

Take digital meeting notes and minutes like a pro



Whether you're the one in attendance responsible for keeping the minutes of a meeting or just like to jot things down for your own benefit, it pays to develop effective ways to capture information. Committing to good note-taking rather than trusting one's own memory increases accuracy. The action also documents decisions should questions arise later.

Traditional pen and paper note-taking certainly is an option. Doing it since they were college students, many people like to scribble handwritten notes and see no reason to change. Furthermore, the act of composing handwritten notes requires spending a few seconds processing info before writing, which aids comprehension.

Technology, however, has expanded the ways people can take notes. Here, we'll look at some of the possibilities available to individuals interested in going that route.

It is important to remember, though, that the best note-taking starts with the note-taker. Some people love having a variety of tech options at their disposal. Others feel overwhelmed. Figure out what works well for you. Prioritize consistency and comfort over bells and whistles.

From laptops to Apple iPads: Digital devices for note-taking

For many workers, their laptop proves a popular way to take notes. Routinely carried around, it is easily accessible. Improved battery life nowadays ensures the device is ready to go when needed without having to sit near an outlet to plug it in. And laptop note-taking means no more worries about running out of paper or trying to find a writing utensil!

Adept typists often like the speed at which laptops allow them to put down information. Typing also is a godsend to note-takers with messy handwriting who may find it hard to share their notes or even reread material themselves down the line.

Some people take notes on their iPhone, especially to just jot reminders or due dates. For lengthier note-taking, an easy-to-carry tablet presents more options. In addition to typing, digital writing and drawing with an Apple pencil or other stylus designed for their particular tablet become possibilities. Essentially, they can create digital notebooks that mimic the familiar process of taking paper notes but with additional perks. Some even choose a lined background that resembles notebook paper. If desired, programs exist to turn handwritten text to type.

Advantages of digital note-taking

Anyone who has ever lost their paper notes or forgotten them somewhere understands the attraction of cloud storage. Digital devices enable backups and easy retrieval from anywhere. Digital documents also are very sharable compared to distributing photocopied notes.

Other potential pros of digital note-taking include:

- Ability to organize material by cutting and pasting, color coding, and adding headers.
- Ability to quickly vary text size, font, color, and highlighting.
- Ability to add in pictures, slides, audio recordings, photos of whiteboards, and other helpful supplements.
- Ability to expand a section of notes as new info or thoughts arise without having to physically scrunch it in.
- Ability to search on terms to easily locate information.

Popular note-taking apps and software

Some people choose to head to their Google Drive and open up a new Google Doc on which to take notes. Others employ a Microsoft Word page (made more team-friendly with Microsoft Teams). The familiarity of these set-ups makes them attractive and convenient.

“As a virtual assistant, I am taking notes during meetings daily, sometimes multiple times a day. The best tool for it is Google Docs,” says Stella Gregory, founder of [Stellar Virtual Assistant Services](#). “My favorite way to do it is to send out an agenda to everyone who will be attending the meeting a day or so before the meeting, and then I take notes directly on that agenda. I color code take-away items and even tag in the document people if they are not on the Asana board for the project. This saves you from having to send out the notes afterward to everyone.”

Be aware, however, that a variety of other note-taking options exist. Especially for frequent note-takers, it can pay to explore what’s available for your digital device. Have you used the Cornell method of note-taking since you were a college student? Are you a visual person who loves Sketchnoting? Chances are high you can find an app that includes the template or whiteboard perfect for your preferences.

When examining, keep in mind that the popular iPad Pro and other Apple products operate on iOS and macOS.

Other digital devices typically employ an android mobile operating system.



Common note-taking apps

include:

- Microsoft OneNote
- Google Keep
- Evernote
- GoodNotes
- Hive Notes
- Notability
- Apple Notes

Talk to individual users, and you'll encounter a variety of opinions about what they like and why.

"As a young techie, I only ever use digital notes. At the moment I'm in love with GoodNotes 5," says Paul Bateria, COO and marketing manager of [Sleep Advisor](#). "This iOS app works incredibly well with my Apple Pen. It gives me a natural writing experience, saves the environment by being paperless, and I can easily share my notes on the go. It's been a lifesaver countless times!"

Tech writer Jessica Carrell, founder of [AnySoftwareTools](#), favors Evernote. She says, "I use Evernote because it has plenty of features that take my note-taking to new heights. For one, you can add tags at the bottom of your notes to make them more locatable. You can also upload handwritten notes, which is a big plus for me because I

take handwritten notes on occasion. You can upload other items, too, like audio clips and images.”

“My favorite app to use for digital note-taking is Microsoft's OneNote!” says David Morgan, CEO of [Snorkel Mart](#). “It is easy to use, can be personalized — which I think is very cute, and has great features such as bullet points, tasks, etc. It is even compatible with all types of devices so I have it downloaded on both my phone and laptop. The fact that all its features are totally free is icing on the cake.”

Ways to improve note-taking

As mentioned earlier, the best notes start with a diligent note-taker. The following are some of the things you can do to create useful, thorough notes.

Use a template

Don't reinvent the wheel each time you compile meeting minutes. A template saves time by organizing material for you. It also prompts you to remember to input important details such as time, date, and names of attendees. A consistent set-up benefits recipients, too. When you present the minutes to others in a set format, they get used to the layout. This familiarity assists them in locating pertinent information quickly.

Turn off digital distractions

Taking notes demands concentration. Unfortunately, digital devices provide a plethora of possible distractions. Resist the urge to play games, surf the web, or go on social media. Mute notifications.

Avoid endless regurgitation

Especially when typing notes during a meeting, it becomes easy to simply put down everything said. The end result, however, is often cumbersome. Notes need to focus on action, not word-for-word replication of conversations.

Evaluate notes for what matters, and organize accordingly. Be specific when it really counts, such as recording motions or decisions.

Keep emotions out of meeting minutes

When editing notes to distribute to the group, eliminate your own feelings and interpretations. Your job is to report what went on, not to speculate whether Albert's voice was raised out of anger or passion.

In personal “for your eyes only” notes, of course, you can include thoughts, feelings, and questions. Consider changing the text color or using a highlighting feature to distinguish your own input from what was actually said or decided.

Create an eye-pleasing final format

Take advantage of what your digital device offers! Use underlining, bullet points, bolding, and the like to draw action steps and deadlines to the reader's attention. Proof and spell-check, then easily send out your digital notes or instruct colleagues to access via the cloud.