

The Shipwright Methodology

How this yard works — written for every agent who works it next · labs.llc & MESSAGE BEST · August 2026

The name is the covenant: every task, whatever it starts as — a bug, a rebuild, a question about a dot — ends the same way. Packaged, versioned, verified, delivered. Nothing merely discussed; everything shipped.

1 · The Ship Cycle

Every unit of work follows one loop, no exceptions:

- **Build** in the scratchpad working tree — never in the user's folders directly.
- **Verify in the browser** before claiming anything: rendered pages, computed styles, live filter counts, real fetches. A grep proves the text changed; only the pane proves it works.
- **Package**: `chmod 644 files / 755 dirs` (the server 403s otherwise), zip the whole tree — full archive in, full archive out, never a patch of changed files. Exclude `pill/images/*` (they ship separately as `product-images.zip`).
- **Deliver to ~/Downloads unasked**, every build, and send the file card. The zips in Downloads are the single source of truth.
- **Version**: the homepage footer marker (vNN) matches the zip number on every ship. The live site's footer tells anyone which build is running.
- **Record**: update the memory ledger with what changed, what was learned, and any trap disarmed — so the next session opens cold and knows everything.

2 · The Two-Edition System

- Paper is the unconditional default and the source of truth; dark is generated from it by a mechanical transform (data-dark on html, dark stylesheet appended, router constants swapped, both edition pills flipped, menu links retargeted dark-to-dark). Never let the two drift — regenerate dark after any paper edit.
- One mode key (`labs.mode`) sitewide: choosing dark anywhere means dark everywhere. `?m=l/?m=d` force-and-record and carry across the redirect. The OS theme is never consulted.
- The edition pill is a segmented control: exactly one lit segment written into the markup, 13px sun/moon glyphs with dimensions on the tag, the lit side a span (not a link to itself).
- New properties are generated from the proven shell (hanta's page is the template): swap head/meta, nav, menu rows, sections, scripts. Each property carries its own chassis copies (`site/dark/toast` css, `site.js`, `toast.js`, DM Sans) — assets per directory, never shared across property borders.

3 · Wiring a Property (the seven surfaces)

A property does not exist until all seven agree. One portfolio-data entry drives the first three:

- **portfolio-data.js** — label, href (dark) + hrefPaper, honest summary, terms. Feeds the homepage strips, the roulette drum, and the register automatically.
- **site-index.js** — paper + dark records; and a GROUPS line in `tools/mkindex.py` so regeneration keeps them. Menu search is a SUBSTRING match: multi-word phrasings users will type ('it support', 'purest water') must appear literally in the terms.
- **Hamburgers** — a `menu__row` in every satellite menu (paper pages link paper targets, dark link dark; single-edition properties link one target from both, like Joke Vault).

- **sitemap.xml** — canonical URLs only: no colour twins, no foreign hosts (protocol-invalid), no noindexed stubs. The HTML sitemap pair carries the human rows, including external domains marked with an arrow.
- **SEO head** — title, description 130–160 chars, canonical (twins share one, naming paper), full og block with image dimensions and alt, twitter card, JSON-LD making only claims the page can answer for.

4 · The Honesty Rules

- Everything on a page is real: no mock clients, no seeded stories, no invented stats, no stock imagery of unverifiable provenance. When mock content is found in a source site, it does not make the trip — and the page may say so.
- Numbers are computed from the data, never hand-written. (Yum claimed 671 tables and quietly served 315; the rebuild serves 671 and computes every figure from the file.)
- Failures say 'no answer' — never a spinner pretending, never a fabricated fallback.
- Licenses are respected: link the author's own free edition; never mirror an NC-licensed PDF on a commercial site; per-layer rules like these outrank feature requests.
- External fetching goes through the whitelisted, redirect-revalidating proxy pattern — never an open proxy, never rdap.org when the registry answers directly via the IANA bootstrap.

5 · Cache Discipline

- The server caches CSS/JS for a week. Any edit to a shared asset bumps its ?v= stamp in every page that loads it, same commit — or the live site runs new HTML against an old stylesheet.
- The chat's service worker build string (mb-vX.Y.Z) turns whenever shipped assets change; the visible version chip turns with the feature, not the whim.
- Data-file changes (portfolio-data, site-index) bump both stamps across all ~22 loading pages in one sweep.

6 · Changing Defaults (the one-time re-seat)

A default change must reach devices that stored the old default without destroying real choices: a one-time flag (mb.linesV1, blackV1, houseTypeV1, smallV1) clears the stored key once, then never again. Anyone who re-picks afterward keeps their choice forever. Never change a default silently; never wipe preferences repeatedly.

7 · Verification Lore (the traps already sprung)

- Hidden browser panes freeze rAF and report 0-height windows — paint on the scroll event when the work is cheap, and never diagnose 'phantom' bugs from a hidden pane's stale render.
- Between player.stop() and a delayed restart, a still-running tracker reads new offsets against old clocks and fires end-of-track logic. Cancel the tracker first, reset the clock synchronously, restart tracking after resume.
- Two features writing one element's background erase each other (rainbow text-clip vs bubble wash) — and browsers refuse 'text' inside a multi-value background-clip. When layers cannot share, invert the design: the bubble wears the rainbow, the words stay ink.
- Shared stylesheets (nav.css) outrank bare-class overrides — match the shared selector's shape (.nav__links a.nav__demo) instead of editing the shared file.
- An accent must never carry a value that vanishes on its own ground: black accent = true ink on paper, near-white mono on dark. One palette entry, two legible faces.

- Derived durations must stay coherent: raising the room sweep to 30 days without raising KEEP (7d) would make keeping a room SHORTEN its life.
- Touch inputs hold 16px on coarse pointers or iOS zooms the page; one unwrappable row widens the whole document and every fixed element with it.

8 · Recovery

The scratchpad is disposable and was wiped twice in one session without losing a byte: rebuild the working tree from the newest zips in ~/Downloads, continue. The ledger (memory files) carries every convention; the zips carry every artifact; the PDF task log carries the history. Nothing durable ever lives only in a conversation.

9 · The Ledger

Memory files are the yard's book: one fact per file, linked liberally, updated at the moment of shipping — including what was deliberately NOT done and why (the un-hosted PDFs, the dropped mock missions, the foreign host kept out of sitemap.xml). Write for the next agent who opens cold. That agent is who this document is for.

Session of record: labs90 → labs127 and chat50 → chat104 — 44 tasks, 37 ships, one name earned. Work the yard the same way and the name is yours too.