



## “NOTE NET” LEARNING RESOURCES: THE ZETTELKASTEN (NOTE NET) METHOD AND *HOW TO TAKE SMART NOTES*

A Brief Note: The Zettelkasten method employed by Niklas Luhmann and popularized by Sönke Ahrens in *How to Take Smart Notes* has many imitators and with each new iteration of the Zettelkasten method comes a new moniker. The Writing Center calls their version of Niklas Luhmann’s knowledge building system the “**Note Net**” (patent pending). Below we’ve collected a series of resources to welcome you into the epistemological space of our **Note Net**.

### TEXT-BASED RESOURCES UNPACKING THE ZETTELKASTEN (NOTE NET) METHOD

**Getting Started**—<https://zettelkasten.de/posts/overview/>

Here you’ll find thorough instructions for setting up your own Zettel, with an explanation of the benefits of the Zettelkasten system. Many of the terms specific to the slip-box method are hyper-linked to more detailed explanations of the slip-box (note net) vernacular.

**The Zettelkasten Method: Examples to Help You Get Started**—<https://medium.com/@rebeccawilliams9941/the-zettelkasten-method-examples-to-help-you-get-started-8f8a44fa9ae6>

This Blogpost takes you through a first-person account of the author’s Zettel with examples of fleeting, literature, and permanent notes to provide a starting point for readers new to the Zettelkasten method.

**A Beginner’s Guide**—<https://zenkit.com/en/blog/a-beginners-guide-to-the-zettelkasten-method/>

Hosted by the Zenkit Blog, this post provides a breakdown of the history of Zettelkasten note-taking, followed by a step-by-step guide to beginning your own Zettel. This text also includes an overview of some of the main benefits of ZK notetaking: organizing and retaining information, making connections between disparate projects, and developing new ideas.

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### VIDEO RESOURCES UNPACKING THE ZETTELKASTEN (NOTE NET) METHOD

#### **Zettelkasten Note-Taking, Simply Explained—**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rOSZOCqOo8>

A three-minute summary of the Zettelkasten method, including its history and its usefulness as a knowledge aid to writers.

#### **Introduction to Smart Notes with Obsidian—**

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Etr\\_WyfpvYk](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Etr_WyfpvYk)

A longer video (54 minutes) that covers how to apply the Zettelkasten method using a specific digital tool, Obsidian.

#### **Zettelkasten Method (Examples and Software)—**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wFZHuWLA09M>

A 6-minute introduction to Zettelkasten that walks through the principles of note-taking and the tools needed for a Zettel step by step, using RoamResearch.

### *HOW TO TAKE SMART NOTES*

Here’s the link—<https://takesmartnotes.com>—to the website for Sönke Ahrens’s *How to Take Smart Notes*. The website, “TakeSmartNotes is a project dedicated to helping students, academics and nonfiction writers get more done - ideally with more fun and less effort. I never found a book on how to organize academic and nonfiction writing convincing enough that I felt good about recommending it to my students.”

[TakeSmartNotes.com](https://takesmartnotes.com) is a full-emersion experience into the world of the slip-box.

You can purchase the book directly from the website or . . .

[Bookshop.org \(\\$13.99\)](https://bookshop.org)

[Alibris \(from \\$9.30\)](https://alibris.com)

[The Besos \(from \\$9.99\)](https://thebesos.com)

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### TEXT-BASED RESOURCES UNPACKING *HOW TO TAKE SMART NOTES*

“How To Take Smart Notes: 10 Principles to Revolutionize Your Note-Taking and Writing”—<https://fortelabs.co/blog/how-to-take-smart-notes/>

Produced by Forte Labs this EXCEPTIONAL summary of Ahrens’s book is our pick for text-based resources detailing both the slip-box (note net) method and diving deep into *How to Take Smart Notes*. We encourage you to start your Zettlekasten journey here. The “10 Principles” capture the very best of Ahrens’s text.

**How to Take Smart Notes: A Step-by-Step Guide**, by Nat Eliason—  
<https://www.nateliason.com/blog/smart-notes>

Here you’ll find a fairly robust five step breakdown of the slip-box method. This article is a bit on the short side. Eliason’s text works best as a companion piece—a primer—to Ahrens’s *How to Take Smart Notes*.

**Book reviewer Will Patrick** has a lot of positive things to say *about How to Take Smart Notes*. Turn here for one more push in the Zettlekasten direction. Patrick writes:

This is the number one book I wished I had read ten years ago, ideally before I started university. Describes a system for the managing of ones own thoughts and ideas, and does it in plain English. Turned me onto the importance of understanding metalearning/metacognition.

### DIGITAL SLIP-BOXES

“ZKN3”—<https://github.com/Zettelkasten-Team/Zettelkasten/releases/>

The ZKN3 is FREE, built explicitly to emulate the Zettelkasten, and lives on your desktop as a standalone app—you save your slip box cards directly to your desktop, freeing you from monthly cloud storage fees. It has a rather stoic, bare-bones interface and is pretty intuitive. You can sort out how to make a card in just a few minutes. The app is designed and updated by a single programmer and can get a little clunky at times.

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“Zettlr”—<https://zettlr.com/>

Zettlr is another standalone Zettelkasten app. It’s a little smoother looking than the ZKN3 (a few more bells and whistles). I find the “cards” a little harder to read but the data management a bit smoother than the ZKN3. There’s more of a learning curve with Zettlr than ZKN3. There’s a useful “how to” introductory video attached to the download.

“The Archive”—<https://zettelkasten.de/the-archive/>

At the time of this writing, “The Archive” ran \$20/download. It’s definitely the prettiest of the standalone apps listed in this reference packet. The interface is excellent. There’s a decent forum to turn to for help in navigating the software and, like “Zettlr,” an approachable introductory video attached to the software. That said, “ZKN3” remains our pick for standalone slip boxes.

“Roam Research”—<https://roamresearch.com/>

“Roam Research” downloads to your desktop and links to your browser. It has a cloud-based storage system, which runs \$15/month, \$165/year, or \$500/5 years. The cloud-based storage allows you to access your information from any device, anywhere, though you lose access to your data if you end your subscription to “Roam Research.” The software allows you to build three discrete networks of data simultaneously. The mind maps are beautifully rendered and approachable as data management tools.

“Obsidian”—<https://obsidian.md/>

Like “Roam Research,” “Obsidian” downloads to your desktop and links to your browser. It has a cloud-based storage system but it also lets you own and control your data. There are three different “Pay Tiers” (Free, \$25+, \$50/year) that offer different levels of service and usability. The Free software should be enough to run your slip box. The free software has all of the browser plugins you need to get going. Also, “Obsidian” looks really cool.