

The Sweet Setup Staff Picks for 2019

Must-Have Apps



Who wants just any app?

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

Alas, it's getting harder and harder to find the best apps. You cannot reliably 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.

Here is our list of staff favorites apps that we consider to be "Must Have".

These apps range across several different categories, all to help you get the most out of your device and your day.

One thing you'll notice is that all of these apps respect your time. They are helpful for keeping you on focus and on track with what matters.

The Best Productivity App

Things

Why we love it

Things is one of the most pleasing and satisfying pieces of software we've ever used. It's easy to get stuff into it with customizable quick entry shortcuts. One of the aspects of Things that has always been important is how it structures the tasks that make up your life using GTD's Areas of Responsibility. So if you're at work and don't care to see your chores around the house, you can view a specific area with all its contained projects and miscellaneous tasks.

Pro Tip for Things Users

Things has an extensive URL-scheme on iOS, making it possible to link all sorts of apps with Things to send tasks to your inbox from anywhere. Matthew Cassinelli has created an extensive guide to Things's URL scheme (you can [check it out here](#)) and one of the best uses of that URL scheme is Shortcuts (formerly Workflow). Using Shortcuts, you can create quick shortcuts for sending new tasks to Things or to quickly open up a specific area in Things. Shortcuts makes [crazy shortcuts like this one possible](#), where you can take meeting minutes inside Bear and then automatically create tasks based on the meeting's actionable items inside Things, complete with URLs linking the two apps.

Did you Know?

You can email tasks to your Things inbox? Once enabled, you're given a unique email address any email you send to that address will be converted into a task and will be added to your Things inbox across all your devices. As expected, the subject line of the email becomes the task's name and any text within the body of the email becomes the task's note.

[Read our full review of Things 3 »](#)

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 Calendar App

Fantastical

Why we love it

What makes Fantastical stand out is its ease of use. A quick glance makes it easy to get a feel for your day, week, or month and how your time is going to be spent. It's also incredibly easy to get items into your calendar.

Pro Tip

For the power users, Fantastical has keyboard shortcuts for external keyboards baked into the app. Check out the complete list in the **Settings** → **Help** → **Tips and Tricks** section.

Did you Know?

You can create entries in Fantastical by just telling it what you're up to. You can say things like, "Vacation in Canada Aug 9-15th" and Fantastical will create an event called "Vacation" with location "Canada" and schedule it as an all-day event August 9-15th.

[Read our full review of Fantastical for macOS »](#)

[Read our full review of Fantastical for iPhone »](#)

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 Password App

1Password

Why we love it

Besides being available as a native app for almost every major platform: Mac, iPhone & iPad, (Windows, and Android) it has powerful and seamless syncing between devices as well. Which means users get access to their passwords on any device they're using, even if they're switching back and forth. All your passwords, no matter which device you're on.

Pro Tip

Built in to 1Password is a feature called Watchtower which performs a security audit of your passwords. It then will give you feedback on how secure your passwords as well as look for duplicates.

Did you Know?

1Password has individual and family options as well as team and business. These different tiers allow you to add (or remove) users from your password vaults and share specific passwords (or sets of them) as opposed to sharing *everything*. You choose what you want to share, credit cards, secure notes, whatever you've got in there.

[Read our full review of 1Password »](#)

The Best Mind Mapping App

MindNode

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 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 »](#)

The Best iPad Handwriting Notes App

GoodNotes

Why we love it

One reason we love GoodNotes is the ability to add our own paper templates to the app. Provided you already have a PDF or image handy, it's a simple process of adding it to the app.

Pro Tip

Turn on GoodNotes' smart shape function to draw shapes that auto-convert into clean shapes. It features the same color and width options as the pen tool, and allows you to choose a fill color if desired.

Did you Know?

Searching from GoodNotes' navigation bar lets you input any word and find multiple types of results — OCR, notebook titles, PDF matches, and typed text — and each result shows how many times there's a page that matches.

[Read our full review of GoodNotes vs Notability »](#)

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