

A Practical Guide to Losing an Umbrella

I buy umbrellas with good intentions. Compact ones. Sensible ones. Ones advertised as ‘wind-resistant,’ which feels optimistic in a city where wind treats physics as a suggestion. Each purchase comes with the same quiet promise: this time, I will remember. This time, I will keep track of it. The umbrella and I will part ways only when it is genuinely broken, not when it simply slips out of my life between errands.

The first stage is ownership optimism. I tuck the umbrella neatly into my bag and feel briefly competent. Rain begins, and I am prepared. I open it smoothly, pleased by the small click of the mechanism. Water beads and rolls away like it should. I think, this is going well. I walk faster, posture improved, as if preparedness itself has altered my character.

The second stage arrives without drama. The rain stops. Not fully. Just enough to suggest the umbrella is no longer essential. I close it and hold it loosely, letting it dangle from my hand. This is the moment everything changes. The umbrella shifts status from ‘tool’ to ‘object I am temporarily carrying,’ which is a dangerous category. Objects in this category do not survive long.

Indoors, the umbrella becomes inconvenient. It drips slightly. It leans against chairs. It threatens to fall over if I look away. I place it beside a table, then move it closer to the wall, then forget it entirely while ordering coffee or answering a message. My attention is elsewhere. The umbrella senses this.

Time passes. I leave the café, the shop, the office. Outside, the air feels lighter. I notice the weather first. Then my hands. One of them is empty in a way that feels wrong. I stop walking. I check my bag with unnecessary thoroughness, as if the umbrella might have learned to fold itself smaller out of spite. It has not.

This is the recognition stage. The realization arrives cleanly and all at once. I know exactly where the umbrella is. Or rather, where it was last seen. I consider turning back. I calculate the distance, the likelihood, the awkwardness of asking. My brain runs through scenarios at impressive speed, most of which end with someone shrugging.

Sometimes I return. Sometimes I do not. When I do, the umbrella is either exactly where I left it, leaning patiently, or already gone, claimed by another person who also believed this umbrella might change their life. I do not resent them. I understand the impulse.

The loss itself is oddly unemotional. There is a brief irritation, followed by acceptance. Umbrellas, after all, are transient. They move through the world quickly, passing from hand to hand, station to station. I tell myself this is normal. I tell myself I will remember next time. I tell myself many things.

Later, rain returns with confidence. I hunch my shoulders and pick up my pace, pretending this was the plan all along. I pass people with umbrellas and feel no jealousy, only recognition. We are at different points in the same cycle. Their optimism is intact. Mine has moved on.

Eventually, I buy another umbrella. I compare prices. I consider color. I choose one that feels responsible. As I walk out of the store, the sky looks clear. I carry the umbrella carefully, already rehearsing how I will not forget it. The cycle resets without ceremony.

If there is a lesson here, it is not about memory or responsibility. It is about objects that refuse permanence. The umbrella does not fail me. It fulfills its role briefly, then exits. I respect that. Some things are not meant to stay. They are meant to be useful once, then disappear, leaving behind a faint sense of rain and the confidence that, for a moment, you were prepared.