Taking Notes

As a software engineer with over 20 years of experience, I've amassed hundreds of notebooks filled with valuable insights on software engineering and development. While managing 10 or 20 notebooks was feasible, things became unmanageable once the collection grew larger.

To address this, I initially built a knowledge base—a personal website where I organized all my notes. It worked well for years, but hosting the site became increasingly time-consuming and costly, even when hosting locally. Despite this, I continued juggling between paper notebooks and the knowledge base. Eventually, I noticed a recurring pattern: I'd conduct Google searches for topics I'd already taken notes on, essentially starting the cycle anew.

This realization led me to seek a better solution. After thorough research, I landed on Microsoft OneNote. While it served me well and remains part of my workflow, it still fell short of my ideal note-taking experience. When meeting with clients, typing notes into OneNote felt clunky and distracting, so I reverted to my trusted paper notebooks. There's something undeniably satisfying about pen-and-paper note-taking, especially with today's high-quality writing utensils. However, the key issue remained—how could I reliably search my notes?

After giving it more thought and conducting further research, I finally found a solution that meets my needs: the iPad Mini paired with the second-generation Apple Pencil. This setup allows me to take handwritten notes that can be converted into typed text. The iPad Mini's portability and the versatility of the GoodNotes app have transformed how I take notes. GoodNotes works seamlessly across platforms, including PCs, Macs, and of course, the iPad Mini.

Whether I'm in meetings, at conferences, or conducting research, the compact form factor of the iPad Mini lets me take notes anywhere. I can even incorporate images, such as photos of slides, and annotate them directly. And the cherry on top? OneNote is also compatible with the iPad, enabling me to access and edit all my notes across devices.

I've finally found my sweet spot for note-taking, but the journey doesn't end here—I'm constantly experimenting and refining the process to make it even better.