Getting Started

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Welcome to **mccoursepack**. This guide helps you install tools, open your first project, and render your first journal.

Chapter 1

Quick Setup

Follow these steps to get your system ready with the **latest course package** and two dedicated RStudio projects–one for your **weekly class tasks** and one for your **weekly journal**.

1.1   Step 1 – Install or Update the Course Package

The course package `mccoursepack` is hosted on GitHub. Use the `pak` package to install or update it.

```
# Install pak if not already installed
install.packages("pak")

# Install or update the course package
pak::pak("SIM-Lab-SIUE/mccoursepack")
```

Once the installation is complete, load the package into your R session.

```
# Load the package
library(mccoursepack)
```

Run the `pak::pak()` command at the start of the semester and again weekly to check for updates.

1.2   Step 2 – Create Two RStudio Projects

Projects keep everything organized. You'll create **two**:

1. A **Tasks Project** for weekly assignments.
2. A **Journal Project** for your course journal.

1.2.1   Create the Tasks Project

1. In RStudio: **File -> New Project -> New Directory -> New Project**.
2. Choose a location, e.g., `Documents/MC451/`.
3. Name the folder: `tasks_project`.
4. Click **Create Project**.

1.2.2   Create the Journal Project

1. Again: **File -> New Project -> New Directory -> New Project**.
2. Same parent folder (`Documents/MC451/`).
3. Name the folder: `journal_project`.
4. Click **Create Project**.

You now have two separate projects: one for all weekly tasks, one for your running journal.

1.3   Step 3 – Set Up the Journal Project

1. Open the **journal_project** in RStudio.
2. In the Console, run:

```
download_journal("mc451")   # or "mc501" if in the graduate course
```

This creates the `journal/` folder structure with an `entries/` directory, a template, and scripts for adding new entries.

1.4   Step 4 – Set Up the Tasks Project

1. Open the **tasks_project** in RStudio.
2. Use the helper function to download the starter files for your first week:

```
download_week("mc451", week = 1)
```

(or substitute `"mc501"` for the graduate course).

Repeat each week: change the `week` number to get that week's scaffold.

1.5   Step 5 – Confirm Everything Works

- Open the **journal_project** -> render the index file:

```
quarto render
```

This should build a unified journal book.

- Open the **tasks_project** -> render a week's scaffold. Check that Quarto builds the `.qmd` file into HTML/PDF.

If both projects render without errors, you're fully set up.

1.6   Mental Model

- **Journal project**: long-running notebook, one entry per week.
- **Tasks project**: fresh scaffolds each week for assignments, labs, and exercises.
- **mccoursepack package**: the engine that fetches and organizes everything for you.