

# The Art of Note-Taking

Workshop presented by Computer Club, co-sponsored by Graduate Student Government.



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This slide show can be accessed at  
[sghua.ng/note-taking](http://sghua.ng/note-taking).

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# Computer Club



Also serves as the Student Chapter of Association of Computing Machinery (ACM)

A club for everyone interested in anything about computer.

Software or hardware; casually or professionally.

All majors are welcome!

# Agenda

- Why are Google Docs a terrible idea?
- The different styles of note-taking and corresponding tools
  - The Student - Apple Notes
  - The Librarian - OneNote
  - The Architect - Notion
  - The Gardener - Obsidian
- How note-taking shapes your life
- Other suggestions
- Q&A

# Why are Google Docs a terrible idea?

LIVE DEMO

- Where do you put your notes?
- How do you write your notes?
- How do you retrieve your notes?
- Is the tool itself handy?

! Google Docs is terrible for note-taking in all these aspects!

# Principles of Effective Note-Taking

- Easy to start - The less frictions the better
- Easy to write things down - Separation of content and style
- Easy to retrieve - Prepare to have different stages of note-taking
- The tool itself must be handy - I might have another workshop dedicated to this

# Styles of Note-Taking

Proposed by Tiago Forte in *Building a Second Brain*.

- Student (Apple Notes)
- Librarian (OneNote)
- Architect (Notion)
- Gardener (Obsidian)

The relationship btw tool and style is not one-to-one!

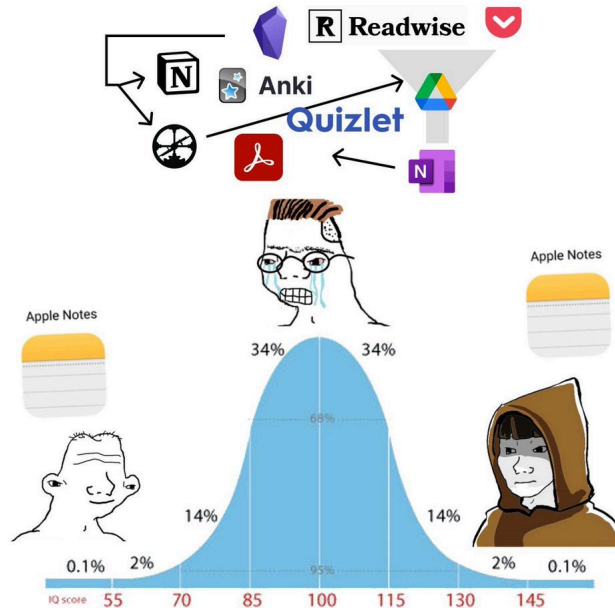
## Style: Student - Apple Notes

Students are **simple** (perhaps stupid?)

- What do they want: Pass the exam
- When do they take notes: in class
- When do they use the notes: when doing homeworks,  
and before the exam
- What do they do after final: throw the notes away

# Style: Student - Are Actually Smart

- ! Premature optimization is the source of all evil. -- Donald Knuth





# Style: Librarian

- Librarian is all about categorization
- The seemingly easiest way to organize your notes
- Dewey Decimal System – classify things with three digits
- Variant: Johnny Decimal System
- Problem
  - Need to think about categorization – friction – remedy: buffer/inbox
  - How can one book be on two shelves at the same time?

# Style: Librarian - OneNote

## QUICK DEMO OF ONENOTE

### The Good:

- Wonderful Handwriting Support (especially pencil)
- Canvas without limit
- Categorization - 6 levels!

### The Bad:

- Outdated data structure
- No way to export notes
- Closely coupled content and formatting

Not Recommended!

## Style: Architect - Notion - notion.so

- This is where things become "unusual"
- Architects are interested in building systems (classic INTJ type)
- Can't be explained by words...

LIVE DEMO OF CRM AND PM IN NOTION

- Similar tools:
  - AirTable - automation (some use it as backend)
  - Coda - competitor of Notion
  - Google Sheets - possible, but with bad UX

## Style: Gardener

- Gardeners are interested in planting seeds in different places. Walking around their gardens, appreciating the beauty of plants, and nurture them.
- Translate → Take/Read/Discover/Connect notes, anywhere, anytime.
- Backlinked Notes
- Zettelkasten

# Style: Gardener - Obsidian - obsidian.md

## LIVE DEMO OF OBSIDIAN

- Separation of content and style
- Tool agnostic
- Free app + big ecosystem
- Similar apps
  - Logseq
  - Roam Research
  - Yu Que

# How Note-Taking Shapes Your Life

- Remember more, do more
- Structures provided (especially with tools like Notion)
- Publish your notes! ``notes.sghuang.com``
- A certain media provokes a certain thinking (looking at a spreadsheet is different from looking at an empty canvas)

## Other Comments

- There's on need for all-in-one
- Apple ecosystem remains the most powerful one
- Combination with other productivity tools
- Tool or toy? *Productivity Pornography*
- To Start
  - Pick a tool, use it for at least a week
  - Always ask how things can be improved

## Other Tools

- Zotero - best for literature reading, integrates well with Obsidian.
- Margin Note - powerful tool for learning from a textbook PDF
- Notability and GoodNotes - for handwritten notes
- Heptabase - for visual note-taking
- VSCode (or any editor)
- LiquidText
- Flomo



**Q&A**