

The Inbox Pass

five questions, asked once per email

Ask them in order.
Each one exits, or sends you to the next.
Every exit ends outside your inbox.

1 Should this have reached me at all?

NO → Unsubscribe, or write a filter. Then archive.

YES ↓ On to question 2.

The only question that shrinks tomorrow's pile.

2 Does it need anything from me?

NO → Archive.

YES ↓ On to question 3.

Having read it is enough. Read is not the same as action.

3 Can I be done in under two minutes?

YES → Do it now. Then archive.

NO ↓ On to question 4.

Done — not started.

4 Is the next move someone else's?

YES → Send your part. Move it to Waiting On, with a date to chase.

NO ↓ On to question 5.

The date is when you chase, not when it's due.

5 Am I deciding, or doing?

DECIDING → Decide list, with a decide-by date.

DOING → Make it a task, with a date.

EITHER WAY → Archive the email.

The message is not the task. Leaving it in the inbox as a reminder is the whole problem.

TWO RULES, OR NONE OF IT WORKS

Answer on first open. No reading it now and deciding later. The hours are in the re-reading.

Two places. That's all. An archive, and one Waiting On folder. Not a folder tree — search beats filing.