



USER GUIDE

Palma

A local-first creative suite for gathering, arranging, and focusing visual references — from first inbox drop to a client-ready brief.

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What's inside

01	What is Palma	03
02	Projects & the Dashboard	04
03	The Dump Board	05
04	Notes, comments & connectors	06
05	Keyboard shortcuts	07
06	Focus — zones & curation	08
07	Scratchpad	09
08	Library	10
09	Exporting & the Process Brief	11
10	The Palma Clipper (coming soon)	12
11	Appearance — light & dark	13
12	Tips for a clean workflow	14



What is Palma

Palma is a quiet place to collect what you find, arrange what matters, and hand off what's ready — without the file struggling to look like software.

Most reference tools try to impress you. Palma tries to get out of the way. The whole app reads like paper: a soft near-white canvas, ink-dark text, a faint grain texture under everything. There's exactly one accent colour (near-black), and colour is reserved for the few places it actually carries meaning — group frames, Focus zone tints, comment markers.

Underneath that restraint is a real working structure, built around three connected spaces:

- **Dump Board** — the inbox. Drop anything here: images, videos, screenshots, links, sticky notes. Nothing is precious yet.
- **Focus** — the curation layer. Pull the references that matter into tinted zones, arrange them, annotate them, and write a Direction statement for the project.
- **Scratchpad** — a ruled notebook page per project, for the thinking that doesn't belong on the canvas.

Everything lives inside a **project** — a self-contained folder on disk. Projects don't talk to each other except when you explicitly move or copy something between them, so a client's work never bleeds into another's.

Local-first, by design. Palma writes your work straight to a project folder on your machine as you go — not to a server. Open the folder in Explorer/Finder any time; the assets are real files, not opaque app data.



Projects & the Dashboard

The Dashboard is where every project lives as a card — a snapshot of its Dump Board, a name, and a last-opened date. It's the front door of the app.

Creating a project

Click **New project** in the sidebar (or on the Dashboard). Give it a name and, on desktop, a folder — Palma scaffolds an `assets/` folder inside it and writes a `palma.json` session file that holds the project's structure. That file is the single source of truth for everything you build.

The Inbox project

Palma keeps one special project called **Inbox** as a landing zone. Once the **Palma Clipper** browser extension ships (*coming soon*), images you save while no project is open will land here automatically; open any project first and the clip goes straight to that project's Dump Board instead.

Recoloring a project

Right-click a project card's `...` menu to pick a colour swatch. That colour becomes the project's identity chip in the sidebar's Recent list — the dashboard card itself always shows a real snapshot of the board, never a flat colour, so you can recognise a project at a glance.



The Library

The Library tab (sidebar) is a flat, searchable grid of every asset across every project — useful when you remember an image but not which board it's on.



The Dump Board

An infinite, dot-gridded canvas — the creative inbox. Messy on purpose.

Everything starts here. There's no "wrong" way to use the Dump Board — drop things in, move them around, group what belongs together, and don't worry about tidiness until you actually need it.

Getting things onto the board

- **Drag & drop** — images or videos from your file manager or a browser window.
- **Paste** — a copied screenshot, an image from another app, a URL, or plain text. Palma figures out what you pasted: images become image cards, a direct image link becomes an image reference, anything else becomes a note.
- **The toolbar** — Photo/Video buttons open a native file picker.
- **The Palma Clipper** (*coming soon*) — right-click any image on the web and save it straight to the open project (see section 10).

Moving around

Pan	Hold Space and drag, or middle-mouse drag
Zoom	Scroll, trackpad pinch, or the on-screen zoom control
Select	Click an item; Shift-click to add to the selection
Marquee select	Drag on empty canvas to box-select everything inside
Reset view	Click the zoom percentage, bottom-centre

Organising

Select two or more items and a floating toolbar appears above the selection: align (left/centre/right, top/middle/bottom), distribute evenly, group, or lock. A **group** gets its own coloured frame and can be renamed, dragged as one unit, or dissolved later. **Tidy** (canvas toolbar) packs everything into neat rows in one click — with a single-step undo if you don't like the result.

Grid Snap is always on. Every item settles onto a 24px grid as you drop or release it, so boards stay crisp without you fighting alignment by eye.



Notes, comments & connectors

Notes

Double-click anywhere on empty canvas to drop a sticky note — type immediately, click away to save. Notes take a soft paper tint from a small colour palette that appears on hover, so you can colour-code by hand (a blocker note, an idea, a client quote). Note text itself stays a fixed dark ink regardless of theme — like a real sticky note, its ink doesn't change colour under different light, even in dark mode.

Comments

A comment is an annotation **pinned to a specific image** — drag a comment onto a picture and it rides along wherever that image moves. Collapsed, it's a small coloured pin; click to expand into a text card, and it re-minimises automatically once you click away (an empty comment just disappears — no clutter).

Connectors

Drag from the small dot at the top of any item to another item to draw an arrow between them — useful for showing a before/after, a sequence, or a causal relationship. Double-click a connector to label it; click to select and delete it with `Delete`.

Copy & paste — inside Palma and out

`Ctrl C` copies the selection to Palma's own clipboard *and* mirrors it to your system clipboard — a single image copies as real image bytes (paste it into Photoshop, Discord, anywhere), a mixed selection copies as text. `Ctrl V` is one smart paste: an image on your system clipboard always pastes as an image; otherwise Palma prefers your last in-app copy (so groups, positions and disk references come back intact) and falls back to turning outside text or a link into a note or image.



Keyboard shortcuts

Press `?` on the Dump Board any time to bring this list up in-app.

ACTION	SHORTCUT
Select / add to selection	Click · Shift-click
Marquee select	Drag on empty canvas
Select all	<code>Ctrl A</code>
Copy · Paste · Duplicate	<code>Ctrl C</code> · <code>Ctrl V</code> · <code>Ctrl D</code>
Paste image / text / URL from clipboard	Ctrl V
Group · Ungroup	<code>Ctrl G</code> · <code>Ctrl Shift G</code>
Lock · Unlock	<code>Ctrl L</code>
Send to Focus	<code>Ctrl F</code>
Connect items	Drag the top link dot
Delete selection	<code>Del</code> · <code>Backspace</code>
Nudge (fine with Shift)	Arrow keys
Undo · Redo	<code>Ctrl Z</code> · <code>Ctrl Shift Z</code>
Pan	Space-drag · middle-drag
Zoom	Ctrl-scroll · pinch · +/-
Add note	Double-click empty canvas
Deselect	<code>Esc</code>
This shortcut sheet, in-app	<code>?</code>

On macOS, use `Cmd` wherever this guide shows `Ctrl`.



Focus — zones & curation

Where the Dump Board is deliberately messy, Focus is where a project's actual point of view gets built.

Sending references to Focus

On the Dump Board, right-click any item (or select several) and choose **Send to Focus**, or press `Ctrl F`. It's promoted into Focus's **Queue** — a rail of candidates on the right of the Focus board — without leaving the original. Items already sent show a small dot in their corner.

Zones

A **zone** is a tinted container you drag references into from the Queue. Rename it, recolour it, resize it, and cycle its layout mode — **grid**, **horizontal**, or **vertical** — via the icon in its header. Zones auto-pack their members into a tidy grid, and images are never cropped to fit — they show at their real proportions, letterboxed if needed, so no detail gets hidden.

Notes & pinned comments

The **Add Note** button in the Focus toolbar drops a freestanding note anywhere on the canvas — the same drag/resize/edit behaviour as a Dump Board note. Each zone's header also has a small comment icon: click it to pin a comment directly to that zone. A pinned comment automatically follows the zone wherever it's moved or resized — and travels into the Process Brief too (see section 09), listed right below that zone's page.

The Direction statement

The bar above the canvas holds a single line describing what the project is *for*. It's optional, but it becomes the opening line of the Process Brief cover page — the one place in Palma that reads like a sentence instead of a board.

The Queue keeps count. A checkmark shows which references are already placed in a zone; anything left un-checked is still waiting to be used.



Scratchpad

Every project gets one Scratchpad — a single ruled page for the thinking that doesn't belong pinned to a board: brief notes, a client quote, a stray idea, a to-do list.

It's a real lightweight rich-text editor — bold, italic, strikethrough, inline code, quotes, and lists — formatted with the toolbar at the top, not typed markdown. Content saves automatically as you type.

The paper quirk

The page carries faint blue ruled lines and a pink margin rule, like a real notebook — list numbers and bullets sit in that margin gutter rather than beside the text, exactly like handwriting in a lined notebook. It's a small detail, but it's the clearest place the "paper, not software" idea shows up.

Scratchpad content travels. Anything written here is pulled automatically into the Process Brief's Notes section on export — see section 09.



Library

The Library is a flat grid of every image and video across every project in Palma — a fast way to find something you remember but can't place. Click a thumbnail to open it full-size; a broken reference shows as a clearly labelled placeholder rather than a silent gap, so you always know when a source file has moved or been deleted on disk.

Because Palma persists images by their real disk path (or, for pasted/web content, a stable embedded copy), an asset should keep showing up here reliably across restarts — even if you later reorganise the project's board.

Exporting & the Process Brief

The **Export** button (top-right, inside a project) offers three things:

- **Dump Board** — a full canvas snapshot as PNG or PDF, at 1× or 2× resolution.
- **Focus Board** — the zones and their contents, same format choices.
- **Process Brief** — a complete, multi-page **landscape** PDF document: a cover with your project name and Direction statement, the Dump Board, one page per Focus zone — its reference grid followed by any comments pinned to that zone (with a "+N more" fallback if there isn't room for all of them; a zone with only comments and no images yet still gets a page) — a **Notes** page pulled straight from the Scratchpad, and a closing page. Every page shares the same paper-textured background and a consistent footer, so it reads as one designed document rather than a stack of screenshots.

Light or dark. The Process Brief can be exported in either the light paper theme or a soft dark theme — pick whichever suits how it'll be viewed or printed.

This is the artifact built for sharing outside Palma — with a client, a teammate, or for your own archive — everything the project stands for, collected into one file.



The Palma Clipper

Coming soon. The Palma Clipper is on the way and not available yet. This section previews how it will work so you know what to expect — the right-click "Save image to Palma" option will arrive in a future update.

The Palma Clipper will be a small browser extension (Chrome, Edge, Brave, Arc, and Firefox) that adds a right-click "**Save image to Palma**" option on any image on the web.

1. Make sure Palma is running — the extension talks to a small local server it hosts on your machine.
2. Right-click any image on a page and choose **Save image to Palma**.
3. It downloads straight into the open project's Dump Board — or the Inbox project if nothing's open.

The extension only ever talks to Palma on your own computer — it never sends anything to a remote server, and it's rejected by the local server if the request doesn't come from the extension itself.



Light & dark

Palma defaults to a light paper theme. A **sun/moon switch** at the bottom of the sidebar, just above **New project**, switches the whole app — sidebar, tabs, canvases, everything — into a soft dark theme. The icon always shows what you'll switch *to*, not the current state: a moon while in light mode (click for dark), a sun while in dark mode (click for light) — two distinct icons, not one mark changing weight.

It's a deliberate, sticky choice: switching it doesn't reset when you navigate between projects or boards, and it's remembered the next time you open Palma.

Dark mode keeps the same paper grain texture and the same restrained, single-accent palette — it's a change of lighting, not a different app.



Tips for a clean workflow

LET THE DUMP BOARD STAY MESSY

Resist tidying as you go — the Dump Board's whole job is to hold everything without judgement. Curation happens in Focus, deliberately, once you actually know what the project needs.

USE GROUPS FOR ANYTHING YOU'LL MOVE TOGETHER

A moodboard cluster, a before/after pair, a set of colour swatches — group them once so you're never re-selecting the same five items by hand.

WRITE THE DIRECTION EARLY

Even a rough one-line Direction statement in Focus gives every zone you build afterward a reason to exist — and it's the first thing a reader sees in the Process Brief.

PIN COMMENTS INSTEAD OF RELYING ON MEMORY

A note pinned to the exact image it's about survives far longer than a mental note — and it travels with the image if you move it.

EXPORT A PROCESS BRIEF BEFORE A REVIEW

It's the fastest way to hand someone the whole story of a project — the raw material, the curated direction, and your own notes — in one file they can open anywhere.





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