Our Must-Have, Most-Used

Apps for Thinkers

THE
SWEET
SETUP

Who wants just any writing and note-taking app?

Not us. We want the best! And so do you!

Alas, it's getting harder and harder to find the best apps. You can't trust the search results on the App store to show you what is actually great. And Googling for something often leads you to just a list of a bunch of apps that you still have to sort through.

That's why we spend an inordinate amount of time and energy to research, test, and find the very best apps for you.

The Best Writing App
Ulysses

Why we love it

There are a lot of great options available in this golden age of writing applications for the Mac and iOS, but we believe that Ulysses is the cream of the crop. In our opinion, it's the perfect combination of power and grace, giving you both the writing tools to help you be productive and a beautiful, distraction-free writing environment to keep you focused.

Pro Tip for Ulysses Users

Send your outline in Ulysses in TextBundle format to MindNode and turn your outline into a mind map (with images attached) instantly. Or you could create a Markdown presentation in Ulysses that can be displayed in Deckset. This is made possible through the new TextPack export feature.

Did you Know?

Turn on Typewriter Mode for an even more focused writing experience. You can highlight the line, sentence, or paragraph you are currently writing. Toggling on the **Mark Current Line** adds an additional layer of contrast.

Read our full review of Ulysses »

The Best Journaling App
Day One

Why we love it

If you're looking for the best journaling app, or a great app for logging and recording various events and milestones of your life, then by far and away the best journaling app is Day One. It has outstanding apps for the Mac, iPhone, and iPad that all sync. It has a clever and rich feature set that lets you integrate photos, current location, weather data, and more into your journal entries.

Pro Tip for Day One Users

New in Day One V3 is the introduction of audio entries. Day One can now capture the coolest new sounds you've experienced on a trip, your child's first words, or a new guitar riff you heard at a concert. In many ways, audio entries branch Day One into a whole new world of capturing your life.

Did you Know?

You can set Day One journal reminders to capture your thoughts throughout your day or week. Reminders can be set as often as every 15 minutes, or as infrequently as once per week. These prompts could be used for an end of day brain dump, or a mid-day reorientation.

Read our full review of Day One »

The Best Note-Taking App

Bear

Why we love it

Some users want a minimalistic approach to notes, while others are looking for a notes app that is feature-rich with different tools and customizations. Bear, from Shiny Frog, accomplishes both by designing a user experience that balances the needs of each user, which is just one of the reasons why we think it is the best note-taking app on iOS.

Pro Tip for Bear users

Activate Bear's iOS app extension inside supporting apps to quickly start a new note, append a note, or prepend a note based on what you have selected. For example, Bear can download the content of a web page to a note. Think of it as Instapaper for Bear.

Did you Know?

You can link to other notes within Bear? By typing the title of the note that you want to link to in between two brackets, like so: [[Title Goes Here]]. Bear doesn't look for upper or lower casing when entering the title.

Read our full review of Bear »

The Best iPad App for Handwritten Notes

Notability

Why we love it

A good app for handwriting has an entirely different place in the iOS ecosystem compared to a traditional note-taking app (like Bear, our favorite app in that category). We believe that the best handwritten note-taking app is one that provides a wide variety of options and a full set of features. Notability offers both of these things, and its long tenure in the App Store convinces us that it's here to stay.

Did you Know?

All notes can be searched via OCR (optical character recognition). Searching for any word shows how many entries there are within the document as well as a list of pages in which the word appears.

Read our full review of Notability »

The Best Mind Mapping App
MindNode 5

Why we love it

There are many very good options for mind mapping software to help you capture and organize your ideas, but we think that MindNode is the best for most people because it has a beautiful design, is easy to use, supports very reliable iCloud sync, and there are just enough import/export options to be a really useful tool in almost any workflow.

Pro Tip

For those using Ulysses, you can export your mind map to markdown, then continuing writing. Helpful when outlining concepts in MindNode then moving to the writing stage.

Did you Know?

MindNode 5 has a built in feature called "MyMindNode" which uploads your mind map to the MyMindNode service and creates a unique URL that allows you to open the mind map in a browser.

Read our full review of MindNode 5 »

Life is too short for crappy apps.

At The Sweet Setup our aim is to help you make the most of your time and attention — both on and *off* your devices...

Every day we publish articles, reviews, tutorials, and guides to help you be more productive and focused.

We've been doing this since 2013. That's why we're trusted by half-a-million website readers every month, tens of thousands of readers on our newsletter, and our work has been referenced by *The New York Times*, *Inc.*, *Forbes*, *Entrepreneur*, *MacStories*, and others.

We also have several products that have helped thousands of iPad, iPhone, and Mac users just like you to become overnight experts in the apps they rely on most.

You can get access to all of our in-depth training courses right here:

thesweetsetup.com/training