Taking Notes on an iPad

Taking Notes On A Tablet

Hi. My name is Josh Sanders; I’m a P3 at UT College of Pharmacy; and today I’ll give you my perspective and tell you how I take notes on a tablet. I, personally, use the iPad, so I’ll talk more about that. My app of choice is “iAnnotate”. I’ll give you a couple of other examples of note taking apps that you can use, but “iAnnotate” is my favorite. One of the things that I like about it is it’s connectivity. Any kind of cloud storage that you have—whether its Dropbox, Google Drive, or SkyDrive—they’re all compatible w/ iAnnotate. I like to use them in conjunction w/ iAnnotate b/c your notes are always backed up and you can access them from any computer, even if you don’t have your tablet with you.

The right screen shot is how I organize my notes: I like to organize them by each class. You have unlimited capabilities; you can organize them by exam numbers or whatever you want. I use Dropbox as my cloud storage, so there is also a free Dropbox app that you can download for iPad. This right screenshot is the Dropbox website, and i highly recommend and can’t stress enough that if you’re going to use iAnnotate or any note-taking devices that you put all of your notes in your Dropbox account and create all of your folders. They will automatically appear in iAnnotate once you synch you Dropbox to the iAnnotate app. I like to use Dropbox b/c I can always customize my notes, save them in a PDF of 6 or 3 slides per page (whatever you play around with and end up liking). I personally like 6 slides per page. It limits the file size a little and you can still zoom in and take notes with ample space.

Another app that is equally compatible to iAnnotate is “PDF Expert”. To my knowledge, I can’t find any differences between iAnnotate and PDF expert. They have some of the same functionality and they’re both the same price—$9.99. Usually around school time, you can catch these at a discount, maybe for $4.99; I have seen them as low as $0.99.

Another app I wanted to mention is Notability. It’s a lot cheaper ($1.99), but it doesn’t have as many functions as the aforementioned. It’s like “you get what you pay for”. However, they did just add Dropbox and Google Drive syncs, so you can still back-up your notes. I used this app for a little while and decided to go on and pay the $10 for iAnnotate. I just liked the functionality of it.

Looking at accessories that you may need when taking notes once you have your app selected and have backed up with Dropbox or Google Drive, the number one thing would be to get a good stylus so that you can write notes. I’ve tried 3-4 different styluses, and the Bamboo stylus from Amazon.com (from anywhere from $10-18), I like. The end, or nib, is a little firmer and smaller to allow more accuracy and help you read your written notes a little better. You can also get replacement nibs. The first stylus I got, I paid $10 and the nib broke, but you couldn’t replace it. So, I was out of another $10 for a stylus. Bamboo’s tips can be replaced; you can get firm ones; pay $5 and get 3 that last a pretty good while. I’ve looked at 3 different types, had personal experiences with all, and Bamboo is by-far the stand-out.

This past year, I moved the Logitech wireless keyboard b/c as I advanced in classes, I found it harder to keep up when writing and I could type a lot faster. This Logitech keyboard is really thin and has a lithium battery that lasts. I’ve had mine for 7 months and have never charged it. It fully functions as your iPad and eliminates the keyboard that pops up and allows you to see the whole screen. It’s easy to keep up b/c you’re used to typing on a keyboard anyway. It’s a little more expensive. You can find it at Office Depot for about $80. I think I found mine on eBay for about $65, so if you shop around, you can probably get a get deal on one. I highly recommend this accessory; It’s a little more expensive, but its worth it.

Let’s look into functions of iAnnotate. You can highlight, write, type, stamp, insert pics, blank pages. If a teacher starts drawing something on the smart board or anything like that, you can click a blank page and draw it. You can take a picture of what was written or drawn on the board and insert it into the page. You can record audio. The main thing I like is that if the professor posts any kind of supplemental notes or PowerPoint at the last minute and they’re in PowerPoint or Word Document, iAnnotate automatically converts those to PDF when you open them.

Here’s a screenshot of a set of notes that I had, just to let you know. I tried to do as many things as I could: I inserted audio on the left side of screen; I customized exclamation mark stamps so that if something seemed important in my notes, I could just stamp or star it; as you see under the electrolyte disorder section, on the right, the camera, you can see that I’ve inserted a picture. It displays as a small box that you can click on and it will display the pic that you took. You have the same capabilities that you have if you were writing on a sheet of paper: you can write with a stylus, type on it, underline, highlight (unlimited highlighter colors—right side of screen). That’s one of my custom toolbars that I set up w/ different colored type writers, highlighters, and underline functions so that I can color code notes. Here is an example of how to customize tool bars. On the right, Click on double arrow on the bottom of the 5 open toolbars. Tool bars will expand. Click on the little gear above each toolbar and when you click the tool bar, you’ll be prompted to go to this page. These are unlimited functions that you can add to your toolbars: highlighting, underlining, stamping, adding pages, inserting notes, pencil marker (using styling). More options include delete a page, add a page, rotate a pic if there’s a set in notes that was landscape and you want it portrait. You can click and drag those and customize your toolbar and set the font size, color, width, writing of pen; unlimited possibilities. Personally I like highlighters, underliners, and type writers; then I can go about color coding my notes how I want.

That pretty much wraps up what I have about iPad. I will talk a little about Android devices. I don’t have any experience w/ Android, but some of my class like to use tablets such as Samsung Galaxy, however they complained that it wasn’t the best with video and media playback. They raved about the great product functionality for the money. It’s a little cheaper but they can still take all of their notes w/o functionality issues. Apps that I would recommend if you have an Android device are Repligo (#1)—only $3 and will sync w/ Dropbox, however, you will have to convert your notes ahead of time b/c it will not convert Word or PowerPoint into PDF so that you can annotate them.

The iAnnotate that is free on Android devices is not a full version; You will not be able to customize tool bars—it gives you a highlighter, a pen, and maybe a note. So I think it’s well worth it to go on and pay the $3 for the Android device Replica app.

That concludes my presentation and I hope you gained valuable info about the iPad and any apps that you may want to use.