

All those documents, data sets and interviews are no good if you can't find them. **Here are nine tools to help.**

Organization

PROJECT MANAGEMENT

Workflow

workflowy.com

Free, but paying for pro gets you more features

This list-making app has less structure than other organization apps, which makes it great for brainstorming or note-taking. It works in your browser or as a mobile app and allows you to create sub-lists and nested lists.

IFTTT (If This Then That)

ifttt.com

Free

A free platform (web and mobile) that connects with all your apps and devices to help you do more. Automated "applets" can download a specific user's tweets into a spreadsheet, remind you to follow up on an email after 30 days or add the next day's weather report to your phone calendar. It's simple and user-friendly.

Whiteboard

Free (minus the cost of supplies)

You know, the old-school, hang-it-on-the-wall kind. Create a tracking system or grid on your whiteboard and put it someplace you'll see every day. Use Post-it notes to track key assignments and when they're due. Move the Post-its through your grid as the project advances.

Financial Times toolkit

github.com/ft-interactive/projects-toolkit

Free download

This PDF kit contains five modules to help newsrooms plan and execute projects: a project calendar, pitch template, production checklist, analytics template and review meeting plan. Use all five from beginning to end, or pull out a specific part that's most helpful.

NOTE-TAKING AND WRITING

Evernote

evernote.com

Free, but paying for premium gets you more features

Sync notes between your devices and upload photos and documents with this app. You can sort notes into specific notebooks and tag them to stay organized. It also allows sharing between users, making it great for multi-person investigations.

Scrivener

literatureandlatte.com/scrivener.php

Free trial, then one-time \$45 cost to download the app

This no-frills word processor and project management tool allows you to create virtual note cards and move them around to outline your story. Take snapshots of your work to track edits, upload notes and research, and view them side-by-side with your copy as you write.

#1
from Sarah Hutchins,
managing editor of
the IRE Journal

"This is what we use
to track IRE articles,
podcast episodes
and other editorial
content."

IRE members share their suggestions for staying organized during investigations.

ELLEN GABLER

Reporter,
The New York Times

'Call log' spreadsheet

Free

Another IRE member showed me how to set up a 'call log' years ago, and I've used it ever since. **I take all my notes for interviews in the spreadsheet.**

It's very simple. In the header row, list out column names: Date, Name, Title, Organization, Phone number, Email, Slug, Notes. The "slug" field is important because it corresponds with whatever story the call is about. You can later use that field to sort the spreadsheet so all your interviews related to "opioids" or "nursing home deaths" come up together. The "notes" field is where you take notes while you interview someone.

The key to a call log like this is to be disciplined in your approach. **Use it every day for every call.** When you leave a message, write that down. It's helpful to be able to remind an official you've left 11 messages in the past four days and haven't heard back. Create the log in Google Sheets and you can have access at home, too.

ANDY PIERROTTI

Reporter,
11Alive News

Amazon Echo

amazon.com/echo
\$50 to \$150, depending on model

This may seem silly, but I find the Amazon Echo Dot extremely helpful. Whenever I'm at home and I think of something I need to do for a story, I simply say **"Alexa, remind me to do ... etc."** It not only reminds you by audio, but it sends you a list of all your reminders.

FRANCISCO VARA-ORTA

Data specialist and
writer,
Education Week

Digital 'filing cabinet'

Free

When it comes to the data and documents that are part of my daily workflow, I try to imagine my computer drive, shared data folders and email folders as **digital versions of a filing cabinet.**

Keeping information in folders with recognizable names is important when working on a team project using a shared drive. It's helped us all see what we're looking at and the various versions of the data we've cleaned or analyzed over time.

With email programs like Outlook, I recommend setting up digital folders by category, such as story ideas, data tools and specific subject areas (like "parent engagement" or "tax reform"). Don't be afraid to create subfolders, too. These make it much easier to find documents when you need them on a whim.



+1
from Samantha Sunne,
independent journalist

"One of the really neat features is you can take pictures of your handwritten notes, and it makes the notes searchable."