



Keeping Track of Random Bits of Information

EVERY OFFICE AND EVERY INDIVIDUAL NEEDS TO KEEP TRACK OF INFORMATION THAT DOESN'T FIT INTO A CALENDAR, A LIST OF CONTACTS, OR A BILLING SYSTEM. THERE'S AN APPLICATION THAT'S A PERFECT FIT FOR THESE BITS OF DATA.

Once I used plain text documents, spreadsheets, and occasionally word processor documents to keep track of these kinds of information. The problem with that method is that finding the information required remembering what kind of document it was in and where I had stored it. That came to an end more than a decade ago when I started using Microsoft's OneNote.

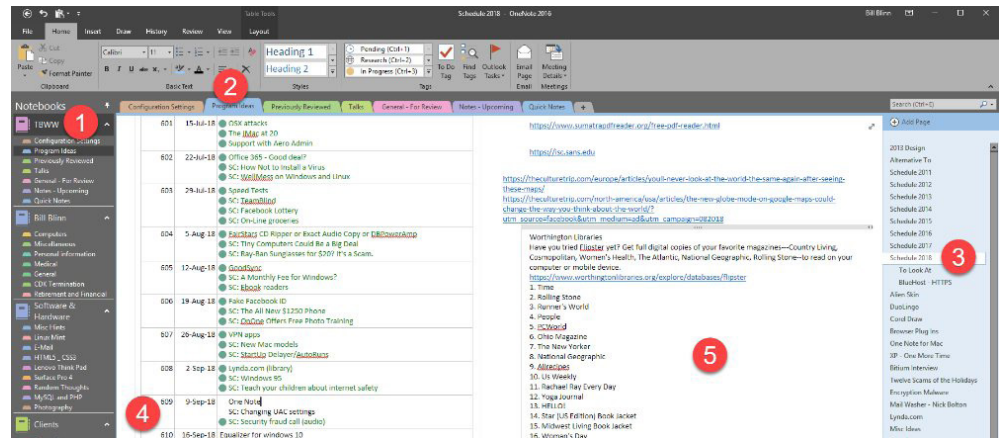
Announced in 2002, OneNote became available in 2003, but only as a standalone application that had to be purchased separately. Eventually it became a part of Microsoft Office, so it's already on your computer if you use the Office suite.

It's Everywhere!

ONE NOTE IS ALSO AVAILABLE FOR PHONES AND TABLETS, IOS AND ANDROID. EVEN IF YOU DON'T USE THE OFFICE SUITE, YOU CAN DOWNLOAD A FREE VERSION FOR SMART PHONES, BUT IT'S LIMITED TO 500 NOTES. THOSE WHO USE THE OFFICE SUITE WILL FIND THAT THE FREE MOBILE APPS HAVE NO LIMITS.

Information about time spent on projects for clients belongs in a time billing system. Email addresses and other contact information belong in Microsoft's Contacts application. But what about books that I want to read, or hardware and software settings for various computers, doctors and prescriptions, or topics for the *TechByter Worldwide* podcast? These are all candidates for OneNote.

OneNote users create a hierarchical system: Notebooks at the top level contain tabs and the tabs contain pages. Pages contain information



(1) NOTEBOOKS ARE LISTED ON THE LEFT AND LIST THE ASSOCIATED TABS. THE TABS (2) ARE ALSO SHOWN AT THE TOP OF THE SCREEN WHEN THE NOTEBOOK IS SELECTED. EACH TAB CONTAINS (3) PAGES AND THE PAGES CAN CONTAIN (4) TABLES, LINKS, OR (5) TEXT.

in various forms such as tables, screen shots, external documents, audio, and video. The hierarchy is helpful because most people are comfortable thinking that way, but it doesn't matter if you use the hierarchy or even if you mis-file something.

Using the Hierarchy

WHEN STORING INFORMATION, MOST PEOPLE THINK ABOUT CATEGORIES.

I have a personal notebook, one for TechByter, one for hardware and software, and one for client projects. The TechByter notebook contains tabs for configuration settings, program planning, notes for upcoming topics, and more. In the Program Ideas tab there's a page for each year's programs and topics for each program, along with status information, is in a table – one row for each week's program.

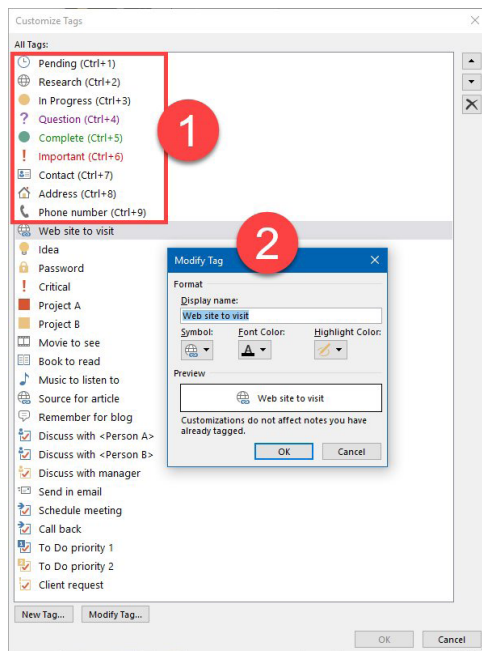
The ability to create sub-pages is one I use rarely, but my personal notebook has a

Miscellaneous tab and that tab has a Reading Challenge page that I set up several years ago when my wife challenged several people to an ambitious, year-long reading exercise. Since then, I've started reading a lot of series books – many of them police procedurals – so I have a sub-page for each author and the sub-page lists the author's books along with information about whether I have read the book.

The hierarchy is handy because it allows the user to go directly to a specific section. I use the TechByter section several times a week. The same is true for information about books. But where should I put a page with information about how to use more than one Gmail account? I could choose Hardware & Software, Personal, or TechByter.

Any item in OneNote can have one or more associated tags. All tags can be defined by the user and the first 9 tags can be applied from the keyboard (Ctrl-1 through Ctrl-9). When

defining a tag, the user establishes the name, a symbol to display, the color of the text, and a highlight color.



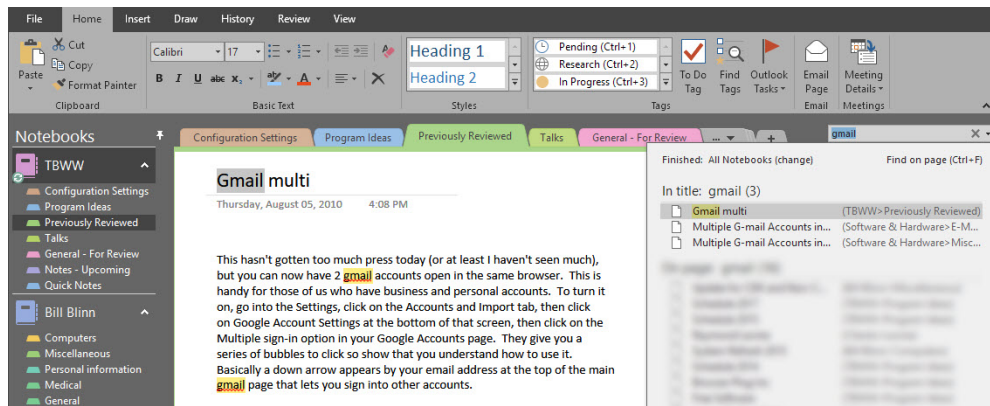
THE FIRST 9 TAGS (1) CAN BE ASSIGNED FROM THE KEYBOARD AND DEFINING NEW TAGS (2) SETS THE ASSOCIATED ICON, THE COLOR OF TEXT, AND AN OPTIONAL HIGHLIGHT COLOR.

Finding What You've Saved

A HIERARCHIAL SYSTEM WORKS WHEN STORING INFORMATION, BUT IT IS LESS USEFUL WHEN TRYING TO RETRIEVE A NOTE BECAUSE WE TEND TO FORGET HOW WE CATEGORIZED IT.

This is where OneNote's search option excels. Ctrl-F limits the find operation to the current page, but a far more powerful option is Ctrl-E, which searches all pages in all tabs of all notebooks. The result will be a list of pages that contain the term you're looking for and clicking any of the listed pages will take you to that page.

So finding my note about Gmail requires only that I press Ctrl-E and type "gmail".



OneNote returns three pages: One from a friend in 2010 who explains how he uses multiple accounts and two more that have details about how I've set up multiple accounts. Instead of wasting time looking for the information, it's on my screen in less than 10 seconds.

Another useful feature is auto-save. As soon as you've typed something, it's saved. This function wasn't invented for OneNote, but OneNote was one of the first programs to take advantage of the technology. This functionality has been added to the other Microsoft Office apps if you save files to OneCloud.

Why Not Evernote?

ONE NOTE'S PRIMARY COMPETITOR IS EVERNOTE AND IT CAN DO MANY OF THE THINGS THAT ONE NOTE CAN. ONE PRIMARY DIFFERENCE IS FORMATTING.

OneNote has much better formatting capabilities. It's not Word (or even Excel), but the formatting is more than adequate for its intended purpose.

In addition to typing notes using the keyboard, camera (still or video), or stylus, users can also copy and paste information from emails, websites, and documents of all sorts.

[Insert a screen clipping on a page - OneNote](#)

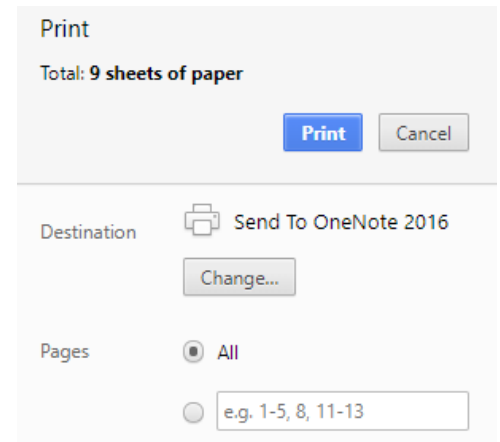
Insert a screen clipping on a page. ... Beside the Send to OneNote Tool, change the toggle to On. After the Send to OneNote tool is in the system tray, you can begin ...

<https://support.office.com/en-us/article/insert-a-screen-clipping-on-...>

Screen clipping taken: 9/16/2018 9:08 AM

OneNote's "snipping tool" lets users select an area on the screen and then send the image to a specific page without even having to open the application. OneNote also creates a virtual printer so that users can add information from any application that can print. Importing files into OneNote is also an option or using the

Web Clipper extension for Chrome, Firefox, and Edge.



Images pasted or printed into OneNote are automatically analyzed for text, so it's possible to search for text in an image or a printout. If you need the text from an image, just right-click it and choose Copy Text from Picture. This also applies to handwriting and Microsoft's ability to recognize handwriting is little short of magical.

But Wait, There's Less!

AS GOOD AS ONE NOTE IS, THERE'S ONE TASK THAT IT'S NOT SUITED TO: MAINTAINING A LIST OF PASSWORDS.

OneNote does allow users to password-protect files, but password protection on Office suite applications is little more than an illusion of security. Think of it as a plastic lock on a cardboard door.

For passwords and any other information that needs to remain secure, you need a password manager such as LastPass; but for retaining, organizing, and locating just about any other kind of information, OneNote is ideal.

If you already use Microsoft Office, check out OneNote. No matter what information you want to store or how you want to organize it, OneNote is an excellent choice. With web access and apps for IOS and Android devices, OneNote is available almost everywhere. 📌

USING CTRL-F TO FIND TEXT LIMITS THE SEARCH TO THE CURRENT PAGE, BUT CTRL-E TELLS ONE NOTE TO SEARCH EVERY PAGE ON EVERY TAB IN EVERY NOTEBOOK. THIS MAKES FINDING AN OBSCURE BIT OF TEXT FAST EVEN IF YOU NO LONGER REMEMBER WHERE YOU STORED IT.