

Red Pen Hub

User manual - every project's review notes on one local board.

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What the Hub does

Each Red Pen surface keeps its notes with its own project - a WordPress database here, a JSON file there, an Ableton store on your music drive. The Hub reads them all and shows one board: every open note, across every project and every surface, sortable and filterable in your browser. Resolve a note on the board and the change flows back to where the note lives.

It runs on your own computer and binds to localhost only - it is never reachable from the network, there are no accounts, and nothing phones home.

Starting the Hub

The Hub runs on Node.js. If you already have Node: run `npx red-pen-hub` (no install needed) - or, from a clone of the repo, `npm install` once, then `npm start`. Open `http://localhost:3900` in any browser.

If you have never used Node or a terminal: install Node.js from nodejs.org (pick the LTS button, click through the installer with the defaults). Then open a terminal - PowerShell on Windows, Terminal on a Mac - type `npx red-pen-hub`, and press Enter. Leave that window open while you use the board; closing it stops the Hub. That is the whole setup.

The first run creates your connect token and a per-user data folder (on Windows: `%APPDATA%\red-pen-hub`) that holds all Hub state.

The board

 **Red Pen Hub**
combined project board

7
OPEN

2
IN PROGRESS

2
RESOLVED

11
ALL

5
PROJECTS

5
SOURCES

Refresh

Export MD

Export CSV

Search notes...

All projects

All surfaces

All types

All priorities

Saved views...

Save view

PROJECT	SURFACE	TYPE	PRIORITY	STATUS	NOTE	LOCATION	CREATED	RESOLVED
Aurora Bakery	wordpress	bug	high	open	Hero photo is soft on retina screens - export at 2x	Front page	2026-07-10 10:00	Start Resolve
Landing Page	static	bug	high	open	CTA contrast fails on the gradient - darken the band	#signup	2026-07-10 10:00	Start Resolve
Neon Tape EP	ableton	note	high	open	Kick clashes with the bass through the drop	Clip: Kick Stack (Drums) @ ...	2026-07-10 10:00	Start Resolve
Aurora Bakery	wordpress	suggestion	normal	open	Menu page: mark the seasonal items	Menu	2026-07-10 10:00	Start Resolve
Portfolio API	express	note	normal	open	Document the pagination params	/api/projects	2026-07-10 10:00	Start Resolve
Robot Short Film	blender	bug	normal	open	Rig the left shoulder before animating shot 12	robot_rig.blend / Armature	2026-07-10 10:00	Start Resolve
Landing Page	static	suggestion	low	open	Try the testimonial above the fold	#testimonials	2026-07-10 10:00	Start Resolve

Aggregated 11 notes from 5 sources - 2026-07-14T09:14:37.170Z

The board: one row per note, across five projects on five different surfaces.

The status tabs across the top - Open, In Progress, Resolved, All - carry live counts. Below them: search, and filters for project, surface, type, and priority. A filter combination you use often can be saved as a named view. Click a column header to sort.

Every row has **Start** and **Resolve** buttons - the board is a control surface, not a viewer. A status change is pushed back to the note's source: a WordPress site over its REST API, a file store directly, a pushing surface on its next sync. Resolving shows a 5-second Undo.

An **Age** column says how old each note is, with amber weight past 30 days and red past 90 - but only on notes that are still open or in progress, since a finished note being old is not a problem. The Hub keeps no history of its own, so age is the one question only a long-running aggregator can answer. The column hides below 1360px where the table runs out of room; the CSV export always carries `Age (days)`.

The board **refreshes itself**. The Hub watches the file-based note stores and the connected-push folder and streams changes to your browser, so a board left open on a second monitor does not go quietly stale. The small dot beside Refresh is green when that stream is connected and grey when it is not - grey means the board is only as current as your last Refresh. Updates wait while the tab is hidden or a dialog is open, then apply. A remote WordPress site cannot be watched this way; use Refresh for those.

The **Location** column links out only when there is a URL a browser can actually open. A filesystem path - a .blend, for instance - shows as its file name, with the full path on hover. Blender notes carry a viewport snapshot, and the board

shows it right there in the Location cell, which those notes otherwise leave empty.

When the board and a surface disagree

Set a status here and the Hub has to hold it until the surface confirms - otherwise the surface's next sync, still carrying the old value, would undo your click. What the Hub can do about a conflict depends on whether the surface reports *when* its notes changed.

- A note whose surface reports change times gets a quiet **held** marker. If somebody changes that note on the surface after your click, their change is newer and it wins immediately - the Hub can prove it.
- A note whose surface does not report a change time gets an amber **held** marker with a number on it: how many more syncs the hold has left. The Hub cannot tell whose change is newer, so rather than overriding the source forever it holds your status for a bounded run and then lets the source win.

Every hold expires after 7 days regardless, so nothing set on the board overrides a source permanently. The marker is decided per note, not per project: one Blender note that has never had its status changed carries no change time even though its neighbours do. If a status has to stick, set it on the surface itself.

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Aggregated 11 notes from 5 sources - 2026-07-14T09:14:37.170Z

Dark mode, on the toggle in the header.

Projects and sources



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5 projects - click one to see its notes

PROJECT	SURFACE	OPEN	IN PROGRESS	RESOLVED	TOTAL
Aurora Bakery	wordpress	2	0	1	3
Landing Page	static	2	0	0	2
Neon Tape EP	ableton	1	1	0	2
Portfolio API	express	1	1	0	2
Robot Short Film	blender	1	0	1	2

Aggregated 11 notes from 5 sources - 2026-07-14T09:14:37.170Z

The Projects tab: one line per project with its open / in progress / resolved counts.

The **Sources** tab manages where notes come from. There are exactly two ways a project reaches the board, and every surface uses one or the other:

- **Add Local Projects** - the Hub *reads* notes from files on this computer. You point it at a folder, it scans for every Red Pen store inside - Express apps, static-site stores, Blender sidecars, local WordPress installs - and you tick the ones you want. The notes never move; the Hub reads them in place.
- **Connect a Site** - the surface *pushes* its notes to the Hub whenever they change. This is for anything the Hub cannot read as a file: Ableton Live, a live WordPress site, a static page running in a browser. The panel shows the two values every pushing surface asks for - the **Hub URL** and the **connect token** - each with a Copy button.



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5 SOURCES

RED PEN PRO

Unlicensed - the board shows up to 5 projects. Paste your PRO license key to unlock unlimited. Verified locally - no account, no phone-home.

Unlock

PROJECT	SURFACE	TYPE	STATUS	NOTES	REPO	ACTIONS
Aurora Bakery connected (pushed)	wordpress	push	synced 2d ago	3	set path	repo re-check remove
Landing Page connected (pushed)	static	push	synced 2d ago	2	set path	repo re-check remove
Neon Tape EP connected (pushed)	ableton	push	synced 2d ago	2	set path	repo re-check remove
Portfolio API connected (pushed)	express	push	synced 2d ago	2	set path	repo re-check remove
Robot Short Film connected (pushed)	blender	push	synced 2d ago	2	set path	repo re-check remove

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The Sources tab: connected and scanned sources, each with its Hub URL and connect token.

Keep the connect token private - anyone who has it (and can reach your Hub) could push notes to it. If it ever leaks, the Sources tab can issue a new one; update any connected surfaces with the new value.

Connecting each surface

If you mostly live in Blender or Ableton rather than a code editor, here is the short version: start the Hub, open **Sources** > **+ Connect a Site**, and copy the two values into your surface's Red Pen settings. That is the entire job - the surface introduces itself on its first push and appears on the board automatically. The walkthroughs below cover each surface, plus what "connected" gets you on that surface.

Surface	How it connects	Where the settings live
WordPress	Push (or local scan for local installs)	Tools > Red Pen > Display settings
Express	Local scan	No settings needed - the Hub finds the notes file
Static drop-in	Push	The Hub button on the page's All-notes board
Blender	Push and pull (or local scan)	The add-on's Preferences in Blender
Ableton Live	Push	Settings inside the Red Pen extension window

WordPress

The easy way (any WordPress site, local or live): in WordPress admin, go to **Tools > Red Pen > Display settings** and find "Connect to Red Pen Hub". Paste the Hub URL and connect token from the Hub's Connect a Site panel, then save - saving runs a test push and tells you on the spot whether it worked. From then on the site pushes its notes automatically whenever they change.

The local-scan way (developers, local installs): Add Local Projects also detects WordPress installs in the folder you scan. A scanned WordPress source talks to the site over its REST API, which needs credentials to write statuses back: when the Hub asks, use an **Application Password**, not your login password. To make one: in WordPress admin, go to **Users > Profile**, scroll to Application Passwords, name it (say, "Red Pen Hub"), click Add New, and copy the generated password. Enter your WordPress username plus that generated password in the Hub's credentials prompt. If board write-backs fail with an auth error, the Application Password belongs to a user who cannot edit posts - create it under an editor or admin account.

Express

Nothing to configure. The middleware keeps its notes in a `.redpen/` folder next to the app, and the Hub reads the `notes.json` snapshot in it directly: open **Sources > + Add Local Projects**, point it at your dev folder, click Scan, and tick the app. Resolving on the board edits that file, and Express folds the change back into its own log. Express notes are three-state from 0.3.0 on, so Start works on them the same as anywhere else.

Static drop-in

The drop-in stores notes in the browser, so it pushes. On the page running `red-pen.js`, open the panel with the red button, switch to the **All notes** board, and click **Hub**. Three fields: the Hub URL, the connect token, and a project name (this is the label the board shows - "Client Landing Page" beats "index"). Save, and the notes push immediately and on every page load after that. Sync is two-way: resolve on the Hub board and the page picks the change up next time it loads or pushes. Connecting also gets your notes out of browser storage and into a real file in the Hub's data folder - worth doing for that alone.

Blender

In Blender: **Edit > Preferences > Add-ons**, expand **Red Pen for Blender**, and fill in the Hub URL, the connect token, and optionally a project name (it defaults to the .blend filename). Then use the two buttons in the Red Pen panel (press `N` in the viewport): **Push** sends every note to the board; **Pull** brings statuses back, so a note you resolved on the Hub shows resolved in Blender. Pull before you push if you have been working on the board - that way a stale scene never overwrites a Hub-side resolve.

Developer alternative: notes live in a `.redpen/notes.json` sidecar next to the .blend, so if the project folder is on this computer, Add Local Projects can scan it instead - no token needed, and the board edits the sidecar directly.

Blender notes carry a snapshot of the viewport as it looked when the note was written, and the board shows it in the Location cell - the fastest way to know which note is which without opening Blender.

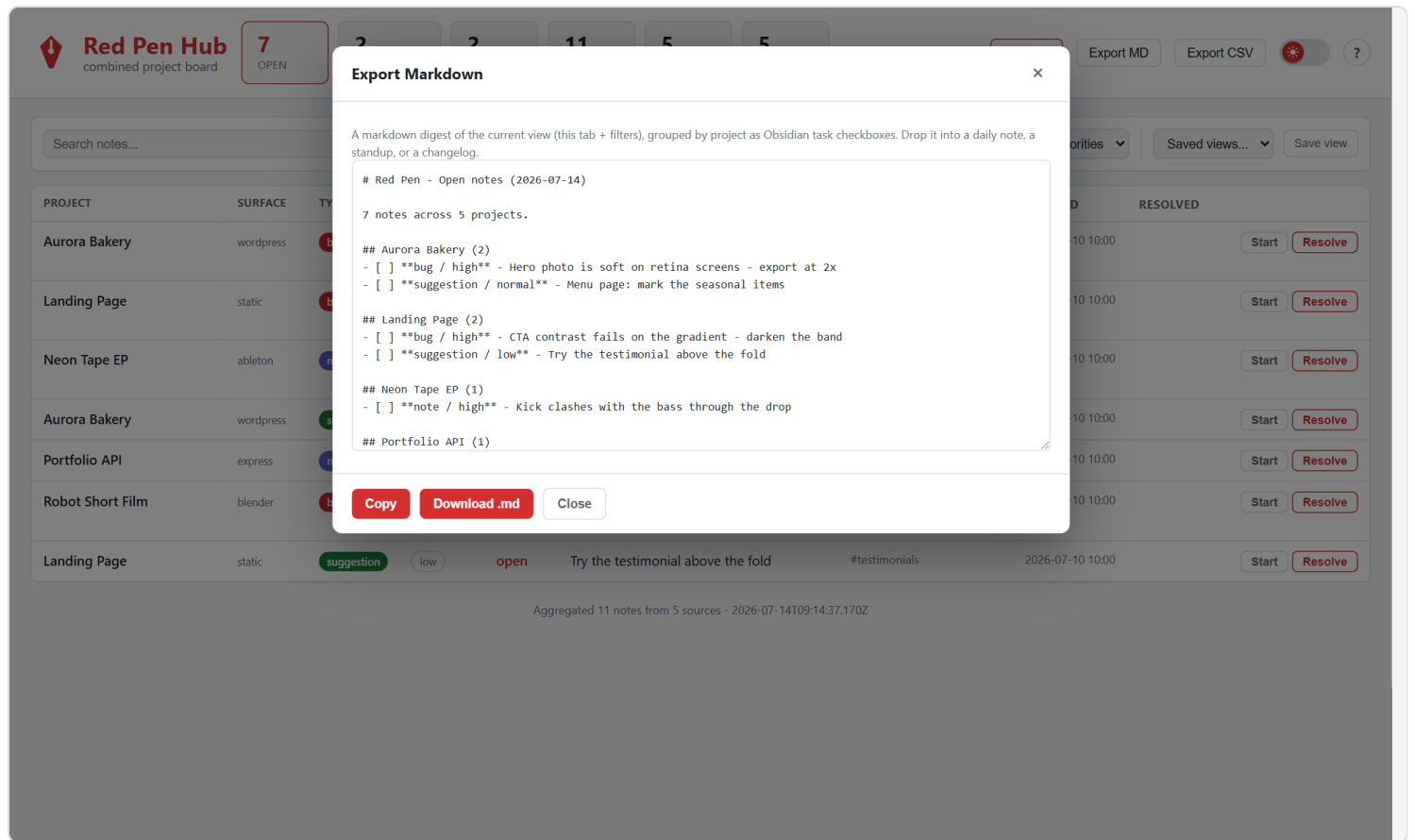
Ableton Live

Open the Red Pen extension window (right-click a clip or track and pick Red Pen), go to **Settings**, and paste the Hub URL and connect token. The **Test** button saves both and runs a real push, so you know immediately whether the

connection works. After that, notes push automatically whenever they change, and each Live Set appears on the board as its own project named after the Set. Two tips: the Hub must be running when Live pushes (a missed push retries on the next change), and save your Set with a name first - an unsaved Set has no identity for the board to file notes under.

Exports

Export MD turns the current view into a Markdown digest - grouped by project, formatted as task checkboxes, ready for a daily note, a standup, or a changelog. **Export CSV** gives the same rows as a spreadsheet.



The Markdown export of the current view.

Free and open

The Hub is free and open source, with no cap and no license key. It aggregates every project you connect, no account and no phone-home, and it keeps working whether or not you ever pay a cent. If it saves you time, you can back the next release - Buy Me a Coffee, one-time and any amount, with supporters listed on the wall at redpen.tools/supporters.html. That is the whole ask.

Where your data lives

Everything sits in the per-user data folder: your source list (`sources.json`), the connect token, and a JSON file per pushing project. Notes from scanned and pulled sources stay where they always were - the Hub reads them in place.

Back up the data folder and you've backed up the Hub.

If `sources.json` cannot be read, the Hub says so - on the console and in a banner across the board, naming the file and the reason - and refuses to write over it until it is fixed. A broken config used to leave a silent empty board and then get rebuilt from scratch, taking your sources with it.

Checking the setup

`npx red-pen-hub --doctor` (or `npm run doctor` from a clone) checks everything without starting the board: it validates `sources.json`, then reports each source and connected push store - found, readable, how many notes, and the REST or authentication error for a WordPress source that is failing. It prints the data folder and the local web roots it detected, and exits non-zero if anything is wrong, so it works from a script. It is read-only: running it on a machine that has never started the Hub creates nothing. `--help` and `--version` are there too.

Local web roots. To turn a scanned WordPress install's folder into a URL it can open, the Hub needs to know where your local server serves from. With nothing configured it detects the usual document roots for the platform it is running on. To say so explicitly, add `"webRoots"` to `sources.json` or set `RED_PEN_HUB_WEB_ROOT`; each entry is a path, or `path=http://localhost:8080` to pin the base URL that root is served at. Nothing is invented - an install outside every known root gets no guessed URL, and the board asks you for one instead of half-working.

If something breaks

Symptom	Likely cause and fix
Browser can't reach localhost:3900	The Hub isn't running, or another program holds the port. Start it and watch the terminal line "Red Pen Hub running".
A surface's push is rejected	Wrong connect token. Get the current one from the Sources tab and paste it again in the surface's settings.
A project's notes look stale	Pushing surfaces sync when they save; click Refresh on the board, or open the surface so it pushes. If the dot beside Refresh is grey, the live stream is not connected and Refresh is the only thing keeping the board current.
The board is empty and a banner names a file	<code>sources.json</code> could not be parsed. Fix the file it names - <code>--doctor</code> prints the same diagnosis - and restart. Your sources are still in there; the Hub will not overwrite a file it cannot read.
A status you set on the board keeps coming back	The note is held, and the hold ran out - the source won. That surface does not report when its notes change, so the Hub will not override it forever. Set the status on the surface itself.
Something is wrong and you can't tell what	Run <code>npx red-pen-hub --doctor</code> . It checks the config and every source and says which one is broken and why.
WordPress write-back fails with an auth error	The Application Password's user cannot edit posts. Create one under an editor or admin account and update the source's credentials.

Blender Pull reports a 401	The connect token in the add-on preferences is wrong or stale. Copy the current one from Sources > Connect a Site.
Ableton notes never appear	Run the Test button in the extension's Settings - it reports exactly what failed. Most often the Hub was not running, or the Set has never been saved.

The rest of the family

The surfaces the Hub aggregates are separate ports of one shared model rather than one codebase, so they do not all have the same features at the same time - which is why a column can be full for one project and empty for another. The **Surface matrix** at `docs.redpen.tools/matrix.html` is the per-feature answer for which surface has what today.

Red Pen Hub 0.9.1 - built by Lincoln Tracy. Part of the Red Pen family: WordPress, Express, static sites, Blender, Ableton Live, and the Red Pen Hub. redpen.tools