The Note-Making
Challenge

Learn how to build a
Zettelkasten in one month

An ebook by Nette Laderas

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Welcome to the Note-Making Challenge!

We all know about the benefits of recording ideas and information so we can make the most of them. However — and I'm definitely guilty of that too — it can be hard to build a consistent note-making habit.

The Note-Making Challenge is very simple.

Each day, you will explore one new strategy, and complete a short practical exercise to put it into practice.

At the end of the month, you will have a solid note-making system based on the Zettelkasten method, as well as the tools to cultivate a long-term mindset of knowledge-building and creativity.

Let's go!

— Nette Laderas.

Welcome to the first day of the Note-Making Challenge! Congratulations on taking the first step toward mindful content consumption and life-long learning.

First, what's the difference between note-taking and note-making?

Note-taking is fast, uses the original author's language, captures content in isolation, and generally feels easier. The issue is the content is often poorly assimilated and easily forgotten.

In contrast, note-making is slower, more involved, uses our own language, and encourages you to make original connections between ideas. As a result, the content is easier to understand and remember.

There are so many paths we can take with regard to note-making. So, where do we start?

One of the most popular note-making approaches is called the Zettelkasten Method. The name may sound complicated, but the principles are simple.

Over the next 28 days, you will learn how to make the most of note-making using the Zettelkasten method. And it all starts with fleeting notes.

In his book How to Take Smart Notes, Dr. Sönke Ahrens defined fleeting notes as a quick capture mechanism to jot down whatever is in our head.

Fleeting notes should not accumulate in your note-making system: they're designed to be thrown away or converted to permanent notes within a day or two.

To kick off our Note-Making Challenge, you are tasked to take some quick fleeting notes about time anxiety.

Go to our shared graph*, look for your own page, and capture your thoughts using the Zettelkasten template which I have already added for you there.

Have fun with today's exercise!

*You don't need to use our shared graph for the challenge, but if you do, please submit your email address in this form in order to gain access. You don't need a paid Roam account.

DAY 2
Building a receptacle for your fast-moving thoughts

You have now taken your first fleeting notes! Now, let's improve the way we capture those fleeting notes.

Fleeting notes capture the fast-moving thoughts that go through your mind while consuming any kind of material. They don't have to be directly related to the material you're consuming.

The best way to generate fleeting notes is to answer the question: "What am I reminded of?"

Think of other ideas, books, articles, or even people that you think about when consuming the content, and capture these in your fleeting notes.

Let's put this principle into practice.

First, go back to your fleeting notes from yesterday's challenge and improve them by selectively adding or removing reference notes.

Then, ask yourself: "What does this remind me of?" and add a few more fleeting notes that are not a direct transcription of the original content. Again, everything is fair game: related books, ideas, or even past conversations with friends.

Finally, create some more fleeting notes based on [this article](#) and apply all of the "What am I reminded of?" strategy you learned about today.

Now that we have a gist of what fleeting notes are all about, let's apply this exercise to different information formats.

There is an influx of information everywhere and it's not surprising we sometimes feel overwhelmed. But, beyond the apparent chaos, there are actually only four main formats of information: electronic, physical, auditory, and visual.

• Electronic information consists of online articles, social media posts, email newsletters, and ebooks.

• Physical information is printed in books, magazines, newspapers, and printed journal articles.

• Auditory information comes from audiobooks, podcasts, in-person conversations, and personal audio recordings.

• Visual information can be found in photographs, charts, graphs, videos, films, television series, and video call recordings.

We have already practiced how to capture fleeting notes based on electronic information. Now, let's take it a step further.

Today's challenge is to capture some fleeting notes based on another format of information.

Think about all of the sources of information around you: conversations with friends, YouTube videos, podcasts, Zoom meetings, etc.

If it's from a physical format, highlight the striking part and take a picture of the whole page.

If it's from a conversation or from a film you watch or from a podcast you listened to, just jot down a non-verbatim version.

If it's a random idea you have while taking a shower, jot that down too.

You don't need to take note of everything that came your way. Be selective: only capture fleeting notes that you will want to turn into permanent notes later.

At the end of the day, or if you can type them down immediately, go to our shared graph and add the fleeting notes that you came across throughout the day. If you're not using Roam, just add those fleeting notes to the tool you're using.

Remember to ask yourself: "What am I reminded of?"

When you're done, reflect for a few minutes: any particular type of information you're finding hard to capture fast-moving thoughts from?

Have fun completing today's challenge!

Uncovering your note-making "Why"

After learning how to take fleeting notes, you probably have realized that note-making is hard work.

This is natural, because any kind of learning takes time and energy. You need to invest some mental effort in order to really understand and assimilate new information.

But it makes it hard to build a note-making habit, and you may be tempted to give up. A great way to keep up with the habit is to define your why. Why exactly do you want to invest in note-making? What is your ultimate goal?

This is what we will explore today.

We will apply the "Five Why's" method to the Note-Making Challenge.

- Why do you want to learn about note-making?
- And why do you want that?
- Dig deeper: why do you really want that?
- Go deeper: why do you actually care?
- Go even deeper: why does it matter?

For example…

Maybe, at a superficial level, you want to build a creativity system in order to produce more blog posts. Why? Because you are hoping to grow an audience.

But why do you hope to grow an audience? Because you want to generate a sustainable income?

That's great, but why? Because you want to spend more time with your family without having to worry about money.

That sounds amazing, but why do you want to spend more time with your family? Because you want to see your children grow.

When you're done, spend a little time thinking about how the exercise went for you.

Did you clarify the purpose behind your desire to learn about the Zettelkasten method and build a note-making system that works for you?

Have fun completing today's challenge!

Yesterday, you dug deep into the big "Why" behind your desire to build a note-making system.

Now, imagine that your note-making system is a partner that will help you achieve that big "Why" — how do you communicate with that partner, how do you work together?

As Niklas Luhmann wrote: "If one has to write anyway, it is useful to take advantage of this activity in order to create in the system of notes a competent partner of communication."

In today's challenge, you will reflect on what kind of communication partner you want to work with, and what the relationship will look like.

In the future, this will allow you to converse and communicate with your note-making system in order to turn fleeting notes into permanent notes.

Your mission, if you choose to accept it, is to answer the following prompt:

I want my Zettelkasten to be like a conversation with…

It may be helpful to think about a specific time in your life when you had a conversation with someone that felt particularly inspiring and really helped you connect ideas together and generate new ideas of your own.

Ask yourself: how did the conversation begin? How did the conversation continue?

What exactly made the conversation flow so well?

What caused the conversation to go from small talk to something deeper?

How did the conversation jump from one topic to the next? What did the transition look like?

Did it feel like forking the topic in a different direction, or were you juggling different topics at the same time?

DAY 6
Using fleeting notes for self-reflection

Yesterday, we talked about the importance of turning our note-making system into a communication partner.

Again, your fleeting notes should not only be about capturing third-party information.

They should be the foundation of a note-making system with whom we can have inspiring conversations.

Today's exercise will solidify that principle.

Julia Cameron, author of *The Artist' Way*, popularized the concept of the morning pages. Morning pages require you to write three pages (about 750 words) first thing in the morning, about whatever fleeting thoughts come to your mind.

Imagine the power of smart notes when integrated with morning pages... That's what we will unlock today.

Go to our shared graph and fire up today's template, which is aptly named Day 6. Write down whatever comes to your mind, aiming to reach at least 750 words. You can of course keep going if you feel inspired!

After you have written your entry, summarize what you wrote about in the top-level block beside the hashtag #[[Fleeting Notes]].

Have fun with today's exercise!

DAY 7
Wrapping up the first week

I hope you enjoyed the first week of the Note-Making challenge!

Yesterday, we discussed the importance of self-reflection.

Let's take a few minutes to reflect on that first week of learning about note-making and the Zettelkasten method.

Go to our shared graph and fire up today's template, which is named Day 7. Then, answer this prompt:

My biggest takeaway from this last week was...

Treat this exercise as you would treat any other fleeting note.

Follow the flow of your thoughts, write down related ideas, and dive deep into new questions that arise from the note-making process.

I'm looking forward to guiding you through the second week of the challenge!

Welcome to the second week of the Note-Making Challenge! You are now comfortable capturing fleeting notes from third-party content sources as well as from your own thoughts. The next step is to learn about literature notes.

Literature notes are about bringing thinkers together: your thoughts + their thoughts = literature notes.

How can you reformulate what the author is saying in your own words? Could you be misunderstanding what they are saying? How can we confidently say that we're faithfully transcribing the author's thoughts?

Answering these questions will be at the heart of today's and tomorrow's challenge: to compare and contrast our ideas with someone else's ideas.

In the context of the Zettelkasten method, comparing and contrasting your thoughts with someone else's is usually done in "conversation" with an author.

For today's exercise, we're going to make it a bit more fun by comparing and contrasting the thoughts of participants in the Note-Making Challenge.

If you're using our collective Zettelkasten, go to our shared graph, open up your page and fire up the template for Day 8. As usual, start with a timestamp. You'll notice seven different attributes with a child block underneath each.

Search for the page called "Album/Photo" and open it on the right sidebar by shift-clicking on it. You're going to see seven photos hidden behind the top-level parent block.

Open each photograph, one at a time. In your own words, write down your description of what the photographer captured. Write as much as you can. Go wild.

After you've wrung out all of you can out of the photograph at the top-level block on your page, write down one word to summarize your personal description.

Do that for each photo — really wringing out all that you can out of each shot and summarizing at the top after you're done.

If you can, please try to complete this exercise in our shared graph so we can compare and contrast our collective thoughts tomorrow. If you're using your own tool, you can copy and paste your descriptions in the comments section below.

When you're done, dedicate a few minutes to self-reflection. Did you find it easy or hard? Was it challenging to capture abstract thoughts from visual content?

DAY 9
Explaining your thoughts to your future self

We are slowly making our way towards extracting all that we can from a photograph, a paragraph, or even just one phrase that resonated with us.

We want this habit to become deeply ingrained and effortless so we can give the gift of our current thoughts to our future selves.

The goal of the fleeting notes is to show your future self how well you understand yourself. The goal of the literature notes is to show your future self how well you understand others.

We're not building a graveyard. We will stumble upon these literature notes later, so let's give them our best. Not brittle, but deep. Not shallow, but broad. And, most importantly, still helpful a thousand days from today.

Go through each photograph from yesterday again, and take a look at what you wrote.

Will it be understandable by your future self? Does it properly capture your thoughts? How can you make it a better reflection of what you think?

Take as long as you need to be thorough with your notes for each picture.

When you're done, spend a bit of time to reflect. Did you have to make many changes to ensure your notes would be understandable to your future self?

DAY 10
Conducting a litmus test on your understanding

Literature notes are the backbone of all the information you don't want to forget because you want to use it later in your writing or your thinking.

They are the litmus test of how well you understand what the original author is saying.

Using a "phases of matter" analogy, if fleeting notes are the gas phase (the fast-moving thoughts), literature notes are your precipitated thoughts, like a gas that turns into a liquid.

Literature notes are meant to be short and extremely selective.

They are written in your own words. Highlighting, quoting and copy-pasting aren't your friend when it comes to literature notes.

Want to put these ideas into practice? Let's dive into making some more literature notes.

Go to our shared graph and open today's template named Day 10.

Once you have the template open, shift-click on "Source Material" next to "Reference Notes" so it opens in the sidebar.

Abstract out your first pass at taking fleeting notes underneath the #FleetingNotes tag as children blocks.

Write down what resonates with you as you read through the passage, and capture enough so that when you come back to this tomorrow, you'll have remembered what this was all about, and why these things stood out for you.

Keep going with your fleeting notes by processing them through the second and third pass.

Process these through the second pass, abstracting what you can from the initial fleeing notes from yesterday, and then summarize at the top-level parent block, which is the third pass.

After you complete that, it's now time to convert these to literature notes. These will be your fourth and fifth pass.

Do you notice how — if you thoroughly went through all the previous steps — this level of abstraction of what the author is saying ought to be much deeper than if you had just captured the original fleeting notes?

Now that you have taken quite a few notes — whether fleeting notes or literature notes — you probably realize that we can easily have too many of them if we don't select our sources of information wisely.

This is why we need to cultivate something called selective ignorance.

Information that is irrelevant, unimportant, or unactionable must be ignored.

As Tim Ferris suggests, we should ask ourselves: "Will I definitely use this information?"

He encouraged us to practice the art of "non-finishing" — you should not feel guilty if you're not finishing what you decided to start reading, listening, or watching.

If the information is irrelevant, unimportant, or unactionable, just redirect your mental effort toward a better learning opportunity.

You'll never run out of information to consume. What matters is to manage your information diet so you don't suffer from infobesity.

Today, we will learn how to practice selective ignorance and manage our information diet.

In order for you to start your journey of a productive and fulfilling information diet and note-making, we need to start on working with less rather than with more.

First, answer these two questions and write down the answers in your Zettelkasten:

1. What is the topic that's most immediate and important to you right now?

2. Why is this topic the most important to you?

Then, write down the top three resources that are relevant to this topic and that you want to consume during this challenge to learn about this topic.

Take as much time as you need to complete today's exercise, and have fun!

DAY 12
Avoiding the collector's fallacy

Yesterday, we learned about how to cultivate selective ignorance. Today, we will learn about its flip side: cultivating selective wisdom.

As avid readers, learners, and creators, we often suffer from the collector's fallacy. We highlight too many sentences and write too many comments in the margins.

In *How to Take Smart Notes*, Dr. Sönke Ahrens wrote: "Luhmann never underlined sentences in the text he read or wrote comments in the margins. All he did was take brief notes about the ideas that caught his attention in a text on a separate piece of paper."

Today, we will practice how to consume content without highlighting anything, or at least while highlighting less of it.

Read an article or a book chapter without taking notes about it at first. Jot down what thoughts have remained in your mind after you finished reading it.

Remember: you should not highlight or take notes while you're reading the content. You should wait for the ideas to mature in your mind before you start capturing those thoughts.

This approach works with any content format. For example, if you listen to a podcast while doing something else, you can capture notes of what remained in your mind when you came back to your computer or when you got a hold of your notebook. Have fun!

DAY 13
Setting up your library

Yesterday, you chose your most immediate and important topic, as well as the three most relevant resources to explore this topic.

Now, it's time to set up a library around this topic. Choose your weapon — your note-taking tool of choice — and let's dive in.

Setting up a library for your note-making system is going to look slightly different in different tools, but here are the key steps to create your initial set up:

1. Make two pages named "library" for the storage of the information you want to consume and "writing inbox" as the repository of your initial fleeting notes.
2. Set up a tagging system for consumption status (#parked, #inprogress, and #finished) and templating system for different kinds of content, which includes your metadata and your tagging system.
3. Set up two queries: one in your writing inbox for fleeting notes to automatically populate there and one in your library page for the resources to also automatically populate there.

The principles I outlined above hold true for any other tool.

If you already have an initial setup in your chosen tool, you can edit this suggested setup to your own liking so it aligns with your initial setup.

The whole library approach is very flexible. Have fun!

DAY 14
Wrapping up the second week

Now that you have used a collective Zettelkasten for two weeks and learned how to set up a solo Zettelkasten, we can discuss the advantages and disadvantages of each approach.

Go to our shared graph and fire up today's template, which is named Day 14. Then, answer this prompt:

What do you think are the benefits of a collective Zettelkasten versus going solo?

Treat this exercise as you would treat any other fleeting note.

Follow the flow of your thoughts, write down related ideas, and dive deep into new questions that arise from the note-making process.

Then, add "Note-Making Challenge Week 2" as the corresponding reference note and summarize your thoughts at the top-level beside the hashtag #[[Fleeting Notes]].

Finally, go through the five passes of Zettelkasten and create a permanent note.

When you're done, spend a few minutes reflecting: did you find it easy to go from fleeting note to permanent note? Do you think you will keep on using the collective Zettelkasten, or go solo from now on?

DAY 15
Unlocking the power of the generation effect

In the first two weeks of the Note-Making Challenge, you learned all about fleeting notes and literature notes. Next, you will learn how to write permanent notes to unlock the power of the generation effect.

But first, what exactly are permanent notes?

Permanent notes are the most important element in a Zettelkasten. They are the culmination of your fleeting notes and your literature notes. They are the notes that contribute to building your mental models.

Writing permanent notes requires you to actively engage with the information and create your own version of it.

In the next few days, we are going to go through the step-by-step process of turning fleeting notes into permanent notes.

For today's challenge, open this article in a new tab. Then, if you are using our collective Zettelkasten, go to our shared graph. If you are going solo, open your tool of choice.

Capture notes by going through the first pass of fleeting notes. Take as many as you can. Set them aside for tomorrow and let the thoughts ruminate in your mind for the next 24 hours.

When you're done, reflect for a few minutes.. Did you find it easier to take fleeting notes now that you have been practicing for the past couple of weeks?

The Feynman Technique is a learning method developed by Richard Feynman to cultivate his ability to explain complicated subjects to others in simple terms.

There are four steps involved: (1) choose a concept you want to learn about, (2) pretend to explain it to a child, (3) reflect, refine, and simplify, (4) organize and review.

Fleeting notes are designed for reflection, literature notes are for refinement, permanent notes are for simplification, and relevant notes are for organizing and reviewing.

We chose our core topic on Day 11, so the first step is done already.

Step two is to pretend to teach what we have learned to a child. This is what we're going to do today.

First, go back to the fleeting notes you took yesterday. Expand those fleeting notes starting from your first pass and going up to the fifth pass.

Then, take that fifth pass and simplify it in your own words, pretending to explain it to a child.

Try to get rid of any jargon, and explain any concept a child would not understand. Keep the sentences short and the vocabulary as simple as possible.

Congratulations, you now have your first permanent note!

How did it go? Did you find it easy or difficult?

DAY 17
Understanding the principle of atomicity

Building a Zettelkasten is all about creating connections.

It is hard to create connections when your permanent notes are too broad. Instead, permanent notes should be atomic. Atomicity allows you to constantly connect your notes together to build a network of ideas.

Atomicity means each permanent note must be about only one thing but as much as possible captures the entirety of that thing.

Today, we will explore this principle.

Continue creating permanent notes in the same way you learned about yesterday, using your own words and explaining the topic to a child. But, this time, keep in mind the principle of atomicity.

Make sure your permanent notes are atomic enough that you are easily able to grasp what the core topic of the note is when you look at it in the future.

Ask yourself: is this note focusing on only one topic, or could it be broken down in smaller units? Would each of these units be usable in different contexts?

Since the whole point of permanent notes is connections, don't forget to add your permanent notes in your repository of permanent notes and take notes of the relevant notes around them.

Have fun!

When it comes to the processing of ideas using note-making, it's important to be conceptual rather than topical.

What's the difference between concepts and topics? Concepts are big ideas that are timeless and universal, whereas topics are about specific times, people, things, and places.

In order to discover connections across different books and domains, you need to be conceptual rather than topical when making notes.

Traditional note-taking is usually grouped in a topical way by author, book, event, or project.

They can be easily linked if we consume two resources about exactly the same topic, but it gets challenging when we discover new connections in those resources we didn't expect to be connected.

Arranging books using concepts rather than links will help you discover surprising links between ideas that you came across in the context of very different sources of content.

If we apply conceptual thinking to our note-making process, over time, we will acquire a collection of ideas that can more easily be combined into new insights.

Let's continue to improve on the way we craft our permanent notes.

Pick an article, video, or podcast of your choice, and continue creating permanent notes

Continue creating permanent notes using your own words, explaining the topic to a child, and keeping in mind the principle of atomicity.

But, this time, try to be as concept-oriented as possible.

Ask yourself: is this a topic or a concept? How can I go from specific fact to universal idea?

How can I decouple the insight from the context so it's easier to connect with other insights in the future?

When you're done, spend a few minute reflecting on your experience. Did you find it easy or difficult?

Do you feel like you understand the difference between a topic and a concept?

DAY 19
Applying the principle of connectivity

You should now feel comfortable creating permanent notes that are atomic and concept-oriented, which will make it easy to apply the principle of connectivity.

In the next few days, we will push ourselves to add connections between our notes.

In doing so, you'll be able to practice networked thinking by creating links between ideas that may not seem connected in an obvious way.

Applying the principle of connectivity creates eustress to think critically and carefully about how ideas and notes relate to each other.

This process is also a form of intentional spaced repetition since you are forced to find interesting links from your old notes.

Start by creating a few permanent notes. Remember the principles we have explored in the past few days: pretend to explain the topic to a child, keep in mind the principle of atomicity, and make sure your permanent notes are concept-oriented.

Then, find the best place in the index to place these new permanent notes by asking yourself: "Where in the index will I be able to best apply the principle of connectivity?"

Have fun!

Because of traditional file systems and libraries, we've become used to hierarchical categories as the natural way to structure our knowledge.

However, most of the time, a note belongs in many places.

And it's likely you won't know about all of these places the first time you capture that note.

That's why it's important to let the structure emerge organically. Don't impose a set structure from the start.

As Andy Matuschak said: "It's better to let networks of related ideas gradually emerge. Once you can see the shape, then you can think about its character."

A tool with bidirectional linking will make it much easier.

It's easier to connect one permanent note with many relevant notes because we can easily get the reference of that note and link to it in several places.

In the past few days, you have learned how to craft permanent notes by using the Feynman technique, the principle of atomicity, and a concept-oriented approach.

Yesterday, you started to think about the principle of connectivity by deciding where to place your permanent notes in the index.

Today, you will practice networked thinking by connecting your permanent notes with relevant notes.

Look at the permanent notes you wrote in the previous days, and ask yourself: "What existing permanent notes are relevant to this permanent note?"

Interlink the notes together so they are now connected and can contribute to building your web of knowledge.

Remember that you only need one link if your tool supports bidirectional linking.

When you're done, dedicate a few minutes to self-reflection. Did you find it easy to find relevant notes and connect them together with your permanent notes?

DAY 21
Wrapping up the third week

There is only one week left in the Note-Making Challenge!

Again, this is an opportunity for self-reflection, and to make sure that you're set up for success for the last few days of setting up your Zettelkasten and building a lifelong learning habit.

First, open your tool of choice. Then, answer these prompts:

1. What are your remaining questions about fleeting notes?

2. What are your remaining questions about literature notes?

3. What are your remaining questions about permanent notes?

Write down your questions with as much detail as possible.

As usual, and as a way to practice for your own Zettelkasten system, don't forget to summarize your questions at the parent block level, and don't forget to add a timestamp.

Keep these questions in mind to ensure you have them all addressed before the end of the challenge.

Have fun!

DAY 22
Using an index as your personal slip box

Now that you know everything about fleeting notes, literature notes, and permanent notes, it's time to ensure that what you learned will result in a sustainable note-making practice. And it starts by creating your personal slip box.

"Zettelkasten" is the German word for slip box. Last week, we learned how to create permanent notes and how to connect them to relevant notes. All of this magic should happen in your slip box.

Your slip box is where you store your permanent notes. This is where the connections between permanent notes happen. It's where your ideas can grow and form.

Niklas Luhmann used index cards to store permanent notes in his slip box. However, for this challenge, you will be creating a digital slip box.

In your own chosen tool, create your personal slip box. Call it whatever you want (some ideas include "slip box", "thought lab", or "index") and make sure to bookmark it so you can easily locate it anytime you open your tool.

Collate all of the permanent notes you have created so far during the Note-Making Challenge, and store them inside your slip box.

Then, make connections between these permanent notes using tags or block references so you'll know which permanent notes are relevant to each other. Have fun!

DAY 23
Establishing the long-term purpose of your slip box

The next step in creating a sustainable note-making habit is to establish the long-term purpose of your slip box.

What is it you want to learn about? What's your big life project? What research or discovery do you want to be known for?

In the book *How to Take Smart Notes*, Dr. Sonke Ahrens wrote this paragraph:

"In Germany, a professor traditionally starts with a public lecture presenting his or her projects, and Luhmann, too, was asked what his main research project will be. His answer would become famous. He laconically stated: "My project: theory of society. Duration: 30 years. Costs: zero." In sociology, a theory of society is the mother of all projects."

On Day 11, we asked ourselves what were our most immediate and important questions in the present. Today, we will shift to long-term thinking by figuring out the "mother" of all our projects.

To establish the long-term purpose of your slip box, you will create your own version of Niklas Luhmann's mother of all projects.

Fill in the blanks to create your own version of the original quote:

"My project: _____. Duration: _____. Costs: _____."

Look at it as your life's calling, your purpose: the greatest research or learning project you'll do in your life. Have fun!

You're now comfortable taking smart notes, which consists in using fleeting notes, literature notes, and permanent notes to build a strong note-making system.

Yesterday, you've also defined your "mother of all projects" — the long-term research purpose of your slip box.

There's no better way to advance research than to learn in public. This means publishing content that other people can consume and comment on.

Whether you publish papers as a researcher, share blog posts as an entrepreneur, or write essays as a student, your slip box is a powerful tool to generate ideas for evergreen content.

First, let's build an ideas inbox. There are five main types of evergreen content we're going to look at: article, video, podcast, tweet, Twitter thread, and atomic essay.

Create a page called "Ideas Inbox" and create categories for each of these types of evergreen content.

For each type, we're going to have some content templates.

For example, to write an article, you'll have a brain dump, your final article, and space to brainstorm potential titles.

For videos, the template will contain space for the script (welcome, intro, content, CTA, outro) and again space to brainstorm titles, and so on.

Go through the notes you took in the past few weeks, and pick an idea from your slip box, which you will tag #ContentIdea as well as the type of content you want to create.

For example, #ContentIdea and #Article.

Then, fire one of the content templates (in this case, the "article" template), and spend some time filling it until it's ready to publish.

When you're done creating and publishing the content, you can tag it as #Shipped to move it from your ideas inbox to your shipping hub, which is a repository of all your shipped content.

Have fun with today's exercise!

You may be wondering: "Why go through all the trouble of building a note-making system to connect your ideas and create content?"

I have three answers for you:

- To practice unbounded learning
- To sculpt your identity
- To live beyond your expiration date

Let's start with unbounded learning. Unbounded learning is the door to the never-ending cycle of personal growth generated by lifelong exploration.

Note-making allows you to keep on investigating adjacent questions, to foster your curiosity, and to nurture your growth mindset.

The joy of this lifelong intellectual challenge can spring up many benefits like improved productivity, a more fulfilling life, and even meeting people from all over the world.

As you can easily spot new opportunities and explore many different career paths in your whole life, unbounded learning can even lead to innovation and economic incentives.

Let's put unbounded learning into practice.

Sometimes, we're so focused on our main research topic that we create artificial boundaries when we explore the topic.

In order to practice unbounded learning, you need to unshackle the way you manage your knowledge.

Go to your slip box, and open a note in the sidebar. Now, ask yourself:

What are some adjacent questions?

What are some loosely related questions I could explore?

What's another approach to exploring this question?

If you've explored the question from a scientific perspective, is there maybe a philosophical, cultural, or ethical perspective?

If you've asked the question from the product designer's standpoint, what would the question look like from the user's perspective?

Have fun answering these questions!

DAY 26
Sculpting your identity with note-making

One of the benefits of note-making is to get to know yourself and sculpt your identity along the way.

Identity sculpting is made of three pillars:

- Defining your ideal character traits
- Establishing unquestionable standards
- Conceiving a projection of your future self

What character traits do you want to explore and embody in your life? What are the standards you will never question? What kind of person do you see yourself in the future?

As with any "mother of all projects" type of research theme, you can use note-making as a powerful method for identity sculpting.

Create a page called "Identity Sculpting" in your tool of choice. Then, subdivide the page into three sections: character traits, unquestionable standards, and projection.

In each section, start with a one- or two-word description of what you want this pillar to be for yourself.

Then, go deeper for each section, working your way from top to bottom and using the present tense to formulate these detailed descriptions.

In the future, every time you consume some content or have a thought that is building towards one of the three pillars of your identity, you can link these notes back to the corresponding pillar. Have fun!

We've learned how note-making can help you become a lifelong learner. But did you know it can also help your contributions grow even after you die?

Living beyond your expiration date doesn't necessarily mean to make History. It means leaving enough behind that other people can keep on building on your work even after you die.

To live beyond your expiration date, you need to create original work.

Examples include writing a book, making a scientific discovery, inventing a new technology, or founding a company.

All of these consist in learning as much as you can in the limited amount of time you have and creating something of value for others.

Developing a note-making habit is essential if you want to create any substantial body of knowledge.

This will allow you to reach what is called "critical mass" — the stage where you have enough permanent notes that you can easily write anything without starting from a blank page.

For today's exercise, you will set a habit-building goal so you can reach that critical mass. We will use the P.A.C.T. method to define a goal that's purposeful, actionable, continuous, trackable.

- **Purposeful:** your goal should be meaningful to your long-term purpose in life, not just relevant to you right now.
- **Actionable:** a good goal is based on outputs you can control, not on external factors.
- **Continuous:** it's important that the actions you take towards your goal are simple and repeatable.
- **Trackable:** your goal should work with a big fan of the "yes" or "no" approach to goal tracking, e.g. "Have you done the thing or not?"

Open your tool of choice, and answer the following prompt:

In order to leave a legacy, I will [ACTION] [OUTPUT] [SCHEDULE].

A bad example of a legacy-building goal would be: "Get 5,000 subscribers in 25 weeks."

A good example of a legacy-building goal would be: "Publish 25 newsletters over the next 25 weeks."

Some other examples include publishing one blog post per week, tweeting daily for 100 consecutive days (which is known as #Tweet100), or creating one sketch each day for the next month.

Have fun setting your legacy-building goal!

Today is the last day of the Note-Making Challenge.

You should be proud to have invested time to learn the system and principle behind digital Zettelkasten.

The last week of this challenge was all about strengthening your "why" behind putting an effort to intentionally learn and connect your ideas.

You created your personal slip box and learned how to create evergreen content from it.

You determined your long-term purpose whether it is becoming a lifelong learner, sculpting your identity, or living beyond your expiration date.

Instead of rushing to our next goal, let's celebrate and reflect on this journey.

Open your tool of choice, and answer the following prompt:

What was your key takeaway from the note-taking challenge?

For your ffinal exercise, try to go from fleeting note to permanent note while answering this prompt.

As a reminder, here are the steps to go from fleeting note to permanent note:

1. Write down your initial thoughts of your answer in today's writing prompt below the fleeting notes section.

2. Expand your initial fleeting notes and after you've done that, summarize your fleeting notes beside the hashtag. Ignore the literature notes for today, we will focus on the fleeting notes.

3. Finally, write down your permanent notes. Enclose them in double square brackets.

Have fun completing your last exercise!

Congratulations on completing the challenge!

What a learning journey!

You should now have a solid note-making system based on the Zettelkasten method, as well as the tools to cultivate a long-term mindset of knowledge-building and creativity.

If you would like to connect with fellow note-makers and Zettelkasten enthusiasts, please join the "Note-Making Challenge" discussion forum here.

Thank you for taking the Note-Making challenge, and may you enjoy your journey with your digital Zettelkasten!

— Nette Laderas.