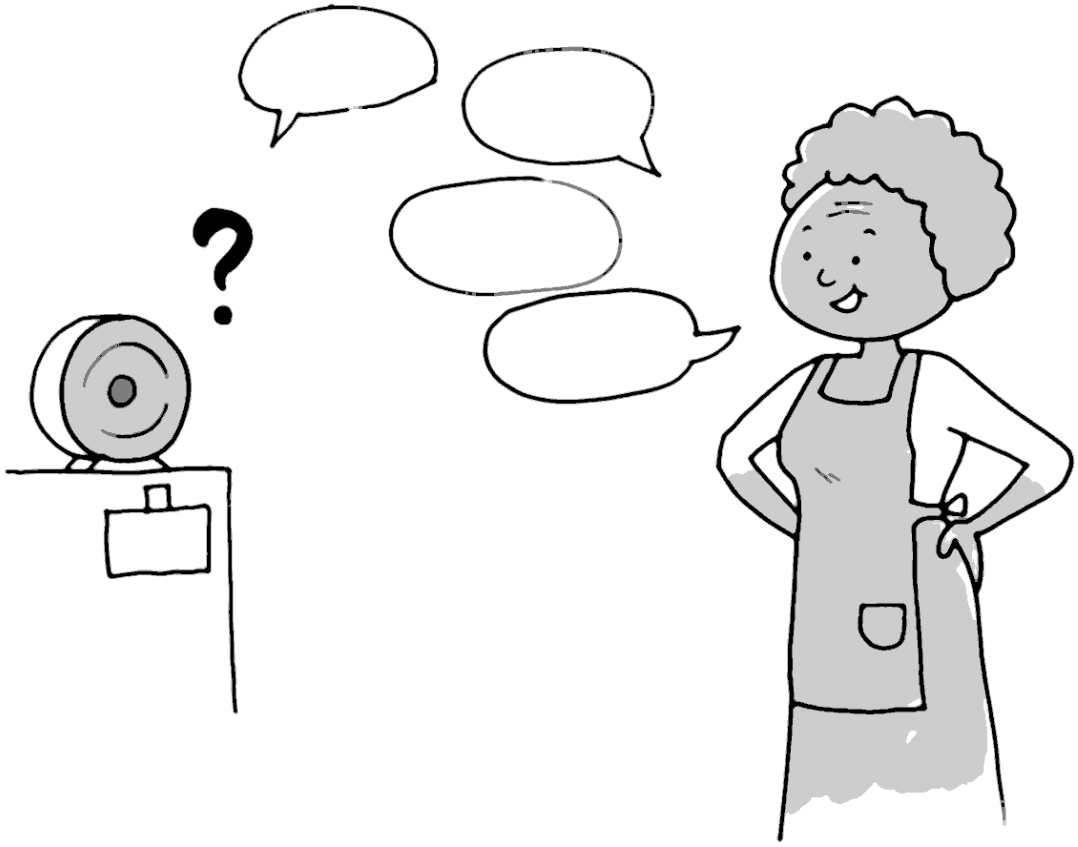


A third case of cat food. She has no cat.

Description

A cartoon of a woman standing in a hall beside a stack of three large boxes printed with a cat, her hands on her hips and a speaker visible on a kitchen shelf behind her.

Figure 16.52: Nothing wrong with how she said it



Fourth time of asking. Nothing wrong with how she said it.

Description

A cartoon of a woman patiently repeating herself to a speaker on a shelf, four blank speech bubbles and a large question mark beside the speaker.

Figure 17.1: What local-first protects

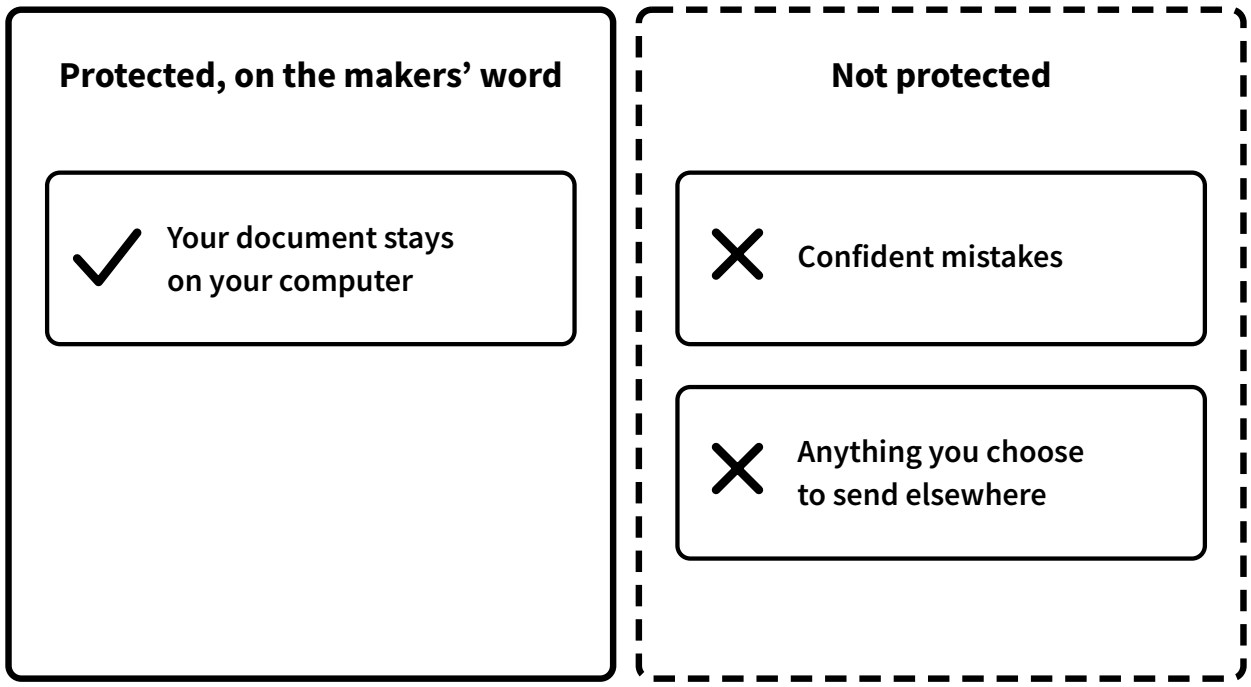


Figure 17.1: What local-first protects, and what it does not.

Description

Two labelled groups side by side. Protected, on the makers' word: your document stays on your computer. Not protected: confident mistakes, and anything you choose to send elsewhere. The point: a local assistant changes your answer to the See question and leaves the rest of the job with you.

Figure 17.2: Online or at home?

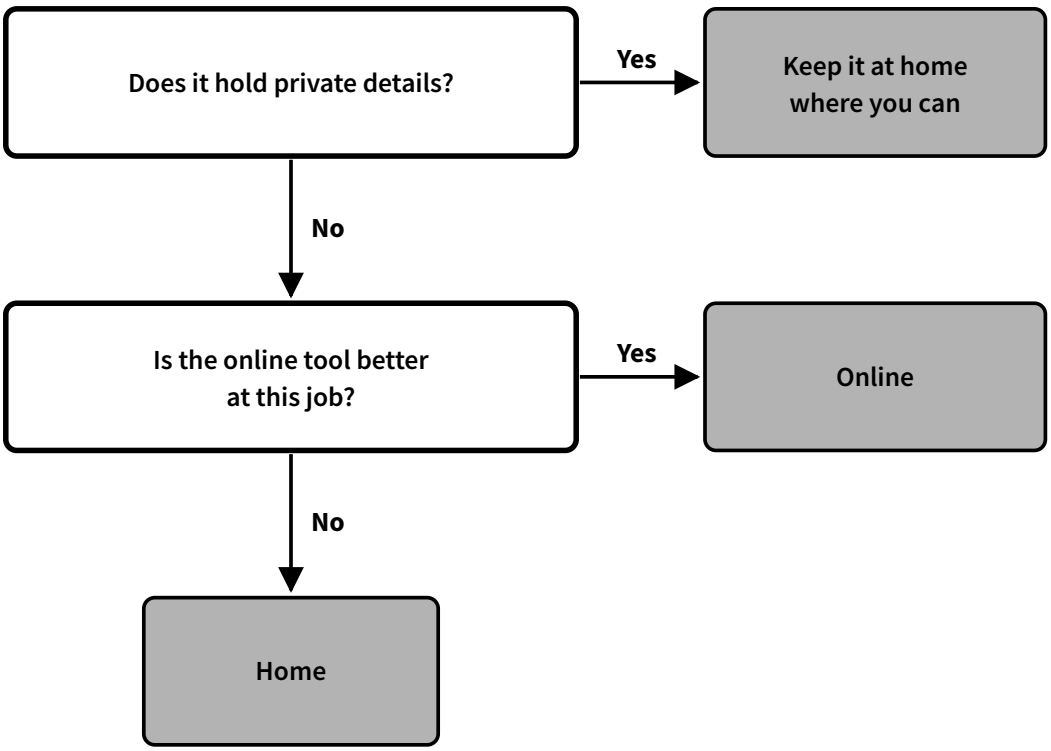


Figure 17.2: Online or at home? Ask two questions.

Description

A decision flow with two questions. The first: does it hold private details? If yes, the path ends at keep it at home where you can. If no, the second question: is the online tool better at this job? Yes leads to online and no leads to home.

Figure 17.51: Back in the envelope



The letter can stay in the house. So, for now, can the hedge.

Description

A cartoon of a man at a laptop folding a letter back into its envelope, with a very tall hedge filling the window behind him.

TAB-17-01: HOUSEHOLD JOBS, ONLINE OR AT HOME

Table 17.1: Household jobs, online or at home.

DESCRIPTION

Table 17.1: Household jobs, online or at home.

TAB-17-02: A MADE-UP LETTER IN PLAIN ENGLISH

Table 17.2: A made-up letter and its plain English version.

DESCRIPTION

Table 17.2: A made-up letter and its plain English version.

Figure 18.1: Names and numbers out first



Figure 18.1: Names and numbers come out first.

Description

An invented letter is drawn twice, side by side. In the first copy, the name, address and account number show as invented field labels. In the second copy, those fields are covered by plain bars. The body of the letter is drawn as plain lines, and no real name or number appears. The point: names and numbers come out before you paste a letter in.

FIGURE 18.2: A PERSON SENDS IT, LAST

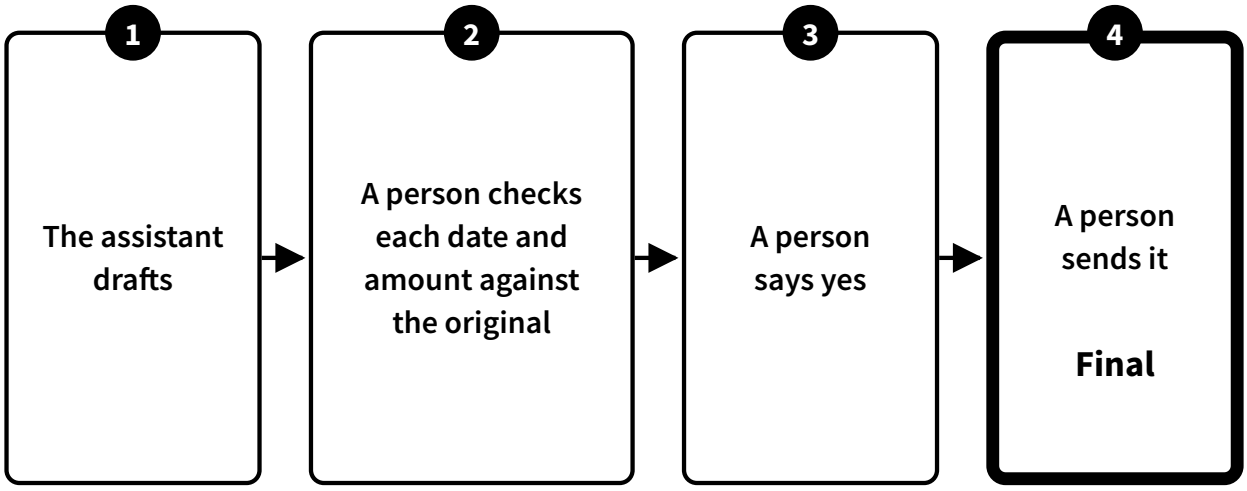


Figure 18.2: It drafts. You check every date and amount. You send it.

DESCRIPTION

Four numbered steps in a row, joined by arrows. 1. The assistant drafts. 2. A person checks each date and amount against the original. 3. A person says yes. 4. A person sends it. The last step is a heavy box with the word Final. The point: only the last step cannot be taken back, which is why it comes last.

Figure 18.51: Under the menu



Found at last, under a menu from a takeaway that closed last year.

Description

A cartoon of a woman lifting a takeaway menu from a pile of post on a hall table and finding a letter underneath, her other hand on her forehead.

Figure 18.52: You post it



Sealed and handed over. The post box is hers.

Description

A cartoon of a small clipboard with a face holding out a sealed envelope to a woman who is standing at a post box.

TAB-18-01: A RENEWALS LIST

Table 18.1: A renewals list with invented entries.

Description

Table 18.1: A renewals list with invented entries.

Figure 19.1: Your answers are on the sheet

House rules sheet

What it is	What it may see	What it may do	How to undo it
Hall lamps, on smart plugs	The time of day	Come on at dusk, go off at 11pm	Press the button on the plug. The wall switch still works

Figure 19.1: The answers are on the sheet.

Description

One invented row of the house rules sheet is drawn large, under the heading House rules sheet. Four cells, each with a label over a short invented entry. What it is: hall lamps, on smart plugs. What it may see: the time of day. What it may do: come on at dusk, go off at 11pm. How to undo it: press the button on the plug, and the wall switch still works. The point: if you did not set the system up, the answers are on the sheet.

Figure 19.2: Keep it, change it or take it out

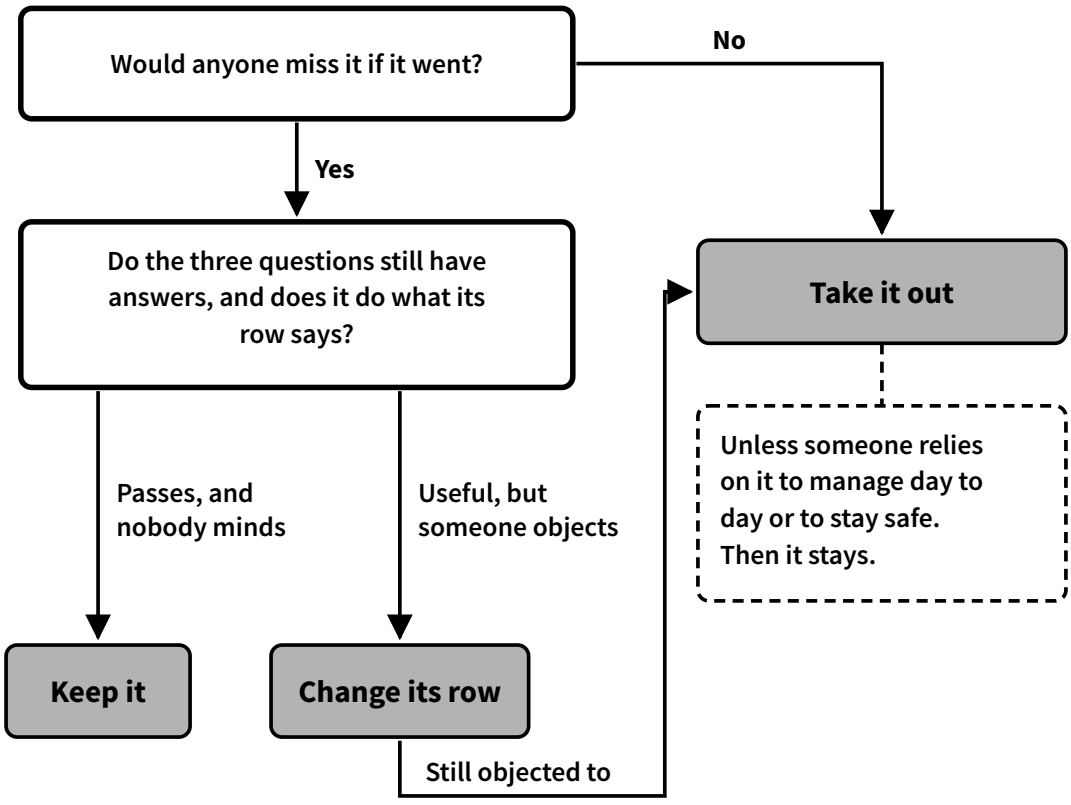
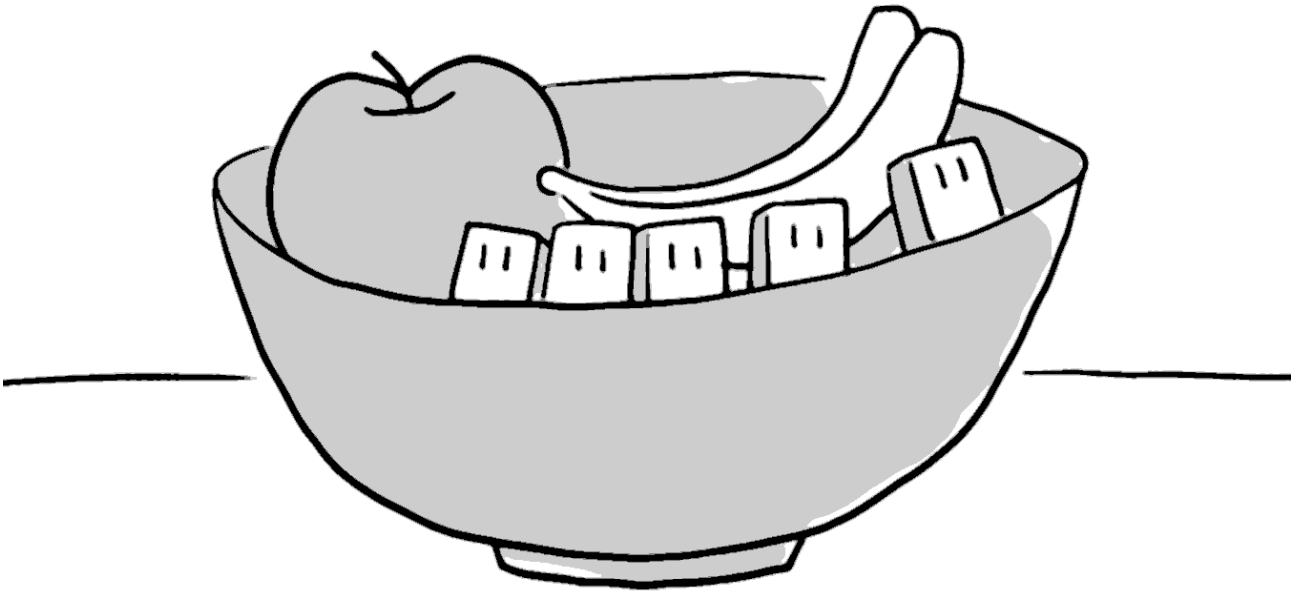


Figure 19.2: Keep it, change it or take it out.

Description

A decision flow that begins with one question: would anyone miss it if it went? No leads to take it out. Yes leads to a second question: do the three questions still have answers, and does it do what its row says? From there, passes, and nobody minds, leads to keep it, and useful, but someone objects, leads to change its row. A third path, still objected to, runs from change its row to take it out. A dashed note hangs under take it out: unless someone relies on it to manage day to day or to stay safe, then it stays. The chapter adds that it stays until you find something that works for that person as well.

Figure 19.51: Five a day



Five a day.

Description

A cartoon of a fruit bowl on a table holding an apple, a banana and five smart plugs.

Figure 19.52: Sixteen notifications



Sixteen notifications. The washing is still done.

Description

A cartoon of a man at a washing machine holding a phone with a long stack of blank notification cards spilling out of it.

TAB-19-01: WHAT GOES WRONG AND WHAT TO DO

Table 19.1: What goes wrong, and what to do about it.

DESCRIPTION

Table 19.1: What goes wrong, and what to do about it.

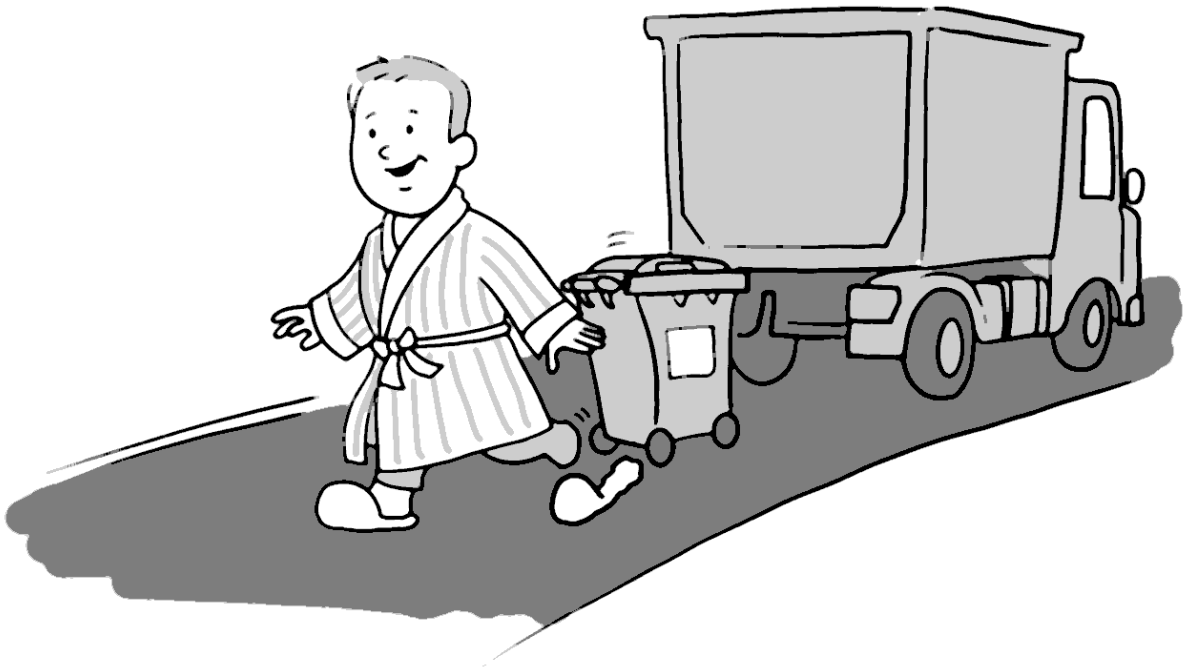
Tab-19-02: A finished house rules sheet

Table 19.2: A finished house rules sheet with invented rows. Last checked: 6 March.

Description

Table 19.2: A finished house rules sheet with invented rows. Last checked: 6 March.

Figure 20.51: Bin night



Bin night. The reminder worked. The slippers were a mistake.

Description

A cartoon of a man in a dressing gown hurrying along a dark road pulling a wheelie bin, a bin lorry just behind him, one slipper flying off.

Figure 21.1: Keep it, return it or skip it

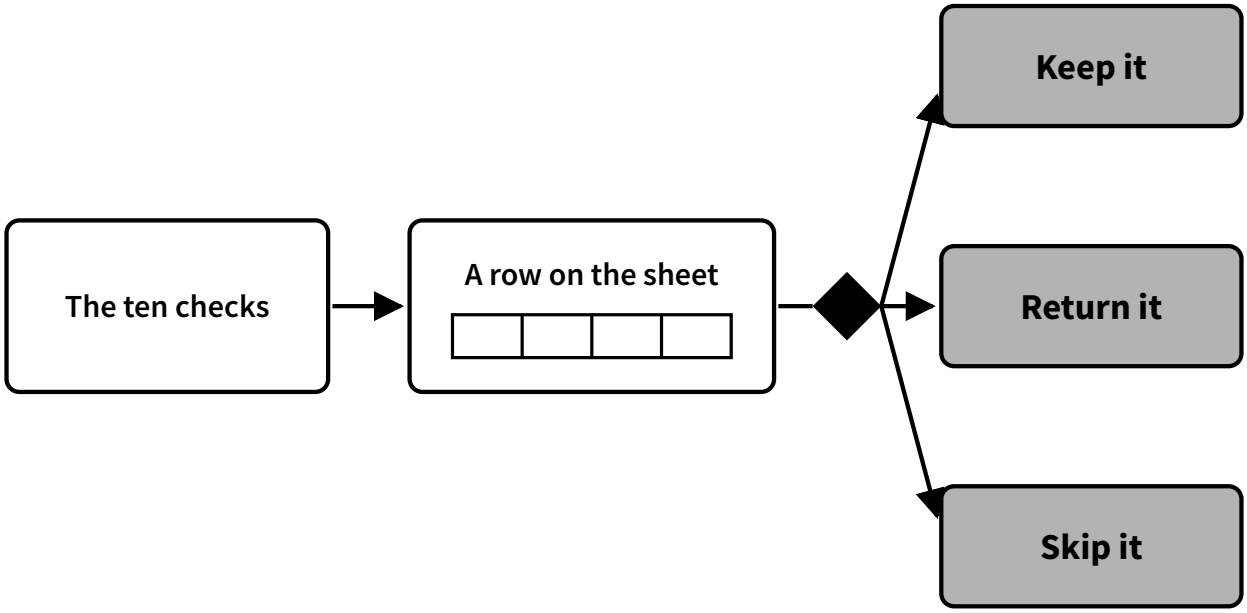


Figure 21.1: Ten checks, then one decision.

Description

A flow in three stages, joined by arrows. First, one box for the ten checks. Second, a box for a row on the sheet, with a strip of four empty cells inside it. Third, a small black decision diamond with three arrows out to the outcomes: keep it, return it or skip it. The point: the ten checks serve one decision.

Figure 21.51: Before the drill

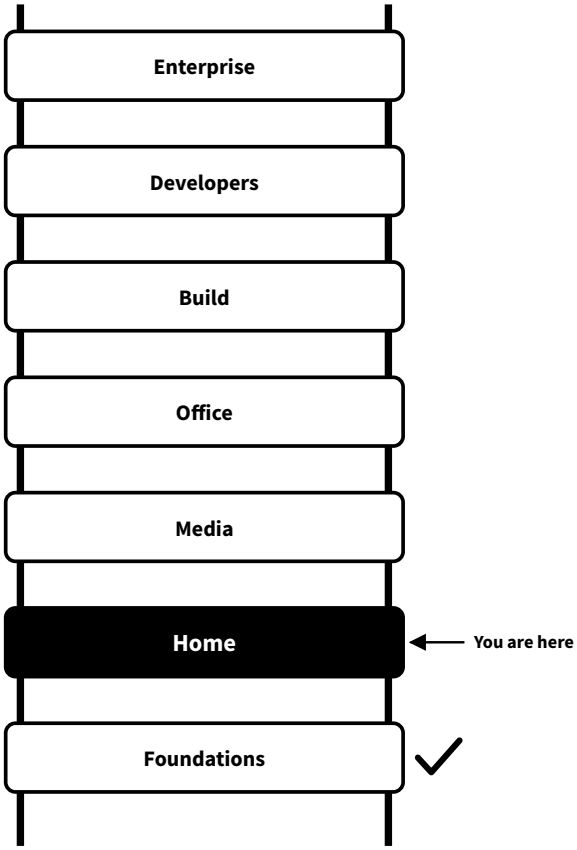


Before the drill: ten questions.

Description

A cartoon of an older man at a front door with a drill and a pencil behind his ear, while a young woman holds up a list in front of the door frame.

Figure 99.1: Where the series climbs next, with Book 2 marked



Seven rungs, and you are standing on the second.

Description

A ladder of seven rungs, labelled from the bottom: Foundations, Home, Media, Office, Build, Developers and Enterprise. The bottom rung, Foundations, carries a tick, because you have climbed it. The second rung, Home, is drawn solid, with an arrow and the words You are here. The five higher rungs are drawn in outline. The point: Book 2 is the second rung of seven.

TAB-99-01: HOUSE RULES SHEET (BLANK FORM)

Date last checked: _____

What it is	What it may see	What it may do	How to undo it

The house rules sheet. A printable copy is in the companion PDF.

DESCRIPTION

A blank form headed 'Date last checked' with a line to write on, then a ruled table with four columns, what it is, what it may see, what it may do and how to undo it, and ten empty rows.

Glossary

Each entry gives the chapter where the term first comes up in this book. The wording is the series' own, so it reads the same in every book of AI Plainly.

Agent: An AI system that plans steps, uses tools and acts towards a goal with some independence. A chat assistant answers when asked, and an automation follows fixed steps; an agent chooses its own steps and takes actions. (chapter 1)

Approve before it acts: The series rule that a person reviews an agent's proposed action and says yes before the agent carries out anything important, such as sending, buying, deleting or publishing. (chapter 1)

Artificial intelligence (AI): Computer systems that do tasks we usually link with human thinking, such as recognising patterns, understanding language, making predictions or choosing actions. The word covers many different techniques, so it helps to ask which kind is meant. (Introduction)

Assistant (AI assistant): A product that lets you ask a model for answers or help in plain language, by typing or speaking. Chat, voice, home and office assistants are all assistants; what each one may see and do differs. (chapter 1)

Automation: A fixed set of steps that a system runs by itself when something triggers it, in the same way every time. An automation does not decide its own steps. (chapter 1)

Confident mistake: The series' plain name for a hallucination: an answer that sounds sure of itself and is wrong. (chapter 1)

Context: Everything a model can take into account when it responds: your prompt, the earlier messages, any files you attach and any instructions set by the product. (chapter 1)

Dry run: A practice pass in which a tool shows or reports what it would do and changes nothing. You look at the result, and only then decide whether to run it for real. (chapter 2)

Hallucination: An output that sounds confident but is false or made up, such as an invented fact, quote or source. This series also calls it a confident mistake. (chapter 1)

Home automation hub: A device or program in the home that connects smart devices, such as lights, heating and sensors, and runs routines between them. (chapter 6)

Ladder Loop: The series framework of five steps for any task you give to AI: Know it, Brief it, Limit it, Check it, Keep it. (chapter 1)

Large language model (LLM): A model trained on very large amounts of text to predict the next token, which lets it write, summarise, translate and answer questions in plain language. It produces likely text; it does not look facts up unless it is connected to a tool that does. (chapter 1)

Local-first: Set up so that your data is stored and processed on your own devices where possible, with online services used only when needed. (chapter 5)

Machine learning: A way of building AI in which a computer finds patterns in examples, called data, instead of following rules a person wrote by hand. (chapter 3)

MCP (Model Context Protocol): An open standard for connecting AI applications to outside tools and data. Each tool or data source is offered through a small program called an MCP server, so one way of connecting works across many tools. (chapter 8)

Model: What machine learning produces: a very large set of learned numbers that turns an input into an output, such as a question in and a reply out. A model is one part of a product, not the whole product. (chapter 1)

Permissions: The settings that say what an assistant or agent may see and what it may do. Good permissions can be checked, limited and undone. (chapter 1)

Prompt: The instruction, question or material you give an AI system to get a response. (chapter 1)

Rung: One book's level on the series ladder, named by its rung label: Foundations, Home, Media, Office, Build, Developers or Enterprise. (chapter 1)

Terminal (command line): A text window where you type commands for the computer to run, one line at a time. (Introduction)

Training: Adjusting a model with large amounts of example data, called training data, until its outputs follow the patterns in that data. Training happens before you use the model. Whether your own conversations are later used to train future models depends on the product and its settings. (chapter 14)

For anyone who did not set this up

From chapter 19. Print these pages for anyone in your home who didn't set the system up.

If someone has handed you this book and pointed at this page, this section is yours, and from here on 'you' means you. Read it on your own if you'd rather, and you don't have to talk about it afterwards.

You didn't buy the plugs or download the app, and you still live with all of it. The people who build one home hub say that those who live with someone else's set-up are the group they hear from least.

You won't need an app, an account or any technical words for what follows.

One thing comes first. If you are afraid of the person who set this up, change nothing yet. If it is not safe to change something, leave it as it is.

There's more on this later in this chapter, under 'When technology is used to control someone'.

If you're simply curious or fed up, read on. Both are fair enough.

What can each thing in your home notice? A speaker's microphones are waiting for its wake word, the name you call it by. The makers say what you say goes to their servers only once it wakes.

A camera records pictures and often sound, for as long as its settings and any subscription say. A motion sensor says only whether something moved, and a door sensor knows one thing: open or closed, and when.

Some smart TVs can report what you watch, if that option is on. A hub can use your phone to tell whether you have left or come home, if you turn that on. It's your phone, so that one is up to you.

For your own home, the answers should be on one page. It's called the house rules sheet, and whoever set this up may have been keeping it on paper as they went.

Each device gets one row. 'What it may see' is what it can notice, 'what it may do' is what it can switch or send, and 'how to undo it' is how you stop it and put it back. Figure 19.1 shows you one.

Figure 19.1: The answers are on the sheet.

If there's no sheet yet, that's the first thing to ask for. Try this: 'Can we write down what each of these does, so that I'm not guessing?'

Read the row for anything that bothers you. If it tells you something you didn't know, ask about it, because the person who wrote it may have forgotten that you never saw it.

The last column tells you how to turn each thing off and put it back. Often that's a wall switch or a plug. Once you've turned something off at the wall or pulled out its plug, a routine can't bring it back until the power is there again.

If you can't easily reach a switch or a plug, say so, because that row needs changing. You shouldn't have to wait for someone else to turn something off.

Many speakers have a microphone switch or button. If yours has one, it is the plainest control you own. For a camera or an alarm, the last column names who to ask, and you go to them. If that's the person you're afraid of, don't ask, and read 'When technology is used to control someone' first.

Whoever set it up is the person to ask about anything else. You might say: 'Can you show me how to turn this off, and then let me do it myself?' Ask whether you can have your own way into it as well, so that you aren't stuck when they're away.

Plenty of this is yours to refuse. You can say no to a device in the room where you sleep, to a routine that lights the hall at midnight and to your phone joining in. You can also ask to be told before the next thing arrives.

Nobody needs a technical reason from you. 'It wakes me' will do, and so will 'I don't like it'. If saying no wouldn't be safe for you, leave it unsaid for now and read 'When technology is used to control someone' first.

Remember. You can say no. You live here, so ask for the row to be changed, or for the thing to go. If saying no wouldn't be safe, leave things as they are for now.

When technology is used to control someone

Also from chapter 19, and named in the pages before this one.

Everything so far assumes that the people in your home are on the same side. Some homes aren't like that.

If you are in danger now, call 999 or 112.

If something in your home is being used to keep track of you, to frighten you or to shut you out, this section is for you. If an earlier chapter sent you here because of an unknown name, someone in your account or someone checking up on you, you're in the right place. Anything on this page can wait until you're somewhere safe to read it.

If you are afraid of the person, change nothing yet. Read this somewhere that person's cameras and speakers can't pick you up.

You may want to pull the plug the minute you find out. Please hold off, and hold off raising it with that person too, because some changes are visible to them.

Try not to delete anything for now, either. Refuge's advice is to save any evidence before removing access.

Watch out. If it is not safe to change something or hold a meeting, leave it as it is. Some changes are visible to the other person, and that can be dangerous. Make a plan before you touch anything.

If you're reading this for a friend or relative, the same goes for you. Leave their devices as they are.

If the person you're afraid of isn't a partner, perhaps a relative, a carer or someone you share a house with, the same advice holds.

Now a word to anyone who set a system up. Do not use cameras, trackers or logs to keep watch on a partner, a housemate, a relative you live with or anyone who works in your home, such as a childminder, a cleaner or a carer. That is this book's rule. Refuge treats watching a partner as a form of abuse.

Worry about someone is not a reason to watch them without their say. If an older relative or someone you care for wants a sensor or a camera for their own safety, that's their decision, and it goes on the sheet.

Everything on the sheet in this book is agreed in the open. A yes given out of fear is not agreement, and a filled-in sheet doesn't prove otherwise.

THE TEN CHECKS

From chapter 21. Print this page and hold anything new up to these ten questions before it joins your home.

- [ ] Check 1: what does it sense?
- [ ] Check 2: does it work with the internet off?
- [ ] Check 3: does it need an account?
- [ ] Check 4: how long does the maker promise updates?
- [ ] Check 5: what happens if the company stops the service?
- [ ] Check 6: can you get your data out and delete it?
- [ ] Check 7: who else does it affect?
- [ ] Check 8: is there a local-first option?
- [ ] Check 9: how is it reset for the next owner?
- [ ] Check 10: what would you write in its row?