

Best Note-Taking AI Tools for Students

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Grammarly:

The usefulness across multiple apps is the largest strength of Grammarly. Multiple of the most popular note-taking platforms can utilize Grammarly, including Google Docs, Evernote, and Apple Notes. Notably, Microsoft's OneNote does not allow for the Grammarly add-on on Apple devices despite other Microsoft apps using it, such as Outlook and Word. In my anecdotal experience, OneNote is the most popular note-taking app, rivaled closely by Google Docs, so it is certainly a drawback that Grammarly cannot be integrated into it for those students who utilize Apple.

Despite the inability to use Grammarly on OneNote, the utilization of the app on all other platforms makes the free digital tool very useful. While Grammarly does have its own platform students could utilize to take notes, it does not lend itself to the typical note organization styles other platforms offer. Organizational necessities such as dividing certain note pages into classes, those classes into semesters, and those semesters into school years, etc.

Grammarly's add-on in the various platforms allows for easy grammar and misspelling correction, sentence structure, suggestions for writing style in certain targeted voice topics (formal, informal, informative, etc.), and the seamless inclusion of AI chatbot answers. The icon remains discreet in any area of the page you place it and expands further when needed. Once hovering over the icon, two distinct sections pop up. One for spelling/punctuation/sentence structure and one to utilize the AI tool

When utilizing the AI chatbot feature, Grammarly allows the user to insert the answer directly into their note page seamlessly, although they do not have to. When asking the chatbot a question, the answer remains in the same side panel the user pulls up when selecting the AI icon. After the answer is given, the user can then choose to insert the whole text with a click of a button, or a portion via copy + paste. Not only does it include the direct question/answer tool, but it also allows students to brainstorm ideas, suggest counterarguments, draft outlines, search the document for information gaps, ensure citations are in place, and much more.

A downside of Grammarly is that not all their tools are available for free. Under their "Premium" version, students can get additional tools such as eliminating passive voice and the ability to identify when sentences need to be rephrased for clarity and conciseness. This "Premium" plan is offered by Grammarly for \$12 per month. This premium feature appears to only approve its spelling/punctuation/sentence structure tools with the AI tools unaffected by the basic or paid version.

Notion:

Notion is a note and organizational platform that offers its own AI tool and chatbot. While the platform offers a lot in terms of customizability, the learning curve to understand how to craft

pages in the exact way the user desires is steep. This is mainly due to the multitude of ways the user can utilize their customization options and smart commands.

Notion's AI tool is able to seamlessly integrate the chatbot answers into the note page, however their answer is automatically entered into the note flow. This is unlike Grammarly's optional integration and can be a bit more disruptive if the user does not want the full AI answer in their notes. The user will then have to go into the notes and delete any unwanted portions. Or, likewise, the full answer if they do not find it necessary or satisfactory.

While Grammarly's add-on is discreet and placeable in any place the user wants on the application, Notion's is invisible. The user just needs to click on a new line, hit the space bar, then the AI tool automatically pops up. Within the AI tool, users can interact with the chatbot, generate summaries of the document, translate into 14 different languages, generate action items, fix spelling and grammar, change tone, simplify language, brainstorm ideas, create outlines, to-do lists, add templates, and much more.

Notion easily allows the user to organize their notes pages, unlike the default Grammarly platform. While organization can be done on other apps Grammarly's add-on is easily integrated into, such as Google Docs, there is an appeal Notion provides over Grammarly in having an all-in-one approach. Again, understanding and organizing the Notion page does take a while to master, but once that learning curve is met, the user experience is very good.

The free version of Notion includes unlimited pages for individuals and collaborative workspaces with up to 10 guests. However, the free version of Notion only allows the user on the basic plan up to 20 uses of their AI chatbot. This factor might make it so a student would not even consider using Notion as their access to AI may be cut off very fast. Notion does allow for the purchase of unlimited usage of their AI for \$10/month. If the user is on Notion's paid "Plus" (\$10/month), "Business" (\$18/month), or "Enterprise" (\$25/month) plans, the unlimited AI price goes down to \$8/month. Students and educators do get the "Plus" version for free with their .edu email address, however, the unlimited AI will still cost \$8/month. This is an extraordinary, arguably non-starting, drawback when compared to Grammarly's free unlimited use.

Microsoft Copilot

Copilot has a very long way to go before it can be utilized in a note-taking sense. It is far more similar to ChatGPT than either of the two discussed above while still lagging behind ChatGPT in some respects.

Despite being run by Microsoft, it cannot be utilized in Word, Outlook, or OneNote such as Grammarly. The interface on Copilot is very similar to ChatGPT, however, Copilot does not appear to save conversation history like ChatGPT. Likewise, ChatGPT's response times were far faster than Copilot's. Copilot does hold positives over ChatGPT with its different prompt options such as "draft an outline," "create a LinkedIn post," "give me a quiz on [x] topic," etc. Copilot has an app that the user can utilize to interact with the chatbot rather than having to go onto a web browser and website as you must do with ChatGPT.

As with ChatGPT, discussed below, Copilot does not allow for the student to seamlessly integrate the AI response into notes. Rather, you must leave your note-taking app, access Copilot, ask the question and copy + paste the answer into the note app.

ChatGPT

With my anecdotal evidence, it seems to me that students utilize ChatGPT the most of any other AI tool. They will bring up the ChatGPT website, ask a question to supplement their learning during the lecture and copy + paste the answer into their notes.

Just as with Copilot, this certainly is a clunkier way to use AI than the seamless/integrated nature of Notion and Grammarly (when used in compatible note-taking applications). I have found, however, that ChatGPT provides much more in-depth answers than its competitors for student note-taking purposes.

ChatGPT's archive of conversations also provides a significant advantage. While Grammarly, Notion, and Copilot only keep the most recent prompt/responses to review, ChatGPT keeps the conversation archives in a convenient side panel for seemingly as long as the user has an active account. In my opinion, this feature does not overcome its other shortfalls, such as lack of integration into other applications, but it certainly is a valuable feature.
