The Playwright’s Desk

User Manual

Version 1.05

theplaywrightsdesk.com

Contents

Chapter 1

Welcome

What The Playwright’s Desk is, what it isn’t, and what to know before you start.

The Playwright’s Desk is a personal management system built specifically for working playwrights. If you submit regularly — to festivals, competitions, residencies, theatres, fellowships, publications — you’ve probably developed some system for tracking it all. Maybe it’s a spreadsheet. Maybe it’s Play Submissions Helper. Maybe it’s a stack of browser bookmarks and a notes app that’s getting out of hand.

The Playwright’s Desk brings all of that into one place: the opportunities you’re tracking, the submissions you’ve made, the plays in your catalog, the people you have relationships with, and the correspondence you’ve sent. Everything connected to everything else.

What you need to know before you start

You don’t have to fill everything in. The app is useful with minimal data and becomes more useful as you add more. Start with what you have right now and build from there.

Your data lives in your browser. Nothing you enter is stored on a server. It lives in your browser’s local storage — private, fast, and under your control. Back up regularly. Chapter 11 covers this fully.

The app works best on a desktop or laptop. It’s usable on a tablet but the layout is optimized for a larger screen.

The navigation

The navigation bar across the top of the app uses dropdown menus. Click any menu name to see the modules inside.

- **Home**
  Your daily dashboard: upcoming deadlines, recent activity, quick stats, and submissions ready to resubmit.
- **My Work**
  Play Catalog and Career Events.
- **Submissions**
  Submissions Ledger, Opportunities Database, and Correspondence.
- **Productions**

Production Log, Royalties, and Licensing.

■ **People**

Contacts and Email Log.

■■ **Tools**

Calendar, Season Planner, Analytics, Reports, and Search.

How the modules connect

The value of the app isn't any single module — it's the connections between them. When you add a play to your catalog, it becomes available in Submissions. When you convert an opportunity to a submission, the submission links back to the opportunity. When you generate a cover letter, it draws from your play's synopsis and the opportunity's details. When you log a production, it updates the play's record.

Chapter 2

Your First Fifteen Minutes

Exactly what to do first. You don't need to set everything up at once.

When you first log in, sample data is pre-loaded — a fictional playwright named Jordan Mercer with plays, submissions, contacts, and productions already in place. This lets you explore the app fully before entering your own data. When you're ready to start, click **Clear sample data** in the banner at the top of the screen.

Step 1 — Set up your profile (5 minutes)

Click your avatar or the Profile option. Fill in your name, contact information, and your playwright bio. The profile feeds the Correspondence module. Even a basic bio is enough to get started.

TIP *If you have a short bio and a long bio, keep both. Label them clearly — e.g., 'Short bio — 50 words' and 'Full bio — 200 words'.*

Step 2 — Add one play (3 minutes)

Go to My Work → Play Catalog, then Add Play. Fill in: Title, Format, Cast size, and Synopsis. Click Save.

Step 3 — Add an opportunity (3 minutes)

Go to Submissions → Opportunities. Click Add Opportunity, then Extract Details. Copy the full text of any call for submissions, paste it in, and click Extract. The app fills in the form. Review and save.

Step 4 — Convert it to a submission (2 minutes)

Open the opportunity. Click → Submit. A pre-filled submission form opens. Select your play. Save. You now have a play linked to a submission linked to an opportunity — the core of the app working.

Chapter 3

The Opportunities Database

Your personal directory of every opportunity you're tracking.

What an opportunity record contains

- Name and organization
- Opportunity type — Festival, Competition, Award, Residency, Fellowship, Workshop, Commission, Publication, Grant
- Organization type — Theatre, University, High School / Secondary School, K-12 Educational, and more
- Opens and Closes dates
- Submission types accepted — Full-length, One-act, 10-minute, Musical, Monologue, and more
- Conditions — Blind, Unproduced, Prior readings OK, US only, Simultaneous OK
- Fee and Prize / Award
- Website and submission portal URL
- Location, Contact name, and Notes
- Your status and star rating

Adding opportunities

By pasting a call for submissions (recommended)

Copy the full text of any call — from a website, email, or listserv. Click Add Opportunity, click Extract Details, paste, and click Extract. The app fills in the form. Review and save.

> ***TIP*** *Copy everything including headers and footers. Extract Details filters out the noise.*

■ Suggest Plays

Every opportunity card has a Suggest Plays button. Click it to see your plays ranked by fit — scored on type, cast size, production history vs. premiere requirements, blind version availability, and keyword overlap. Click → Submit on any result to open a pre-filled submission form.

Manually

Click Add Opportunity and fill in the form. A name, deadline, and type is enough to start.

From Play Submissions Helper

Click the gear icon in the sort bar, select PSH, and import their Excel file. Use Today's Imports to review; Delete All Today's to undo a bad import.

With Smart Search

Describe what you're looking for in plain language. The app returns a list of matching organizations. Click Add, then Enrich to pull in current details.

IMPORTANT Smart Search results are based on known organizations, not live deadline data. Always verify current deadlines on the organization's website.

Enrich and Fetch from Website

Extract Details — you copy text and paste it in. **Fetch from Website** — the app fetches the page itself using the URL in the Website field. **Enrich** — same as Fetch from Website but triggered from the opportunity card. All three do the same job.

Filtering and sorting

- Filter by status, submission type, fee, opportunity type, deadline range
- Sort by deadline, date added, name, star rating, or status
- Search bar — searches names, locations, notes, and requirements

TIP *For daily use, filter to Open and Upcoming sorted by deadline ascending.*

Chapter 4

The Submissions Ledger

Your complete record of every play submitted to every organization.

Converting an opportunity to a submission

Open the opportunity record and click → Submit. A pre-filled submission form opens. Select the play, set the submission date, add notes, and save.

Status lifecycle

- **Unsent** — created but not yet submitted
- **Sent** — submitted and awaiting response
- **Received** — organization confirmed receipt
- **Accepted** — selected for production, development, or publication
- **Declined** — not selected this cycle
- **No Response** — notification deadline passed with no word
- **Withdrawn** — you pulled the submission

TIP *A submission is not complete until it has a final status. Even No Response counts as closure and keeps your analytics accurate.*

Resubmission tracking

Each submission has a **May reapply?** field and a **Reopen / next cycle date**. Set these when logging a decline. The Home panel's "Ready to resubmit" section surfaces submissions whose reopen date is within 30 days.

Duplicate detection and eligibility warnings

An amber warning appears if you open a submission form for a play you've already submitted to that venue. A red warning appears if the opportunity requires an unproduced script but the play has productions on record, or if a blind version is required but none is saved.

Importing existing submission history

Go to Data → Import in the Submissions panel. Select a CSV file, map your columns, and click Import. Even a two-column CSV with organization and play title creates a useful historical record.

Chapter 5

Correspondence

Generate tailored cover letters, follow-ups, queries, and withdrawal notices.

How it works

The Correspondence module draws from three sources: your playwright bio from your Profile, the synopsis and production history of the play from your Play Catalog, and the details of the submission opportunity. You select the letter type, link it to a submission, choose your bio version, and generate.

Letter types

- **Cover Letter** — a full submission cover letter personalized to the organization and play
- **Follow-up** — a professional check-in when a notification deadline has passed
- **Query** — initial outreach to gauge interest before submitting a full script
- **Withdrawal** — a notice that you're pulling the submission
- **Custom** — free-form email that still draws from your profile and submission data

Generating a letter

1. Go to Submissions → Correspondence.
2. Click New Letter.
3. Select the letter type.
4. Under Load from Submission, select the submission this letter is for.
5. Choose your bio version.
6. Click Generate. A draft appears within seconds.
7. Read carefully. Add your voice, adjust the opening and closing, correct any detail that's off.
8. Click Save. The letter is attached to the submission permanently.

Writing a synopsis that works

Your synopsis feeds directly into your cover letters. The best submission synopses are concrete (they name characters and set up the specific situation), focused (central conflict without summarizing every plot point), tonal (they give a sense of the play's register), and brief (one strong paragraph is usually enough).

***TIP** Avoid opening with “This is a play about…” — start with the situation or the character.*

Chapter 6

Your Play Catalog

Where your works live — and what connects them to everything else.

What to include

Every play you're actively submitting should be in the catalog. At minimum: Title, Format, Cast size, and Synopsis. Runtime, keywords, setting, and production requirements are useful but not required to start.

Script versions

The Versions section tracks each draft: version number, label, date, page count, and whether it's a blind copy. Mark one version as the current approved draft — it shows highlighted in gold. The version record tells you exactly which draft went to each venue.

Materials packages

A package bundles the script version, bio type, synopsis type, and other materials you typically submit together. Name packages like "Standard Festival Package" or "Blind Contest Package" and reference them in submission notes.

Contributors

Record co-playwrights, composers, translators, rights holders, and anyone whose approval may be required for submission. Each contributor has: name, role, email, split/share percentage, and an "Approval needed" flag. Plays with contributors requiring approval are flagged in the Play Dashboard.

Suggest Plays

From any opportunity card, click ■ Suggest Plays to see your catalog ranked by fit. Scoring considers type match, cast size, production history, blind version availability, prior submissions to that venue, and keyword overlap.

Production history

Log every production, workshop, staged reading, radio production, or publication. Many opportunities require disclosure of production history. Having an accurate record means you can answer that question correctly.

IMPORTANT “Unproduced” in most submission guidelines means no full production. Workshop productions and staged readings are generally acceptable. When in doubt, disclose and let the organization decide.

Chapter 7

Contacts

Your professional relationships — searchable, connected, and preserved.

Adding a contact

Go to People → Contacts, click Add Contact. Fill in: Name, Title, Organization, Email. In the Notes field, record the context: how you met, what productions of yours they've seen, what kind of work they champion.

TIP *Add a contact immediately after any meaningful interaction — a conference conversation, a post-reading meeting, an email exchange. While the context is fresh.*

Linking contacts

Link a contact to an opportunity record to see who you know at a theatre when looking at it. Link to a submission to see who at that organization knows your work. The contact record shows a full history of every submission and opportunity they're connected to.

Recording interactions over time

After any meaningful interaction, add a note with date, context, what was discussed, and any follow-up expected. Three years from now, when you're reaching out to someone you met briefly at a festival, you'll be able to pull up exactly what you talked about.

Email Log

People → Emails stores a record of correspondence sent through the Correspondence module and any received emails you log manually. Each email can be linked to a submission. Click Show on any email row to read the full body.

Chapter 8

Analytics, Goals, and Career Events

Understanding your submission data — and tracking the arc of your career.

Analytics

Go to Tools → Analytics. The submission volume chart shows how many submissions you've made each month. Look for consistency, trends, and gaps. The status breakdown shows acceptance rate, decline rate, no-response rate, and withdrawals. Filter by play to see the submission history of a single work.

> ***TIP*** *A high no-response rate may mean you're submitting to organizations that don't communicate outcomes, or that you're not following up on submissions with stated notification deadlines.*

Goals

Set measurable targets for the year: total submissions, acceptances, productions, or income. Go to Goals in the Analytics panel to set them. Progress appears on your Home dashboard.

Career Events

Go to My Work → Career Events to log milestones beyond submissions: awards, nominations, grants, fellowships, residencies, commissions, publications, press mentions, podcast appearances, and reviews.

Each event has: title, type, date, organization, associated play (optional), amount or value, URL, notes, and a résumé flag. Events are color-coded by type and sortable by date.

> ***TIP*** *Log press mentions and reviews as they happen. Even a brief local mention is worth a record — they're hard to reconstruct later.*

Chapter 9

Production Log, Royalties, and Licensing

Tracking the life of your work after acceptance.

The Production Log

Go to Productions → Production Log. Log every production, workshop, staged reading, radio production, podcast, or publication. For each entry: play, organization, type, director, dates, city, venue, cast, and notes. The production log links to your Play Catalog, so every play's record shows its complete production history.

TIP *Log productions as they happen. The details — director name, opening date, venue — are hard to reconstruct accurately after the fact.*

Royalties

Go to Productions → Royalties. Log every payment: production royalties, option payments, commissioning fees, publication advances, prizes, and awards. For each entry: play, organization, amount, payment date, and status. These figures flow into Analytics and give you a clean year-end record.

Licensing

Go to Productions → Licensing. Track licensing agreements: play, licensee, license type, territory, term (start and end date), and royalty rate or flat fee. Use the Expiring Soon filter to see agreements approaching their end date.

Chapter 10

Calendar and Season Planner

Deadlines, reminders, and submission strategy.

Calendar

Go to Tools → Calendar. Submission deadlines from your Opportunities Database and alarms from your Submissions Ledger appear automatically. Add manual entries for production dates, meeting reminders, writing deadlines, or anything else. Each entry has: title, date, time, type (deadline, production, meeting, reminder), play, and notes. Set Reminder Days for advance browser notifications.

Season Planner

Go to Tools → Season Planner for a strategic view of your submission practice. The Season Planner shows opportunity distribution across the year, open submission windows, and a play-opportunity matrix — helping you identify periods with too many simultaneous deadlines or gaps with no upcoming opportunities.

Chapter 11

Data — Backup, Restore, and Import

Your data lives in your browser. This chapter tells you how to keep it safe.

IMPORTANT Clearing your browser history or storage, reinstalling your browser, switching to a different browser, or performing certain system updates will erase your data. The backup is the only protection against this. Back up regularly.

Automatic backup

The app automatically downloads a backup file to your Downloads folder once a week when you log in. You'll see a brief notification when this happens. You can also trigger a manual backup at any time.

Manual backup

Click Data in the top navigation, then Export backup. A file is downloaded to your device. Save it to a cloud folder (iCloud, Google Drive, Dropbox), email it to yourself, or store it on an external drive.

TIP *Keep at least two recent backup files. If a backup is corrupted, you want the one before it.*

Restoring from a backup

Click Data → Import backup. Select your backup JSON file. A confirmation dialog shows what will be restored. Confirm to restore — the app reloads with your data.

NOTE *Restoring replaces all current data. Export a new backup first if you've made changes since your last one.*

Moving to a different device

1. On your current device: Data → Export backup. Save the file.
2. Transfer the file to your new device via email, AirDrop, shared cloud folder, or USB.
3. On the new device: open theplaywrightsdesk.com and log in.

4. Data → Import backup. Select the transferred file.
5. Your complete history is now on the new device.

The app does not sync automatically between devices. Export a backup after any significant session before switching devices.

Importing from a spreadsheet

- **Submissions:** Submissions → Data → Import. Map your columns to the app’s fields.
- **Opportunities:** Opportunities → Data → Import. Map your columns.
- **Contacts:** People → Contacts → Data → Import. Map your columns.

TIP *You don’t need a perfect spreadsheet. Even a two-column CSV with organization name and play title creates a useful historical record.*

Chapter 12

Frequently Asked Questions

Answers to the questions that come up most often.

Can I use the app on my phone?

The app is designed for desktop and laptop use. It’s usable on a tablet but not optimized for phone screens.

What happens if I clear my browser history?

Clearing your browser storage will erase your app data. Back up regularly and save backup files somewhere outside the browser — a cloud folder, email, or external drive.

Can I use the app on multiple devices?

Yes, but data doesn’t sync automatically between devices. Export a backup on one device, transfer the file to the other, and import it there.

Is my data private?

Yes. Your play catalog, submissions, contacts, and all other app data are stored locally in your browser and are never transmitted to or stored on any server. Only your account email and subscription status are held externally.

What does “unproduced” mean in the submission context?

In most submission guidelines, “unproduced” means no professional or non-professional full production — staged readings and workshops are generally acceptable. When in doubt, disclose and let the organization decide.

What is the Datafeed?

The Datafeed is a regularly updated database of open submission opportunities that will push directly into your Opportunities Database. It is currently in active development and will be available as an add-on feature when launched.

How do I report a bug or request a feature?

Email help@theplaywrightsdesk.com or use the feedback form at theplaywrightsdesk.com/feedback. Every report is read personally.

What happens when my trial ends?

When your 30-day trial ends, you'll need an active subscription to access the app. Your data remains safe in your browser — it is not deleted. Subscribe at any time to restore full access.

I found a duplicate in my Opportunities Database. How do I remove it?

In the Opportunities panel, click the Duplicates button in the sort bar. The dialog shows all suspected duplicates side by side. Click Delete on the unwanted copy.

The Playwright’s Desk

Questions? help@theplaywrightsdesk.com

theplaywrightsdesk.com