

WORKSHEET · PUBLIC · 10 MIN

Starting with something messy

For when several things are on your mind and you cannot tell yet whether they belong together. Twenty minutes. You do not need to know what it is before you start.

For when several things are on your mind and you cannot tell yet whether they belong together. A stretch of bad sleep, a conversation you keep replaying, a bill, a decision you are avoiding, something at work. Twenty minutes. You do not need to know what it is before you start. The first version is allowed to be partial, emotional, vague, or wrong.

Empty it out

Write everything that is on your mind about this, one line each, in any order. Do not sort yet.

What is on my mind

What belongs together?

Signal first: the relationship between several concerns reveals the context they belong to.
Read the list. Mark the lines that connect. Give each group a temporary name. Two groups

is common. One is fine. Five means you have found two or three contexts, and that is useful to know.

Group	Which lines belong to it	A temporary name

What stays outside?

Some lines do not belong to this. Naming where they belong instead is relief. It is also how the context keeps its edges.

Not this	Where it belongs

Where do you stand?

The orientation lenses. Take the group that matters most right now and answer what you can.

Question	Right now
What am I actually dealing with?	
What am I trying to understand, protect, change, or make possible?	
Where do I stand in it?	
Who and what else is part of it?	
What is changing, recurring, or unresolved?	

Say it in one sentence

The one-sentence PLAIT. "These things belong together, and I need to work with them in context." Now your version, in your words, with what the context may be trying to protect, resolve, complete, or make possible.

My sentence (current, not final)

What moves next, if anything?

The messy start is a legitimate start. The next move can be small, or it can be waiting with a date attached. If a group turned out to be a project, a transition, or a decision, its own tool is on this shelf.

- ☐ One small move:
- ☐ Or wait, and what I am waiting for:
- ☐ When I will look at this again:

Clarity is not required before practice begins. Clarity develops as context is brought into view.

When there is credible risk. If any line on the list involves your safety or someone else's, that line comes first, and the honest move is toward qualified help.

In the PLAIT Context System the groups you named become PLAITS, and the lines become their first notes. The download carries this worksheet as app-aligned entries.

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Source: New for the Practice workbench (2026-09-29). Follows the entry points (Practice Model §3), the orientation lenses and the one-sentence PLAIT (§6), in the language of a messy start.

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