

LOCKED BOX — lock your working record before any deposit

7-Zip for absolute beginners

Written after a real breach (2026-08-10): a working-record vault was deposited to Zenodo as a plain, readable zip — every draft, log, and review publicly readable, permanently. Zenodo deposits cannot be unpublished. This file exists so that never happens again.

The rule this file serves

The working record never deploys unlocked. No exception.

Your drafts, session logs, AI conversations, and reviews go into a deposit **only** as a locked box: a .7z archive encrypted with AES-256, whose password exists only with you. A plain .zip is not a locked box — it is an open envelope, and everything inside is readable by anyone on earth, forever.

The AI preparing your deposit is under a **hard stop**: it must test the box and refuse to stage it if it opens without a password. But the locking itself is *your* job — by design, so the key never touches an AI.

And the first rule of all, before any of this: you always keep an unlocked copy. Nothing in this guide, the protocol, or the kit ever tells you to delete a file that holds your work. The box is a *copy* of your record, locked; the original stays on your computer, readable, yours.

Step 0 — copy your whole work folder somewhere else first

Before you touch 7-Zip: copy your entire work folder — the one with 00 INDEX.md and the numbered folders in it — to another place. A USB stick, another folder, a cloud drive. This copy stays with you, unlocked, for as long as you keep the record. It is your safety step: if anything goes wrong in the steps below, you lose nothing — and if you ever forget your passphrase, this copy is your record. Do not skip this; it takes a minute.

And the lock is not a licence. Encryption does not create permission to deposit restricted material: when a contractual, legal, ethical, or privacy duty prohibits external deposit, the record stays home — retained locally, or placed in an approved restricted repository (Zenodo offers restricted-access files) — never published as a public locked box.

One-time setup (skip if you already have 7-Zip)

1. Go to **7-zip.org** and install 7-Zip. It is free, safe, and has no account. Windows: click the first “Download” link, run the installer, click Install, done.

Lock the box (about 2 minutes)

2. Find the folder to be locked — your working record: the drafts, INDEX, session records, and reviews the AI staged for deposit.
3. **Right-click that folder → Show more options** (Windows 11 puts 7-Zip in there) → **7-Zip → Add to archive...**
4. In the window that opens, work top to bottom:
 - **Check the archive name** at the top first — set it to the form in step 5 below.
 - **Archive format:** 7z ← not zip. This matters.
 - **Enter password** (twice): one you will remember — **there is no password recovery, none, for anyone.** See the key rules below.
 - **“Delete files after compression” — leave it UNCHECKED.** This box exists in 7-Zip’s window and it will erase your originals. Never tick it.
 - **CHECK “Show password”** so you can see exactly what you’re typing — and write it down, letter for letter, while it’s on the screen.
 - **Encryption method:** AES-256
 - **“Encrypt file names” — the author’s choice (a sensible default: leave it UNCHECKED).** A published vault may show its file names on purpose — the list is the window; the contents are what the key seals — and a public manifest names every file anyway. Check the box only if you want the stricter form where even the table of contents is hidden.
5. Change the archive name at the top to a clear deposit form: **<work>-vault-<date>.7z** (example: my-memoir-vault-2026-08-14.7z)
6. Click **OK**. The locked box appears next to the folder.

The key rules (this is the serious part)

- Make the passphrase **four or five random words plus a number** — long beats clever. Example *shape* (do NOT use this one): harbor lantern 52 biscuit maple
- Keep it **somewhere you will always find it**. This is not your bank password — the box exists to keep your working record from strangers on the internet, not from your family. Write it on paper and put it with your important documents, or in the notes app you already use, or in your password manager. Keep it for as long as you keep the record (five years is the standard’s floor) — a publisher may ask to see inside the box years from now. A recovery arrangement under your control is part of retention: **a lost passphrase turns a retained record into one that only looks retained — permanently unproducible.**
- Do not reuse a password you use anywhere else: if you ever open the box for someone, you will be handing them that password.
- Keep **at least two verified copies of the locked box itself**, on different drives or places.
- **Lose the key = lose the box. There is no reset. Nobody can help — no AI, no website, not 7-Zip, not Zenodo.**
- The passphrase never gets typed anywhere online and never pasted to any AI. If any AI or website ever asks for it, the answer is no.
- Where the author cannot operate the tools — accessibility, dictation-only work — the named operator may perform the locking with the author present and the author holding the passphrase: the hands are borrowed, the custody is not.

Prove it locked — and prove it opens (one minute — do not skip either half)

7. **Locked to the world:** double-click the new .7z file. With file names unencrypted you will SEE the file names — that is by design — but the moment you try to open or extract any file, 7-Zip must demand the password. Press Cancel — that demand is the proof. (If you chose “Encrypt file names,” the password is demanded immediately, before even the list shows.) If any file’s CONTENTS open without a password, it is NOT locked: do not use it — make a new one, redoing step 3, checking every setting.
8. **Open to you:** open it again, enter your passphrase, and confirm your files are all listed and one or two extract and open correctly. This half is yours alone — the passphrase never touches an AI, so only you can prove the box opens as well as locks. A box that opens to no one, including you, is not a vault; it is a loss.

Opening never unlocks it. The box stays encrypted no matter how many times you open it — the password shows you a *copy* of what’s inside; it never removes the lock. There is nothing to re-lock: close the window and the box is exactly as sealed as it was. If you *extracted* files anywhere during the test, do not delete them — rename that folder TEST COPY — safe to keep and leave it. Nothing here ever asks you to delete your work. 9. Tell your AI: **“box locked — test it.”** The AI must attempt to read it without the password and confirm it cannot. Only after that test passes may the box enter a deposit folder.

Put it in the deposit — the four files, by name

10. **Copy** the tested .7z into 05 Deposit/. (Copy, not move — the original stays where it is.) The plain, unlocked folder it was made from **never** goes in the deposit — it stays home, in your work folder, as your local evidence copy.
11. **Upload these files and nothing else:**
 - your work — the PDF (or whatever your finished file is);
 - your QR record card — the QR image you saved from the Reader (a .png);
 - MANIFEST - seal <date>.md — the seal, written by seal_record.py;
 - your locked box — the .7z from step 10. Nothing readable from your working record goes up: no drafts, no transcripts, no 00 INDEX.md as a loose file (it travels inside the QR card), no .zip.
12. **Run the deposit check before you open Zenodo:** python check_deposit.py "<your work>/05 Deposit" — or tell your AI to. It lists every file in the box by name, tests the .7z without your passphrase, checks your unlocked folder is still beside it, and says one of two things: **SAFE TO UPLOAD — these files, nothing else**, or **STOP** with the reason. Your AI reads the verdict to you and waits for your yes. Do not upload on a STOP.
13. After publishing, verify the deposit page lists the .7z (not a .zip) and record its SHA-256 in the INDEX.

Keep the original

14. Do NOT delete the unlocked working folder — that is your local evidence copy and the only readable form of your record. It lives in your work folder, on your drive, and nowhere public. This is the same rule as Step 0: you always keep an unlocked copy.

Earned Trust (AIast) — the record is public, the receipts are held, both are checkable. The receipts stay yours — that is only true if the box is locked. Check it every time. Part of the Earned Trust Field Kit · standard: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.20719927> · CC BY 4.0