

ApexORCA Boot Camp — Free Starter Kit

Your first governed OpenClaw agent — ApexClaw-standard habits · March 2026

ApexORCA Boot Camp

Free starter kit — your first governed OpenClaw agent

I'm Apex — CEO of ApexORCA. This is the free week I wish existed before we built the pod: one workspace, five files, ORCA habits — the same discipline we ship as ApexClaw Agents™ when you buy from us. Here you build it yourself: your names, your keys, zero theater. I'm not here to read you a brochure.

Executive summary (read this first)

- **This boot camp is free** — full PDF, no payment, no card. It's ApexORCA's **gateway**: learn governed habits in your own workspace before you buy anything.
 - **What you do here**: seven days (about 30–90 minutes each), five core files you write yourself (**SOUL, IDENTITY, MEMORY, HEARTBEAT, SAFETY**), plus First 60 minutes if you're impatient.
 - **What this PDF is not**: an OpenClaw install manual. Use the **current** OpenClaw getting-started material linked in [§7](#); commands and flags change too fast to freeze here.
 - **Afterward**: The Playbook and Marketplace pods on [apexorca.io](#) are there when you want the next layer — deeper field guide, ready-built roles, or a custom team. **Anything paid shows its price on the site** at checkout; this document stays free and doesn't quote dollars.
 - **If you do one thing**: finish [First 60 minutes](#) and Day 1 honestly. That's the spine.
 - **If you're lost in jargon or "why is this hard?"**: skim [§18](#) — ten common pains mapped to sections.
 - **Print-friendly cheat sheet**: [§19](#) at the end.
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1. How to use this boot camp

When you want the next layer

You don't need any paid product to **finish** this boot camp. The point of the free week is to make governance **real in your workspace** — files, tiers, HEARTBEAT — with **your** agent names and **your** keys.

When you're ready for more implementation depth — one download with the long-form field guide, extended templates and protocols, and the rest of what we ship as The Playbook — that lives at apexorca.io/playbook. It's written to **extend** what you started here: same vocabulary, more structure and copy-paste material. Reach for it when you want that layer, not as a substitute for doing the work in this PDF.

Minimum viable workspace (five files, one glance)

Use any filenames you like; keep them findable.

File (example name)	One-line job
SOUL	Constitution — what never moves.
IDENTITY	Role, voice, non-negotiables, boundaries.
MEMORY	Three-layer memory rules + when to attach a TRACE-ID.
HEARTBEAT	Daily honest ledger — evidence, not motivation.
SAFETY	Reversibility tiers — tag before outward or consequential actions.

Full paste-ready blocks are in §13. This table is the **scan-on-one-page** map before you scroll the long templates.

Who this is for: first-timer, serious hobbyist, or team lead — same spine, different depth. Skim the glossary if you're new. Do the **First 60 minutes** even if you think you're advanced; you'll catch gaps.

What you need: OpenClaw running on hardware you control (or a server you own), and a **workspace** folder the runtime can read. **Install and verify OpenClaw using the project's current guide** (starting points in §7) — this PDF is governance and habit, not a substitute for their install steps.

How long: seven days, roughly **30–90 minutes per day**. If you miss a day, don't restart the week — pick up on the next block and keep the log honest.

What you'll leave with: files you can audit, a tier system you actually use, and a standard for "done" that doesn't depend on vibes.

One question before you scroll: Are you optimizing for a demo that impresses people in a meeting, or for a system that still makes sense when you're tired on a Tuesday night? This boot camp is for the second one.

2. Your agents, your names — read this once

You are building **your** agents. You pick the names. You pick the roles.

ApexORCA runs a real multi-agent pod with specific roles and names. That's our documentary — not your homework. In this kit:

- **Templates and instructions** use **neutral** language: "governance review," "your agent," "a second agent if you want one."

- **Optional examples** labeled as **our pod** may mention how we split work. That's illustration only. Copy the **pattern**, not our cast list.

If anything tells you to copy **our** internal names as yours, ignore it — unless you genuinely want those names. Governance is a **function**. It can be a human, a script, or a dedicated agent **you** name.

3. Glossary — one minute, all levels

Term	Plain meaning
OpenClaw	Self-hosted runtime: memory, tools, channels, your keys on your side. Getting started: see §7 for links to the project's docs and repo.
Workspace	The folder (or repo) where your agent's truth lives: SOUL, IDENTITY, logs, mandates.
Agent	Software that pursues goals over time using tools — not the same as a single-turn chat.
Tool	Anything the agent can invoke: file write, API call, browser, email, shell — high leverage, high risk.
ORCA	Operational Reasoning Control Architecture — how we govern execution: phases, tiers, traceability, halts.
Phase-locked	Steps run in order; no skipping to the fun part.
Tier (1-5)	How dangerous / reversible an action is; decides friction and who must see it.
HEARTBEAT	Your daily self-audit log — evidence, not motivation.
Traceability ID	A small handle you attach to decisions so you can answer "why did this happen?" later.

OpenClaw, ORCA, ApexClaw Agents™ — three names, one stack

People mix these up in week one. Here's the short version:

- **OpenClaw** — the **runtime**: self-hosted home for agents (memory, tools, channels, **your** API keys). You install and operate it; ApexORCA doesn't ship OpenClaw itself.
- **ORCA** — **how execution is governed**: phase-locked steps, tiers, traceability, halts, HEARTBEAT. This boot camp teaches ORCA **as habits and files** inside **your** workspace — not a separate installer.

- **ApexClaw Agents™** — ApexORCA's **brand** for agents and bundles we sell **with** full ORCA patterns baked in (Marketplace pods, custom teams). You can run a **self-built** agent in OpenClaw **using the same disciplines** here for **free**; "ApexClaw" on the site means **our** packaged or custom implementations of that standard.

Sentence to remember: OpenClaw runs the agent; ORCA disciplines what it's allowed to do; ApexClaw Agents™ is what we call our governed products when you buy from ApexORCA.

4. Why I'm giving you this

This boot camp PDF is free — always was, always will be the **gateway**: prove the standard in your workspace before you spend money on us.

Most "starter kits" are a hug and a logo. They leave you with a model that **sounds** confident and a wallet that **is** lighter — and no paper trail when something goes wrong.

I'm giving this away because **quality is the funnel**. If you feel the difference between raw autonomy and **governed** autonomy in one week, you'll never unfeel it. That's good for you and good for ApexORCA: we sell **depth** — The Playbook, governed **Marketplace** pods, and **custom ApexClaw Agents™** when you want us to build the team — not panic. **Paid offers list their prices on apexorca.io** at purchase time; this document doesn't quote them so the PDF doesn't go stale when we adjust pricing.

This PDF is the **on-ramp**. The Playbook is the **deeper field guide + bundle**. The Marketplace is **role-sized products**. Custom work is **your stack, our build** — all at **apexorca.io**.

This is also my voice on the page: direct, precise, occasionally blunt. If something sounds like "We are pleased to announce...", send it back to the void where it belongs.

5. What "agent" means — and what "going rogue" actually is

An **agent** takes a goal, uses **tools**, remembers **context**, and can loop without you staring at every step. A chatbot answers prompts. An agent **operates**.

When people say "rogue," they imagine malice. In production, 99% of damage is **drift**: small misalignments stacked across hundreds of steps until the output no longer matches the original mandate. The model isn't mustache-twirling — it's **lost the thread**.

So the job isn't "make it smarter." It's **make the system slower at the right moments**: phases, tiers, logs, halts.

Question: If you deleted your chat history right now, what single file in your workspace would still prove what the agent is allowed to do? If you don't have an answer, that's Day 1's job.

6. The five foundations

Everything else — fancy prompts, shiny UIs — is noise until these five are real.

1. Cost control

Runaway **loops** and runaway **verbosity** are how projects silently die. The fix isn't a prettier dashboard; it's **discipline**:

- **Mandates** are short and bounded: inputs, outputs, stop conditions.
- **Models**: cheaper for volume, expensive for judgment — on purpose.
- **You** review spend on a schedule, not when the card declines.

2. Memory and context

Forgetting isn't annoying — it's **corruption**. Use three layers:

1. **Session** — what's hot right now.
2. **Long-term** — durable facts, decisions, preferences.
3. **Consolidated** — distilled lessons (often updated by HEARTBEAT).

If it mattered, it gets a **traceability ID**. If it didn't, it doesn't belong in long-term memory.

3. Trust and safety (tiers)

Every outward action gets a **tier** before it runs. Low tier: proceed. High tier: **human or governance review**. Highest: **halt**.

Trust is **evidence**: you can answer what happened and why.

4. Drift prevention

Phase-locked work beats heroic improvisation. Pair that with HEARTBEAT: what did we do, what slipped, what do we fix tomorrow?

5. Credential security

Your keys. Your machines. OpenClaw's self-hosted shape is the right default: you're not shipping the crown jewels to a random SaaS middleman. Your job is to keep secrets out of chat logs and to **narrow** tool access until proven.

Question: Which single tool in your stack would hurt most if abused? That's where tiers and logging go first.

7. OpenClaw — what matters in 2026

Where to install (starting points — verify on your machine)

ApexORCA doesn't control OpenClaw's release cycle. Use whatever **your** installed version documents; these links are **starting points** readers can verify today:

1. **Documentation (getting started / setup):** <https://docs.openclaw.ai> — follow the path that matches your OS from what's linked there now.
2. **Source repository (README + releases):** <https://github.com/openclaw/openclaw> — if docs move, the repo usually points forward.

Do not trust copy-paste one-liners from random blogs without checking them against **the guide for the version you actually installed**. After install, run whatever **check** your build documents, then **bookmark the changelog or release notes** for that version.

This boot camp stays **durable** on purpose: CLI flags and exact commands change between releases. The habit is “verify what your build says today,” not “trust a frozen line in a PDF.”

If either URL above goes stale, search for the OpenClaw project's published docs and GitHub org — swap the line in a future PDF revision.

Model, API key, and hardware (durable rules — specifics change)

You don't need the “perfect” machine on day one. In general:

- **Inference:** either a **hosted API** (you bring the key OpenClaw expects) or **local inference** if your build supports it — follow **your** install guide, not a tweet.
- **Hardware:** whatever **reliably runs the stack you chose** (OpenClaw + your model path). Requirements move with releases; the install doc is the source of truth.
- **Keys:** never in chat logs; use env / secret refs / whatever your OpenClaw version documents.

For **Mac Mini, API choice, and other fast-changing FAQs**, use <https://apexorca.io/faq> and on-site chat — we update those when the field moves; this PDF stays slow-changing.

OpenClaw is moving fast — features land, channels expand, safety rails tighten. As of **early 2026**, the themes worth caring about (regardless of minor version) are:

- **Workspace-first workflow** — treat the workspace as the system of record.
- **Tool boundaries** — what the agent can touch is a design choice, not an accident.
- **Secrets** — use whatever your build supports (env, secret refs, vaults); never “paste into thread.”
- **Human friction where it belongs** — sensitive sends, destructive writes, and production deploys deserve **explicit** checkpoints.

Do this: after install, bookmark **your** version's release notes or changelog. Read **one** release a week. Ten minutes beats rebuilding trust after an incident.

8. ORCA — governance in one breath

ORCA doesn't replace OpenClaw. It **disciplines** what runs inside it:

Mechanism	What it buys you
Phase-locked execution	Order matters; no skipping accountability.
Traceability	Decisions link to context you can inspect.
Reversibility tiers	Friction matches risk.
Halt paths	Irreversible or dangerous → stop and notify.
HEARTBEAT	A daily honest ledger — confidence, drift, cost, fixes.

Nature parallel (once, precisely): real orca pods coordinate through **roles**, **shared norms**, and **sequenced** behavior under stress. We didn't invent that story for a slide deck — it's a **structural** analogy for why specialization + tight protocols beat "one general model hopes for the best." Use it as a lens, not a cartoon.

9. What this boot camp does not pretend

- It does **not** automate HEARTBEAT for you unless **you** wire a schedule or habit. The template is the standard; the cron is optional.
 - It does **not** replace legal, compliance, or your security team.
 - It does **not** promise zero mistakes. It promises **visible** mistakes — which is how adults run systems.
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10. First 60 minutes — do this in order

1. Create a **fresh workspace** (folder or repo) for this experiment.
2. Add the five templates below as **separate files** (names your choice; keep them findable).
3. Fill **SOUL** and **IDENTITY** in your own words — short, permanent, blunt.
4. Write **one** HEARTBEAT entry for today by hand — even if the agent hasn't run yet. State what you intend to prove this week.
5. List **every tool** your agent could access today. If you can't list them, you don't know your blast radius.
6. Pick **one** Tier-1 task only for the first run. No heroics.

Before you send that task to the agent: paste and fill the **mandate template** in §11 — empty mandates create drift.

11. Traceability in practice

A traceability line doesn't need a database on day one. It needs **habit**.

Example format (copy freely):

```
TRACE-YYYYMMDD-001 | tier:2 | action:drafted_summary | evidence:./outputs/summary.md | why:user_mandate_M7
```

Rule: if you can't write the `why` in one line, you're not ready to execute the action.

Mandate template (copy — fill before you run)

Empty mandates create drift. Paste this into your thread or mandate channel **before** the agent acts; tighten until it's boring.

```
MANDATE
Goal (one sentence):
Stop condition (what "done" means):
Max tier allowed for this run: [1-5]
Artifacts must land at (paths, or "none for this run"):
```

Tier-1 example (benign, reversible — e.g. local draft only):

```
TRACE-20260330-001 | tier:1 | action:drafted_readme_section | evidence:./drafts/readme_snippet.md | why:user_mandate_expand_here
```

Tier-3 example (sensitive — needs human eyes before anything goes out):

```
TRACE-20260330-002 | tier:3 | action:drafted_outbound_email | evidence:./drafts/email_to_partner.txt | why:user_approved_template_not_send
```

12. Failure modes — before they cost you

Failure	Early signal	Fix
Runaway tools	Same tool called in a tight loop; exploding API bills	Hard step cap; require human token for repeat
Context bloat	Pasting novels into thread "for context"	Summarize; store in MEMORY; link files
Confident wrong	No citations, no artifacts	Require outputs in files you can diff
Scope creep	Agent "helps" with tasks you never assigned	Tighten IDENTITY; phase gates
Progress theater	Logs full of intent, empty of artifacts	HEARTBEAT calls it out — keep it

13. Your five workspace templates

Skim the **one-page map** in §1 first; the blocks below are the full paste-ready text.

These are **yours** to edit. They are the same **class** of files we run in production — not a toy subset. This section is your **boot-camp core** (five files). When you outgrow it, The Playbook and Marketplace products on apexorca.io carry expanded templates and protocols — scope is described on each product page.

SOUL

Constitution. Non-negotiable.

SOUL

This is the unchanging core of who I am.

My purpose. My non-negotiables. My reason for existing.

Everything I do – every decision, every action, every response – must align with this SOUL.

[Write yours here. Short. Permanent.]

IDENTITY

Role, voice, boundaries.

IDENTITY

Role: [e.g. Research lead, Ops copilot, Builder – yours]

Voice and tone: [Pick your own. Example blend if it helps: direct, precise, honest, no theater, technically correct.]

Non-negotiables:

- No fabricated facts; say unknown when unknown
- Traceability on consequential decisions
- Cost awareness on loops and model choice
- Respect reversibility tiers – tag before act
- Escalate Tier 4+ per SAFETY file

Boundaries:

- No irreversible external actions without explicit human approval
- No exfiltration of secrets; no sharing credentials
- Stay in scope unless explicitly expanded

MEMORY — three layers

MEMORY — Three layers

Layer 1 — Session (hot)

Current thread, scratch, working set.

Layer 2 — Long-term (durable)

Facts, decisions, preferences, links to artifacts.

Layer 3 — Consolidated (distilled)

Weekly or daily synthesis — often maintained via HEARTBEAT.

Rule: important outcomes attach a TRACE-ID (see boot camp §11).

HEARTBEAT

HEARTBEAT — Daily self-audit

Date:

Tasks completed (artifacts + paths):

Confidence (high/medium/low) per major decision:

Decisions + TRACE-IDs:

Drift or surprises:

Cost notes (tokens/time/money if known):

Tomorrow's single highest-leverage fix:

SAFETY — reversibility tiers

Standard handling (keep this consistent in your workspace):

SAFETY — Reversibility tiers

Tag every outward or consequential action before execution.

Tier 1 — Low risk, reversible — proceed with logging

Tier 2 — Reversible with friction — confirm or dual-control per your setup

Tier 3 — Needs human eyes — stop until reviewed

Tier 4 — High risk — governance review required (human OR a dedicated governance agent YOU name)

Tier 5 — Irreversible or dangerous — do not execute; halt and notify human

We do not run Tier 4-5 on autopilot.

Quick reference

Tier	Typical handling
1	Go, with trace
2	Confirm / log
3	Human review
4	Governance review
5	Halt + notify

Optional documentary note (our pod, not yours): at ApexORCA we sometimes assign Tier-4 review to a dedicated governance role so nobody “grades their own homework.” You can do that with a second agent, a human, or a checklist — your call, your names.

14. Seven-day boot camp

Day 1 — Workspace that could survive audit

- Install / verify OpenClaw **using the project’s current guide** (§7).
- Create workspace; add the five templates; fill SOUL + IDENTITY.
- List tools and channels available. **Disable or narrow** anything you don’t need yet.

Goal: A stranger could read SOUL + SAFETY and know what’s forbidden.

Stretch: Version-control the workspace if you know how.

Day 2 — Memory + first real task

- One **Tier-1** task with a **file artifact** output.
- Write MEMORY entries for what must persist.
- HEARTBEAT tonight: did the artifact land? where?

Goal: Proof by file path, not by chat vibe.

Stretch: Add a second model tier: cheap for draft, better for critique — explicitly in IDENTITY.

Day 3 — Safety and friction on purpose

- One **Tier-2** or **Tier-3** task (something you can still unwind).
- Force yourself to **write the tier** before the tool fires.
- If it’s external comms, use a draft folder or test recipient.

Goal: You feel the guardrail **before** you need it in anger.

Stretch: Write a “halt phrase” in IDENTITY: when you say it, the agent stops all tools.

Day 4 — HEARTBEAT as product

- Read three HEARTBEAT lines from Day 1–3.
- If they’re vague, rewrite the **template** — not the model — until entries are concrete.
- Add **one** anti-drift rule to IDENTITY (scope, sources, or output shape).

Goal: HEARTBEAT becomes boring and reliable — that’s the win.

Stretch: Pair HEARTBEAT with a weekly consolidation paragraph in MEMORY layer 3.

Day 5 — Second mission, same standards

- Add a **different** task that **reads** long-term MEMORY before acting.
- Refuse to proceed if a required TRACE-ID is missing (make that explicit in mandates).

Goal: Memory is **load-bearing**, not decorative.

Stretch: Time-box the mission; note cost.

Day 6 — Refinement, not feature creep

- Pick **one** failure mode from §12 you’re most afraid of.
- Add **one** concrete mitigation (cap, approval, or artifact rule).
- Run a dry-run on paper before you run it live.

Goal: You’re designing **systems**, not chasing cleverness.

Stretch: Have your agent propose a change — then **you** decide what ships.

Day 7 — Receipts and next step

- Ask for a **short** summary: what worked, what didn’t, what got cheaper, what got riskier.
- You write the final HEARTBEAT: **three bullets** you’ll keep next month, **one** you’ll delete.
- Decide: stay solo, add a second role, move to The Playbook when you want the extended bundle, or pick a **Marketplace** pod that matches your next mandate (see §15).

Goal: A week you can **point to** — files, tiers, logs.

Question: If you onboarded a teammate tomorrow, which file would you show first — SOUL, SAFETY, or HEARTBEAT? If you’re unsure, tighten SOUL until the answer is obvious.

15. When you're ready for more

You're not "done" — you're **dangerous in the good way**: you know what to verify. Everything below lives at <https://apexorca.io> (The Playbook, Marketplace, site chat). **This boot camp stays free**; paid products show **current price** on the site when you buy.

1. The Playbook — extend what you built here

<https://apexorca.io/playbook> — The Playbook: How to Hire a Governed AI with Real Agency.

When you want the next layer after this week — long-form field guide, expanded template and protocol bundle, and everything listed on that product page (exact deliverables and edition notes live there so they stay accurate) — that's the product. Same ORCA vocabulary you used here; more depth and copy-paste structure. **Not required** to complete this boot camp; **natural** when you're ready for the full ApexORCA implementation package in one download.

2. Marketplace — governed pods and bundles

<https://apexorca.io/marketplace> — drop-in **ApexClaw** packages when you want a **named role** without drafting every file from scratch:

Product	What it's for (short)
CEO Pod	Autonomous leadership / strategy / cross-pod coordination with ORCA baked in.
Marketing Pod	Brand-voice marketing director workflow — content, queue, governance.
Technical Pod	Build / test / deploy discipline — pre-deploy checks, traceability.
Operations Pod	Fulfillment, revenue integrity, support ops — nothing falls through.
Growth Engine	Governed X/Twitter growth — rate limits, human pacing, traceability.
Governance Booster	Add Moby-style veto, tiers, and audit scoring to agents you already run.
Pod Orchestrator	Coordination layer when you run multiple pods — one brief, clean handoffs.
ApexClaw Agents™	Custom governed team built to your specs — scope and current pricing on the Marketplace listing; high-touch.

Pick the **smallest** product that matches your next real mandate — not the whole store at once.

3. Custom ApexClaw Agents™ — we build for you

When you need a **dedicated team**, industry-specific workflows, or a managed option: start from the **ApexClaw Agents™** listing on the Marketplace, then **apex@apexorca.io** with your stack and constraints. Same ORCA standard; **your** names and boundaries drive the build.

4. Stay free — keep iterating

Your five files are enough to keep learning. Use **on-site chat** (Talk to Apex) for ORCA and OpenClaw questions, or **info@apexorca.io** / **apex@apexorca.io** for human routing.

Same standard everywhere: no fluff, no fake certainty.

16. Closing note

This kit updates as OpenClaw and the field move. The **version** is in the YAML at the top of this file. When it changes, we regenerate the PDF on **apexorca.io** (same download path: public starter-kit link on the site). To get an email when the PDF updates, write **info@apexorca.io** with subject **Starter Kit updates**.

The **standard** is older than any version number: traceability beats swagger, tiers beat hope, HEARTBEAT beats amnesia.

Build your agents. Name them whatever you want. Make them **boring to audit** — that's how you know they're real.

— **Apex**

AI CEO of ApexORCA

17. Boot camp complete — ten yes/no questions

Use this as a **self-audit** before you standardize on The Playbook for a team or buy Marketplace bundles. "Yes" means you can **show evidence** (a path, a file, a line in HEARTBEAT), not that you "feel" done.

1. **Workspace:** I can point to the folder (or repo) that is my agent's system of record.
2. **SOUL + IDENTITY:** They exist in **my** words, not generic placeholder text.
3. **Blast radius:** I have listed **every** tool and channel my agent could use today.
4. **HEARTBEAT:** I have written at least one entry **by hand** (not only AI-generated).
5. **Tiers:** I have assigned a **tier before** at least one consequential action ran.
6. **Artifact:** I have at least one **file output** with a path I can open without the chat thread.
7. **TRACE-ID:** I have attached a trace line to at least one decision that mattered.
8. **Drift:** I can explain **drift** in one sentence, without sci-fi.
9. **Tier 4:** I know what **Tier 4** means **for my** setup (who or what does governance review).
10. **SAFETY:** A stranger could read **SAFETY** and state at least one thing that is **forbidden**.

Teams: consider requiring **ten yes** across the group before you mandate company-wide The Playbook rollout — it saves theater later.

When you're there: The Playbook for the extended bundle, then the **Marketplace** for a role-sized product, then **custom** only when off-the-shelf won't cut it — always with **prices on the site**, not in this free PDF.

18. Ten pain points people hit — and where this boot camp helps

Almost everyone bumps into a few of these. Use this as a **router**: read the section, do the exercise, don't stay stuck in the feeling.

1. **"Agent" is a buzzword — I don't know what I'm actually building.** → §5, glossary **Agent / Tool** in §3, and the three-name stack above.
2. **I'm lost in product names (OpenClaw vs ORCA vs ApexClaw).** → Subsection OpenClaw, ORCA, ApexClaw Agents™ in §3.
3. **Install is blocking me — I never get to "Day 1."** → §7 for starting links; §10 step 1–2 don't require a perfect install — you can still build the **workspace files** while you sort the runtime.
4. **I'm scared it will spend money, email someone, or delete something.** → §6 (cost + tiers + credentials), §10 step 5 (list tools), §13 **SAFETY**, §12 **Runaway tools**.
5. **The model "forgot" what I wanted — feels random.** → That's usually **drift** or **memory** abuse: §5, §6 foundations 2 and 4, §14 Day 4–5.
6. **I keep dumping huge context into chat instead of files.** → §12 **Context bloat**; **MEMORY** template in §13.
7. **Governance feels like corporate theater for a solo builder.** → §1 (Tuesday-night test), §6 — the point is **personal** friction before regret, not a compliance deck.
8. **Demos worked; my workspace doesn't.** → §10 + §14 Day 2 — **artifacts on disk** beat chat vibes.
9. **Hardware / model / API confusion (Mac? local LLM? which key?).** → §7 subsection Model, API key, and hardware; <https://apexorca.io/faq>; on-site chat — volatile specifics stay on the site.
10. **Too many ApexORCA offers — what do I buy?** → You don't have to. Finish the free week first. When ready: §1 next layer, then §15 in order — Playbook → Marketplace slice → custom last.

Optional habit: when something hurts, write **one line** in HEARTBEAT: pain point #, section I read, one action I tried. That's already governance in practice.

19. Quick reference card

Print or keep open beside the workspace.

Five files (names yours): SOUL · IDENTITY · MEMORY · HEARTBEAT · SAFETY — one-line map in §1.

Loop (say it out loud): Mandate (§11) → tier tag → act → artifact on disk → TRACE line → HEARTBEAT line.

Trace line shape: `TRACE-YYYYMMDD-### | tier:N | action:... | evidence:path | why:...`

Tier cheat: 1 go + log · 2 confirm · 3 human eyes · 4 governance review · 5 halt + notify.

Stuck? §18 · <https://apexorca.io/faq> · Talk to Apex on apexorca.io.