

Organizing unread content

Tom Rochette <tom.rochette@coreteks.org>

January 21, 2020 — [56b76eb4](#)

1 Question

How can I organize all the webpages I never read?

2 Answer

2.1 TL; DR

1. Delete articles you know you will never read
2. Add articles you'd like to read one day in a system such as [pocket](#)
3. Track when articles are added to your “must-read” list, after 1 year “graduate” them by deleting them from the list
4. Estimate how long an article takes to read and how much value you expect it will bring you
5. Use the ROI to order your reading list

2.2 The details

The following method applies to content online as well as offline (magazine article, books).

The first, most important, and difficult strategy, is to simply let go of those articles. Most of the time, we keep certain things out of fear of missing out. We may also think that if at some point we have free time we'll go through them, however that never happens. We always try to find something new instead. This can be seen as a way for the mind to communicate that it doesn't think it would be worthwhile to spend its time reading this content so it's better not to and instead we should look for alternative content to read.

Once you've gotten rid of all those articles you decided you would never read you can add them to tracking systems such as pocket. The idea here is that it may be possible for you to read this content, but in other contexts than when you're in front of your computer. Maybe you'd be likelier to read the article if you're waiting in line or waiting for your bus/subway. Maybe you'd read it if you're on your way to work.

Track when you add articles to your list. The older an article becomes, the less likely you will be to read it. As articles reach a certain age, it might be time to graduate them to the graveyard, in other words, to never read them. Mark them as read or remove them from your reading list.

You should have an idea of how long an article takes to read. Pocket offers an estimate of how long it takes to read an article. Knowing how long it takes to read an article is important since one of the techniques to get rid of articles is to go through all the short articles first since the time investment may be low.

As in the case of task management, the strategy we will want to adopt to organize and prioritize our reading will be related to the return on investment (ROI) metric. Each article should have an estimate of the value it will bring you to read it (e.g., how much you would have paid to acquire this knowledge), as well as an estimate of the effort (duration, e.g., how long it takes to read the article according to pocket) necessary to go through it. You can then order your reading list from articles with the highest ROI to the least ROI and feel more confident that you are reading high (expected) value content.