

Key Features to Incorporate

Based on Apple's Human Interface Guidelines (HIG), which prioritize clarity, consistency, deference to content, depth through layered interfaces, immediate feedback, and accessibility, your local Evernote replacement should focus on a minimalist, user-centric design. Current best practices from 2026 note-taking apps like Apple Notes, Bear, Craft, Obsidian, and NotePlan emphasize simplicity, offline-first functionality, and extensibility without overwhelming users. Here's a curated list of essential features, drawing from trends like progressive disclosure (revealing options gradually) and intuitive navigation to ensure an easy-to-use system.

- **Local-First Storage and Offline Access:** Store all notes as plain Markdown files or a simple database on the user's device, avoiding cloud dependencies. This aligns with HIG's emphasis on performance and reliability—notes load instantly without internet. Apps like Obsidian and Joplin excel here, allowing users to build a "vault" of interconnected local files. Include folder-based organization for notebooks, with automatic backups to user-specified local directories.
- **Minimalist, Intuitive UI with Progressive Disclosure:** Use a clean interface with ample whitespace, simple typography, and one primary action per screen (e.g., a prominent "New Note" button). Follow HIG's clarity principle by hiding advanced tools (like tags or links) until needed, reducing cognitive load. Bear and Craft demonstrate this with elegant, distraction-free editors that reveal formatting options on demand. Implement touch-friendly elements for iOS/macOS, like swipe gestures for archiving or quick previews.
- **Powerful Search and Tagging:** Integrate full-text search with filters for tags, dates, and attachments, powered by local indexing for speed. HIG stresses discoverability, so include smart folders or quick search bars that suggest results as you type. Modern apps like Apple Notes and NotePlan use this for seamless retrieval, enhancing intuitiveness without complex hierarchies.

- **Markdown-Based Editing with Rich Media Support:** Support lightweight Markdown for formatting, combined with easy embedding of images, PDFs, audio, and sketches. This follows best practices for simplicity while allowing depth—users start with plain text but can add media via drag-and-drop. Obsidian and Bear shine here, with live previews and handwriting conversion (via Apple Pencil on iOS). Ensure accessibility with voiceover support and high-contrast modes.
- **Backlinks and Knowledge Graphing:** Enable automatic backlinks between notes for a networked knowledge base, visualized in a simple graph view. This builds on HIG's depth principle, allowing users to explore connections intuitively. Obsidian popularized this for local systems, making it feel organic rather than forced.
- **AI-Integrated Summaries and Tools (Local-Only):** Incorporate offline AI (e.g., via on-device models like those in Apple Intelligence) for note summaries, quizzes, or auto-tagging. Keep it subtle—opt-in and non-intrusive—to align with user-centric trends. Notability and GoodNotes use similar features for productivity without overwhelming the core experience.
- **Templates and Quick Capture:** Provide customizable templates for common note types (e.g., meetings, journals) and a global quick-entry shortcut (like Fn+Q on macOS). This supports HIG's feedback and efficiency, with apps like NotePlan integrating calendars and lists for a unified feel.
- **Accessibility and Customization:** Follow HIG's inclusivity guidelines with dynamic text sizing, color inversion, and keyboard navigation. Allow light/dark mode auto-switching and basic theme tweaks, but keep defaults minimalist to avoid paradox of choice.

Old Models and Features to Explicitly Avoid

Outdated designs from legacy apps like early Evernote versions often lead to frustration, as highlighted in 2026 critiques. Avoid these to prevent common pitfalls like context loss, visual clutter, and performance drags, focusing instead on streamlined, intuitive experiences per current UX trends.

Outdated Model/Feature	Why Avoid It	Modern Alternative
Hierarchical Folders as Primary Organization	Forces rigid structures that hinder quick access and lead to "file not found" frustration; ignores HIG's emphasis on fluid navigation.	Use tags, smart searches, and backlinks for flexible, context-aware organization (e.g., Obsidian-style).
Overloaded Toolbars and Menus	Creates paradox of choice and cognitive overload; violates simplicity best practices by showing all options upfront.	Progressive disclosure: Hide advanced tools in contextual menus or gestures.
Proprietary File Formats	Locks data in, causing fragmentation and export hassles; counters local-first ethos and portability.	Standard Markdown or ENEX-compatible exports for easy migration.
Subscription-Dependent Features	Alienates users seeking one-time ownership; leads to feature creep and abandonment if costs rise.	Fully local, with optional paid plugins if extensible.
Cluttered Visuals (e.g., Excessive Colors/Animations)	Increases visual noise, reducing readability and focus; ignores minimalist trends and HIG's deference to content.	Clean, whitespace-heavy design with subtle feedback animations.
Manual Syncing or Cloud Reliance	Introduces delays and privacy risks; outdated for local systems where instant access is expected.	Purely device-based operations with optional manual backups.
Word-for-Word Transcription Focus	Encourages passive note-taking without synthesis; leads to bloated, unusable archives.	Promote summaries and key ideas via AI prompts or templates.
Lack of Performance Optimization	Slow loading in large libraries frustrates users; defies HIG's performance guidelines.	Efficient local indexing and lightweight rendering.

By incorporating these features and sidestepping pitfalls, your app will feel modern, intuitive, and aligned with Apple's ecosystem—prioritizing user control and efficiency for a seamless local note-taking experience.