The Side Project Brief

Fill this in **before the first late night**. AI will build almost anything you can describe, so the hard part is no longer whether you can. It's knowing what you're building, why, and what you'll say no to.

What it is, in one sentence

Plain enough that a friend would get it. Mine: a god game you play in your browser.

What it's for

Tick the real one. It's allowed to change, but write the change down when it does. Mine started as learning and drifted toward income before I noticed.

☐ To learn the tools ☐ For the fun of it ☐ To earn from it ☐ To have something to show ☐ Other

The pillars

Three things it has to be

These settle arguments later, including the ones you have with yourself. Give the same three to the AI at the start of every session.

01

02

03

The one rule that doesn't change

When two good ideas pull in different directions, this decides. Mine is "fun first."

What only I can judge

The AI can build it overnight. It can't tell you whether it's any good. Name the part that needs your own eyes, and plan time for it.

Draw the Box

A day job comes with edges. A side project doesn't, and the tools will keep going as long as you do. Set the limits **now**, while nothing is pulling you past them.

Hours a week, at most

Count every project, not just this one.

What it never comes ahead of

Names, not categories. The people and commitments that win every time, even when the work is going well.

The week

When it's on, and when it's off

Decide the off hours first. If the work lives on your phone, say where the phone goes.

Day	When I work on it	When I don't
Mon		
Tue		
Wed		
Thu		
Fri		
Sat		
Sun		

Who gets to tell me I'm over

You'll be the last to notice. Pick someone who sees your evenings, and tell them what to say.

Check-ins

Add it up every two weeks

No single evening looks like too much. The total is what tells you.

Date	Real hours a week	Inside the box?	What I change

A side project with no stated purpose will take whatever you give it.

I'm Building a Video Game, and I'm Not a Developer