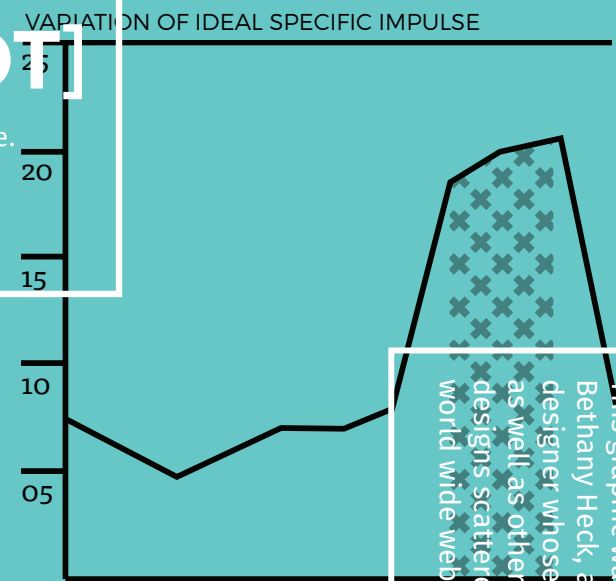


Say hi and learn more about me by joining the Monday Memo, my weekly newsletter for creatives.

# SYSTEM[REBOOT]

I'm Making All This Up is a project of Ben Noble. Each week, he writes a new article about the creative process and shares it with his mailing list, The Monday Memo.

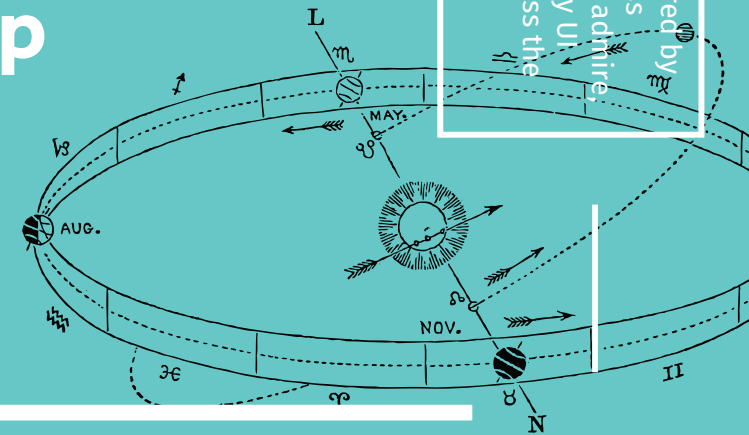
Ben Noble is a writer, improviser, teacher, student, wannabe designer, outer space addict and cat owner.



This graphic was inspired by Bethany Heck, a kickass designer whose work I admire, as well as other fantasy UI designs scattered across the world wide web.

a guide by i'm making all this up

## THE CREATOR'S TOOLKIT, A-Z

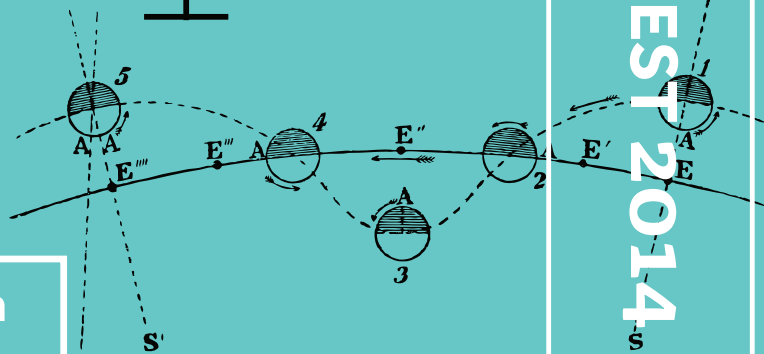


FUEL PERFORMANCE

### The 26 Tools I Can't Create Without

25  
20  
15

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EST 2014





# INTRODUCTION

I'm a sucker for a good tools article.

I'm fascinated by the ways in which other creative people do their work. And I love learning what they use throughout process.

Since I've been writing this blog for over two years, I thought it might be interesting to reflect on my creative process and some of the tools I take for granted (in a fun A-Z format). Hopefully I can recommend one or two that will help you make more cool stuff.

Quick disclaimer before we dive in—I have not been paid in any way to endorse these products. These are just the tools I use and love every day.



## **ADOBE CREATIVE CLOUD**

At \$50 a month, Adobe's Creative Cloud is the priciest product on this list. But if you're looking to do any kind of design work (and who are we kidding, in 2016, your site and products need a great design), then the Creative Cloud cannot be beat. Not a day goes by that I don't open at least one of the apps—Photoshop for image editing, InDesign for PDF and ebook formatting, Audition for podcast production, and Illustrator for....everything else.

There is a bit of a learning curve if you're not familiar with Adobe products, but they're the industry standard for a reason—and I definitely get \$50/month of value.

*Price: \$9.99/month for Photoshop, \$49.99/month for all apps*



## **BETTER BRANDING COURSE**

If you want to create and promote your work online, it helps to have a strong brand behind your products. But we're not all marketing experts and we can't all afford professional help when we're just getting started.

I'm 100% serious when I say that the Better Branding Course is the best online course I've ever taken (I've actually taken it three times). Caroline walks you through the entire branding process—from your brand mission, to your messaging strategy, to designing your visual identity and logo (even if you have 0 design experience).

*Price: \$80 / \$280 / \$380*

## COMMONPLACE BOOK

Want to actually remember the stuff you read? Next time you dive into a book, underline interesting passages and take margin notes. Then, transfer those highlights onto index cards and organize them by topic.

The more you read, the more you'll build your repository of quotes and sources to pull from when you write blog posts, speeches or books.

Hat Tip: Ryan Holiday

*Price: < \$10*



## **DOWNCAST**

I am what some would call...a podcast fiend. On average, I listen to 23 in a week. And I probably wouldn't be able to do that without Downcast. It's a podcast player that's full of features the default iPhone app should have by now—like smooth playback at higher speeds and the ability to create customized playlists to group different shows together.

*Price: \$3*



## **EVERNOTE**

Evernote is my go-to note taking app. If you're not familiar, it allows you to group notes into different categories (called notebooks), upload rich media, add tags, share with collaborators, sync across devices, and a whole bunch of other stuff I probably haven't discovered yet.

*Price: Free (to sync with 2 devices). Currently, I'm using premium, which is \$70/year*



## **FACEBOOK NEWSFEED ERADICATOR**

I love Facebook...a little too much. I thought about deleting my account altogether, but I need it to communicate with improv groups (and share blog posts and get event invites).

Newsfeed Eradicator is a the perfect solution—it's a chrome extension that blocks your newsfeed, so you can get on Facebook and take care of your business without getting distracted by election news and cat videos.

*Price: Free*





## **GUMROAD**

If you're looking to sell anything online, then Gumroad can. The platform makes it easy to upload images, write product info, price your goods (and offer different price points), add shipping costs and more. I used it last year to sell my book, and I look forward to using it again to sell my next one.

*Price: Free, but 3.5% + 30¢ per charge.*



## **HONEY**

Honey is a Google Chrome Extension that will save you money—so how could you say no? It pops up at checkout and tests a bunch of coupons before you buy.

It doesn't always find a deal, but it's a free and easy way to save 20% here and 10% there.

*Price: Free*



## **INBOX BY GOOGLE**

Gmail may have a ton of features, but Inbox makes email fun! It doesn't have any added functionality, per se, but you can archive emails with the click of a check mark, group emails by category in your inbox (without tabs), and it looks clean and tidy.

It's the most fun I've ever had reading email.

*Price: Free*



## **JAWBONE UP2**

I often get lost in projects, skip meals, and fail to notice that half the day has passed me by, which isn't a healthy way to live. Since wearing a fitness tracker every day, I'm more aware of my habits and have started moving and sleeping more.

If you're not your healthiest self, you can't create at full power.

*Price: \$100*



## **KLEON, AUSTIN**

If you're a creative person, you've probably heard of Austin Kleon or read his mega-bestseller, *Steal Like an Artist* (and if you haven't, start there). But he's done more than write *Steal*. He wrote another helpful creative primer called *Show Your Work* about non-scummy self-promotion, and he writes one of my favorite weekly newsletters, full of interesting and inspiring links.

*Price: Show/Steal: ~\$10, Newsletter: Free*



## **LYNDA.COM**

If you need help using your fancy Adobe Creative Cloud apps or are into online learning, Lynda has a huge cache of great tutorials. Most local libraries offer Lynda (or a similar service) for free with your card, so check there before shelling out your own hard earned cash for a subscription.

*Price: \$19.99/month, but check with your local library*



## **MECHANICAL KEYBOARD (WAS-D)**

If you're a writer, then you know how important it is to have a great keyboard, one that makes typing fun. And if your current setup isn't delivering, then it's time to upgrade to a mechanical keyboard.

Each key has its own switch (for writers—I recommend for blue cherry mx switches), which means it's more satisfying to type and it just feels better. And if you go with WAS-D, you can customize the colors of each and every key!

*Price: \$135–145*



# 1 NETWORKING

I realize networking isn't exactly a tool, and it's not exactly the most fun or the easiest thing to do...but it's incredibly difficult to take on a creative project entirely on your own. And if you can take on the project all by yourself, you're probably not thinking big enough.

You may do the majority of the heavy lifting, but you'll need people at the ready with moral support, complementary skills and fresh eyes. So go out and make some friends!

*Price: self-confidence*





## ONE POT MEALS

I'm kind of cheating with this one since I actually want to talk about about a website called Budget Bytes (which starts with a B, for those out there keeping score).

When I get home after work, the first thing I want to do is work on my creative projects, and the last thing I want to do is cook dinner. That's why I make all my meals on Sunday and reheat food throughout the week. Beth at Budget Bytes comes up with a ton of one pot meals and writes really clear recipes with pictures, so meal prep never gets in the way of my creativity.

*Price: Free (until you go to the grocery store)*



## **PROJO.CO**

At some point, every project gets visual. And whether I'm going to be creating something myself or hiring a friend to do real design work, it helps to have my inspiration in one place.

Projo.co helps you create online mood boards—groups of images based on projects, themes, or concepts—making collaboration a breeze. They also have a handy Chrome extension so you can drag images off pages and into your mood board while you surf the web.

*Price: Free*



## QUICKTIME

If you have a Mac, odds are you've used Quicktime. But seriously, it's a lifesaver. I don't know anything about video editing, but the program allows you to make quick edits and screen recordings even if you're a dummy, like me.

*Price: Free (on Mac)*



## **RHODIA NOTEBOOKS**

Every creative person needs a notebook. Personally, I prefer Rhodia—they're well made, inexpensive, come in an awesome orange color, and have graph paper pages that make me feel like an architect.

*Price: \$8–20*



## **SLACK**

If you listen to podcasts, you've heard of Slack. And everything they say in that ad copy is 100% true.

Slack organizes communication into teams and channels, looks great, and makes chatting fun. I literally have nothing else to say—just try it.

*Price: Free*

## **TEACHERY**

Teachery is an online learning platform, created by Jason Zook and Gerlando Piro that I used to make my Better Blog Course earlier this year. Unlike other course platforms I've used, it's intuitive, looks professional, and gives you just enough options without going overboard. The plans are incredibly reasonable and the support is top-notch.

*Price: \$49/month, \$470/year, \$900 forever*



## **UNSPLASH**

It's 2016—your blog posts need images. And they need images that don't suck. Unsplash offers professional, royalty-free photography that you can use anywhere without attribution, and new photos are constantly added.

*Price: Free*



## VOICE MEMOS

Although I'm about to recommend a microphone, if you need to make a quick audio recording with decent quality, this native iPhone app has you covered. It's quick, easy and does exactly what you need it to do.

*Price: Free (on iPhone)*





## **WHATFONT**

I'm a type junkie. I love discovering new fonts and changing up my website's visual tone (probably too often). WhatFont is a Chrome extension that will tell you what font is used on a particular site so you can look it up and use it in your own designs.

*Price: Free*



## **XBOX ONE**

It's not exactly a creative tool, but every creative needs to take a break and recharge his or her batteries from time to time. When that time comes, I turn on my Xbox to play video games or watch Stranger Things.

*Price: \$249*



## **YETI MICROPHONE**

As I write this article, I'm in the process of starting a podcast. I'm not at the level where I need one of those intimidating mics with the swinging arm, but I know that I need more than the voice memos app on my phone. The Yeti is a fairly inexpensive starter mic for those like me—someone looking to dip their toe into podcasting while still sounding professional.

*Price: \$130*

## ZOMORODI, MANOUSH

Buckle up, because we're going on a bit of a journey with this one.

Manoush Zomorodi hosts the WNYC podcast Note To Self, about humanity's relationship to technology. One episode, about reducing smartphone distractions, challenged listeners to store all of their apps in a single folder, making their home screen distraction-free. Although I didn't go super hard core, I did put the vast majority of apps into a "stuff" folder and now use the search bar (swiping down on the home screen) to open most programs.

This may sound like I'm adding points of friction to the user experience of my iPhone...because I am. When it takes extra effort to check Facebook or Instagram, I do it less and get off my phone faster.

*Price: convenience*

## CONCLUSION

Hopefully, in this list, you've found a new tool or a fun tip that can help you streamline your creative process and help you make more cool stuff. But this list comes with one giant disclaimer.

***No tool or trick is going to make you a creative success.***

Success comes from all the intangible stuff inside you—things like work ethic, motivation, and a commitment to self-improvement. And unfortunately, you can't buy that in the App Store.

*PS: If you want more helpful, creative advice and an honest look at the creative process, join my weekly newsletter, the Monday Memo for free at: [immakingallthisup.com](http://immakingallthisup.com) if you haven't already!*