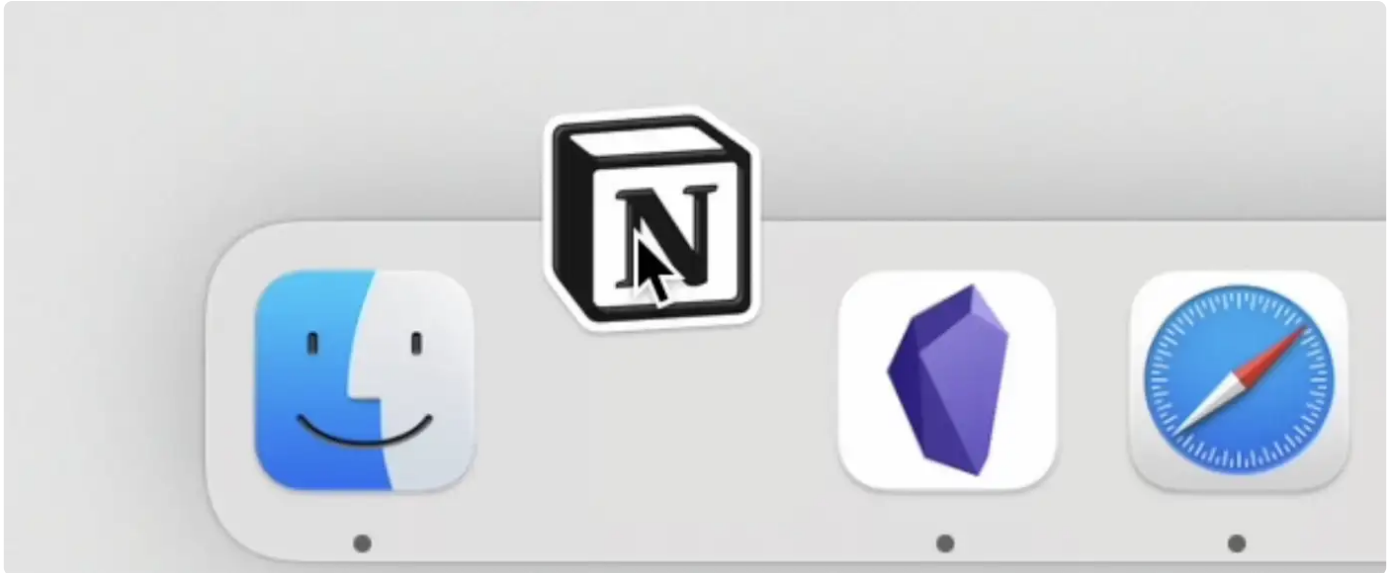


The 5 Reasons I Switched from Notion to Obsidian

[Geet Duggal](#) • 5 mins

[May 22nd 2022](#)



The application I use take notes is without a doubt the most important application I use every day. While I love to play with the latest and greatest note-taking applications, I rarely switch.

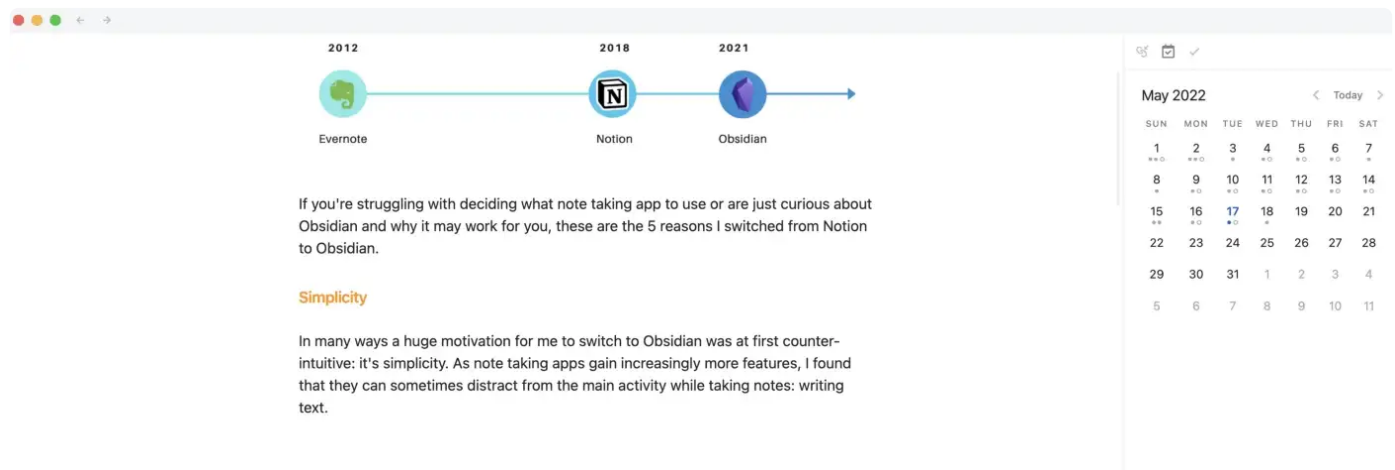
I used Evernote for 6 years before switching to Notion, and after 3 years of using Notion, I was surprised that a newer app called Obsidian would so quickly become my new daily driver.

If you're struggling with deciding what note taking app to use or are just curious about Obsidian and why it may work for you, these are the 5 reasons I switched from Notion to Obsidian.

Simplicity

Focus on plain text

In many ways a huge motivation for me to switch to Obsidian was at first counter-intuitive: it's simplicity. As note taking apps gain increasingly more features, I found that they can sometimes distract from the main activity while taking notes: writing in plain text. Ironically, even though Obsidian is arguably one of the most complex note taking apps out there. It's super easy to just take basic notes. See this view of me literally drafting this post (uses the "Minimal" theme). I really feel like the writing experience is superbly simple.



Not to say that these additional features aren't useful, but having used Obsidian as my daily driver since early 2021, I have really come to appreciate how additional features are thought of more as plugins and you can use them as supplemental 'lego' blocks to aid your pure text writing experience. Directly from their landing page, you can tell that this

was a very early and intentional design choice:



YOUR KNOWLEDGE BUILDING BLOCKS

Obsidian is built to be extensible from the ground up. We want you to build your own system, play with it, tweak it, until you're happy.

Obsidian is a versatile toolbox: with 25 core plugins, [567 community plugins](#), and 127 themes, plus custom styling, you can tweak Obsidian to work and look exactly how you want it.

Backlinks

The other key feature on top of pure text that Obsidian and many other note-taking solutions are adopting is the concept of a backlink. When you create a link to a page like I just did, you can now go to that page and see what pages link to it:

Tiago Forte



Pretty cool guy who teaches a course on "Building a Second Brain" (soon to be a book release). His technique is a bit like Zettlekasten ([Zettlekasten Overview](#)), that I discovered from the [Book How to Take Smart Notes](#).

Linked mentions



✓ 2022-05-13

- Just finished watching a [\[\[Tiago Forte\]\]](#) video that had interesting results for people's choice of apps when taking notes

✓ Choosing a Note-Taking App

[\[\[Tiago Forte\]\]](#)

✓ PARA

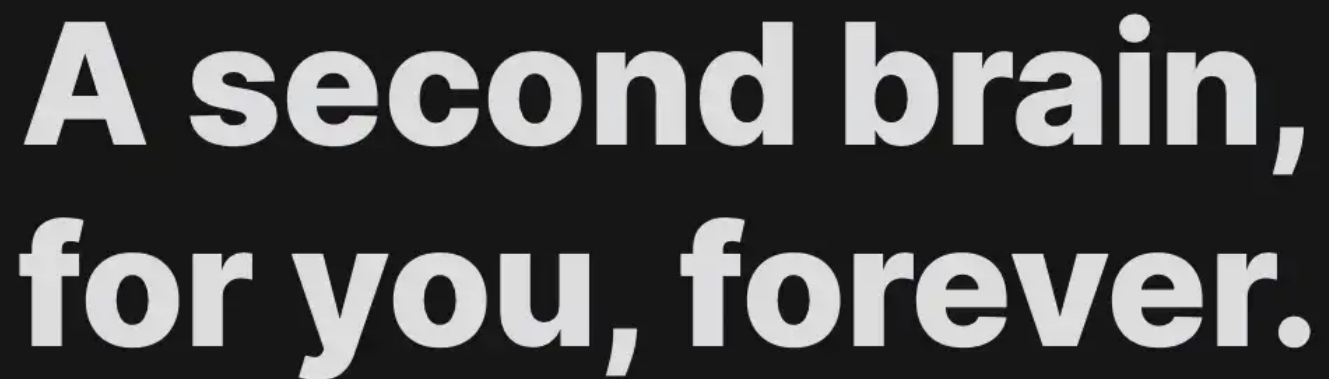
[\[\[Tiago Forte\]\]](#)

This surprisingly simple feature is incredibly useful because I can quickly link to a topic from any page I'm on and I know I can resurface it when necessary. I know that backlinks are basically ubiquitous now, but when I

started using notion only a handful of popular apps were using them and Notion hadn't yet implemented backlinks.

Personal notebook feeling

Finally, I really like how Obsidian really feels like my own personal notebook. Obsidian is intentionally designed to be personal, and I find that separation useful. I'm worried less about polish and appearance of the content in my own text notes and more focused on writing. Also, directly from their landing page, this was intentional from the beginning:

The image shows the Obsidian logo, which consists of the text "A second brain, for you, forever." in a bold, white, sans-serif font, centered on a dark gray rectangular background.

Simplicity through an emphasis on plain text, backlinks, and a personal space for writing is one of the key reasons for my switch from Notion.

Speed

The second and probably most underrated reason for me to switch is simply put: speed. When I type in Obsidian or work on the same note via

1Writer on my iPad, the typing experience feels way faster than in Notion.

I haven't quite quantified this but there is a qualitative difference that makes typing in Obsidian way more pleasurable. Beyond typing, I also find that search in Obsidian is quite fast presumably because it's operating directly on local files that are mostly plain text.

While it may not be the biggest deal in the grand scheme of things, I really like how my search results are virtually instant and that it makes the overall experience of working on my notes that much more fluid.

Portability

This leads into the next key reason I switched: portability. Obsidian operates on Markdown or plain text files directly which makes it very easy to use other tools in combination. As I mentioned earlier, you can use apps like iA Writer or 1Writer for a great note-taking experience on iOS or use the Obsidian App directly. It's my choice!

On your computer, you can also use other applications and even command line tools or scripts to work on your notes. For example, knowing that all my notes, PDF files, and images are also backed up via Dropbox, I can use Dropbox's efficient search to search for content within PDFs and images very easily.

It is a great feeling knowing that I can use so many different tools

together with my notes and that I am not locked into any particular tool.

Another aspect of portability I think is important, and hinted at earlier, is the fact that Obsidian doesn't rely on being constantly connected to the cloud. Even though it is rare to not be connected to the internet, it is really nice when you do happen to be offline for some reason or expect to travel where connection may be limited.

Configurability

The fourth reason I switched from Notion to Obsidian is its configurability.

Obsidian provides the user a lot of control over the theme or style of the note-taking experience by not only providing a lot of user-contributed themes, but also letting the user edit their own style directly.

Obsidian also provides a number of very handy core plugins that help you customize your experience. For example, you can enable or disable a feature that provides daily note functionality or helps you 'favorite' or 'star' certain notes.

Obsidian also provides the ability to highly customize how both your notes and core plugins are visually laid out. This level of configurability is something I don't find in a lot of other modern and popular note taking applications and I really like having it to help make the writing environment feel that much more useful and personal.

Extensibility

Finally, a huge reason I am a fan of Obsidian is its extensibility. In addition to its core plugin library, users can contribute third party plugins. For example, the Calendar plugin (see the calendar in the screenshot above) is something I heavily rely on and really helped sell me early on to Obsidian.

While a note taking app like NotePlan has this feature, I as a user am completely dependent on what NotePlan dictates the experience should be like. With Obsidian, this feature can be easily made by a 3rd party developer and customized by the end-user if desired.

The user experience with Obsidian is also very extensible by using tools that help the user build workflows between applications. For example, I can use the 'Alfred' app on a Mac to quickly append some text to a daily note or create an iOS shortcut to quickly dictate a task to do from my phone or even watch.

I really enjoy how the experience of using Obsidian can be extended in many different and creative ways. Their approach has enabled me to create a very enjoyable and practical environment to work in.

I hope walking through these 5 reasons helps to illustrate why I made the transition and potentially helps you make a choice when choosing the note taking experience that best fits you. To be honest I had stellar experiences on Evernote and Notion as past daily drivers, but Obsidian has allowed by note-taking to reach a new level. Would love to hear your

experiences and if this post resonated with you may be interested in how I journal in Obsidian:

This Simple Journaling Method Could Change Your Life

I am using a journaling technique that I can honestly say has changed my life and I've also been sticking with it like...

medium.com