

How to Take Smart Notes

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General Ideas

- Writing is the medium of work.
It is not a result of learning or studying but the way it is performed.
- Taking notes beforehand makes work itself easier
- Defining tasks well beforehand is better than relying on willpower
- It is better not having to use willpower
- Mere Exposure Effect:
Thinking you are good at something just because you have done it often

Structure of the Slip-Box-System

3 types of Notes		Components of the System	
Fleeting Notes:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Small reminders• Needed only a few days• Throw them away as soon as possible• Written anywhere you find them at the right time• E.g. Post-Its	Inbox	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A Place to store Ideas as fleeting notes• Review it regularly• Convert the notes to tasks or permanent ones
Permanent Notes:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Kept forever• Either Literature notes stored in the reference system or general notes in the slip-box• Literature Notes = things you want to remember from a source• General Notes = Notes that add to your personal thinking. Contradict, correct, support or add to your existing thoughts.• Full sentences, which can be understood out of context• Link them to other notes	Reference System	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A place to manage your literature• For capturing literature notes• Direct Reference to the material you read• Copying of useful ideas with context to the source
Project Notes:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Specific to a particular project• In a project specific folder• Transferred to other folders when project is finished	Slip-Box	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Main place for permanent notes• Only your own notes written out• Notes are assigned an ID or sub IDs (s. Slip Box-Manual)
		Project Folders	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Data for specific projects• Contain tasks, notes for projects and relevant notes

1. Everything to know	2. What you need to Do	3. What you need to have				
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Having structure reduces effort to keep track of everything• The more information the more system is needed to keep track of• Great solutions are simple and unexpected• Don't reorganize existing systems. Change the way you work from now on.• Keep it simple• Most organise by separating complexity into small segments and sub-segments.• This reduces the likelihood of finding surprising ideas -> Keep things as simple as possible and follow a few basic principles• Routines need to be simple, repeatable and fit in a bigger picture• Getting Things done: Keep everything to be taken care of in one place and create a standard to process. Break projects into small steps#• Holistic Principle: Things nag us and steal energy when not taken care of. Having a system to deal with them frees up the mind.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• With the slip box you don't need to worry about building arguments and ideas. They practically build themselves.• Understanding comes from writing the content in your own words	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Focus on the essentials				
<h3>The Slip Box</h3> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Success is more about priming yourself to work properly than working itself• Problems arise when our systems are not flexible enough to change• The Brain is unreliable. Having an external system to organise thoughts is better than being smart without one.	<h3>Writing a Paper</h3> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Make Fleeting Notes Capture every idea in an Inbox Process them to permanent notes or to dos2. Make literature notes. Take notes from what you read. What you don't want to forget. Very short and in your own words.3. Make permanent notes. Take notes that contradict, correct, support or add to your existing thoughts. In your own words and comprehensible without context4. Sort permanent notes into the slip-box. Add them in multiple places if necessary. Add links to relating notes. Have an index and add entry points to notes if necessary5. Build ideas. Don't cling to ones when others have more potential6. Decide a topic to write about. Look through the connected notes. Create a project folder Go through the permanent notes and collect the relevant ones to the project. Create an outline.7. Make a draft of the arguments8. Edit and proofread	<h3>4 Tools to use</h3> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Something to write<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Write down every idea whenever you have it• Always have something to write at hand2. A reference Management System (Zotero, Citavi)<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Have a standardised title like "AuthorYear"• Keep alphabetically ordered in one place3. A slip box (digital or physical)<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Use a notes app with backlinking function like Obsidian4. A text editor<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Any software to write a text in				
<h3>Slip-Box Manual</h3> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Have 2 separate systems <table><tr><td>Bibliographic:</td><td>For references of literature content</td></tr><tr><td>Main System:</td><td>For general ideas</td></tr></table> <h3>Creating a Note to the Slip-Box:</h3> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Add the note directly behind the note being referenced. Or add the note behind the last note and number with the next available ID.2. Add links to other notes or from other notes to your new note.3. Add the note directly to the index or to a note that is already connected to the index. <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Notes are simple sentences on index cards in your own words• Can be all ideas (even if someone is struggling to make a point in a chapter)• One side keeps the note, the other information about the source and links to other notes• Notes are numbered• When creating a note, relate it to other notes and sort it where it is most relevant• If placing a note in between existing ones, use 2a, 2b• Write possible connections to the note on the back to relating notes and ideas• Use an Index to link to certain notes Assign Keywords to the Index. Make them as short as possible and so that you can find them in the context you need them	Bibliographic:	For references of literature content	Main System:	For general ideas		
Bibliographic:	For references of literature content					
Main System:	For general ideas					

4 Underlying Principles

1. Writing is the only Thing that matters	2. Keep it Simple	3. Noone starts from Scratch	4. Let the work carry you forward
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Writing enables understanding and analysing texts• Presenting knowledge and generating it is the same thing• Writing things in your own words primes you to think beyond the read• Writing is a circular process, not a linear one	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Being simple makes ideas powerful• Normally, students underline interesting things, write comments in the margins or write an idea into a notebook• But this way, notes are scattered in different places	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• First formulate a specific question for your research• Don't plan your research! <p>Hermeneutic circle (Hans-Georg Gadamer)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Don't trick yourself into doing things by rewarding yourself afterwards. It is only a short-term solution. You have to get to a positive feedback-loop of motivation by establishing systems

		<p>They rely heavily on the brain to remember where notes are placed</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Instead of asking which topic an idea belongs to Ask: <i>In wich context do I want to use this note?</i> • This way <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You find ideas you would have had forgotten otherwise • It becomes more valuable the more information is stored 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You have do some research first to formulate a good question to write about • Being able to decide what to read requires knowledge of the topic • Learning is an active dialogue with the material • Out Interest in a topic is influenced by the information we recieve. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Revisiting ideas in a circular way enforces feedback loops and clustering around the best ideas • Writing your thoughts shows you flaws in your thinking
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6 Steps for Successful writing

1. Separate interlocking Tasks	2. Read for understanding	3. Take Smart Notes	4. Develop Ideas	5. Share Insight	6. Make it a Habit										
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Don't multitask<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Switch between activities as little as possible• Separate different kinds of tasks as much as possible• Write down what outcome you want to achieve before writing• Teachers confuse the ability to follow their rules with the ability to make the right choices• Memory techniques are based on bundling information together and remembering it in a meaningful way• The bundles should be 4 pieces of information or less• Zeigarnik Effect:<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Open Tasks block our working memory and demand our focus• Write them down to get them out of your head• Only keep the questions related to your immediate projects in mind• Standardize the way you do things Always do the research notetaking and processing the same way to reduce friction	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Formulate what you read in your own words• Have a clear purpose in mind while reading• Look for things that challenge what you know• Look for frames, patterns, categories and assumptions in the writing• Teacher make it harder to understand things, because Prearranging information, sorting into modules, categories and themes makes it harder to understand. It strips away the opportunity to translate it into their own understanding and emphasizes only reviewing the information.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Have questions in mind while reading• Try to relate the information to your own questions• Don't use cramming Avoid just repeating information Connect the information to as many meaningful contexts as possible -> Mind Palace• Elaborating is the best way to create meaning	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Combine abstract numbering with topic related tags• Add notes according to the description• Create entry points in the Index. Name them for the context you want to use the information• There is a bias for easy available information instead of the most relevant• Principles that support Learning<table><tr><td>Elaboration</td><td>Connect new info to what you already know; seek deeper meaning.</td></tr><tr><td>Spacing</td><td>Revisit the material over time, not all at once.</td></tr><tr><td>Variation</td><td>Practice in different contexts and situations.</td></tr><tr><td>Contextual Interference</td><td>Let randomness and challenge improve adaptability.</td></tr><tr><td>Retrieval</td><td>Actively recall information with effort.</td></tr></table>• Problems rarely get solved directly, anyway. Most often, the crucial step forward is to redefine the problem in such a way that an already existing solution can be employed. The first question should always be directed towards the question itself: What kind of answer can you expect from asking a question in this particular way? What is missing?	Elaboration	Connect new info to what you already know; seek deeper meaning.	Spacing	Revisit the material over time, not all at once.	Variation	Practice in different contexts and situations.	Contextual Interference	Let randomness and challenge improve adaptability.	Retrieval	Actively recall information with effort.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Work on different things at a time• Writing is a part of understanding• Talk to others to deepen your understanding	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Build a daily routine around reading, note-taking, and reviewing notes.• Start small but be consistent: one good note a day adds up.• Long-term success comes from small, steady efforts, not bursts of motivation.
Elaboration	Connect new info to what you already know; seek deeper meaning.														
Spacing	Revisit the material over time, not all at once.														
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Contextual Interference	Let randomness and challenge improve adaptability.														
Retrieval	Actively recall information with effort.														

How to use the System

In general

- Establish a habit of Notetaking
- Make Fleeting, Literature and General Notes
- Sort them in the Slip-Box
- Build strings of ideas and topics

For projects:

- Decide for a project
- Look through the connected notes.
- Create a project folder
- Go through the permanent notes and collect the relevant ones to the project.
- Create an outline.
- Make a draft
- Review Edit and Proofread