

How to Make a Complete Map of Every Thought You Think *by Lion Kimbro 2003*

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Introduction

This book is about how to make a complete map of everything you think for as long as you like.

Whether that's good or not, I don't know- keeping a map of all your thoughts has a "freezing" effect on the mind. It takes a lot of (albeit pleasurable) work, but produces nothing but SIGHT.

If you do the things described in this book, you will be IMMOBILIZED for the duration of your commitment. The immobilization will come on gradually, but steadily. In the end, you will be incapable of going somewhere without your cache of notes, and will always want a pen and paper w/ you. When you do not have pen and paper, you will rely on complex memory pegging devices, described in "The Memory Book". You will NEVER BE WITHOUT RECORD, and you will ALWAYS RECORD.

*For all of this immobility, this freezing, for all of these negative effects, why on Earth would anyone want to do this? Because of the INCREDIBLE CLARITY that comes with it. It may feel like, doing this, that for the first time in your life, you REALLY have a CLEAR IDEA of what kinds of thoughts are going through your head. You'll really understand your ideas. And you'll also see connections that you were never consciously aware of before. You'll see a structure and a pattern in your life. You're goals and psychology will become clearer to you. You'll be clearer too *about what you do NOT understand.**

YOU MAY ALSO ARTICULATE. Your thoughts will be clearer to you than they have ever been before. You will see things you have never seen before. When someone shows you one corner, you'll have the other 3 in mind. This is both good and bad. It means you will have the right information at the right time in the right place. It also means you may have trouble shutting up. *Your mileage may vary.*

You will not only be immobilized in the arena of action, but you will also be immobilized in the arena of thought. This appears to be contradictory, but it's not really. When you are writing down your thoughts, you are making them clear to yourself, but when you revise your thoughts, it requires a lot of work you have to update old ideas to point to new ideas. This discourages a lot of new thinking. There is also a "structural integrity" to your old thoughts that will resist change. You may actively not-think certain things, because it would demand a lot of note keeping work. (Thus the notion that notebooks are best applied to things that are not changing.)

It is like taking a microscope to your brain.

You'll see the little thoughts moving around, literally, as you walk them through the maps you discover within yourself. You'll see what you care about, quite clearly. You'll be familiar with your mental terrain. Incredible clarity. Addictive clarity. Vast clarity. Extraordinary clarity.

You will Love it, if you are anything like me. It will feel natural and free; There will be a freedom within your mind. You'll create astonishing things, and you'll find great tools that will help you in your life after you are immobilized. Or at least, *it will seem that way.*

Time will tell whether such an experience has been useful to me or not. I still do not know, and will not know for some time now. The experience is very much a modern version of the “walkabout”. Except for instead of going out there somewhere in the world, you hole up in your mind.

Is it useful? I still don't know.

I want to digress and say something here as well:

I am astonished that there isn't a field of study of notebooks. I have searched on the net, and while I have found a page here and there on some type of notebook method, it is almost ALWAYS one of the following two things:

Thus it is with great hesitation that I present for the public this work on notebooks. (That is, my notebook technique.)

The Diary A bunch of entrees, chronologically based, maybe with a TOC, in which a person keeps a record of their thoughts. AKA “The Journal”.

The Category Bins A bunch of notes, stuffed into category bins, maybe 2 or 3 levels deep.

That's IT. In all the world, people have only been putting their notes in the above two ways.

Sure, there are a few others, but people aren't comparing notes, talking about such things.¹² I would think that something like intelligence augmentation through notebook study would be one of the first things that people talk about on the Internet! I would think that one of the first things we would be greeted with on the Internet would be, “Did you know how to use Notebooks to be smarter?” At the very least, it would be accessible.

My solution to understanding this lack is my faith in what I call “The Anarchist Principle”: If there is something *really cool*, and you can't understand why somebody hasn't done it before, it's because *you haven't done it yourself*. That's DIY for those in the know: Do It Yourself.

Instead, there is a vast desert.

¹ Ted Nelson in a very special case and deserves particular comment. Sadly, he seems a bit unhinged, and doesn't write much about the topic of keeping notes openly on the web.

² Note added Later: David Allen's “Getting Things Done” system is actually pretty cool. Sadly, it does not appear on the Internet. But it's a cheap book. If you are interested in contributing to a study of notebook systems, this is a must read.

Now I have a third thing I want to talk about, before getting on with the text.³

I am just SPITTING THIS TEXT OUT. I know that my understanding of personal projects and getting them completed is low. I know my weaknesses that I am bad at getting huge projects done. So what I'm doing is just SPITTING THIS TEXT OUT.

I figure that if you are reading this, you'd much rather have this than nothing at all. And that's what's out there, if you aren't reading this- NOTHING AT ALL. I mean, you can always keep a diary or a bunch of category bins, if you like. That's a real no brainer. But besides those two, and treatises on Ted Nelson's madness, you won't find a whole lot.

SO PLEASE EXCUSE THE POOR FORMATTING OF THIS. IT'S RAW, COERCIVE, STRAIGHT TEXT. IT'S UNORGANIZED. IT'S TERRIBLE.

Maybe one day I will improve this. But that day is not today. Today is a day for spitting text out. With God's mercy, I will learn how to finish big projects. I pray for that ability frequently. If you can mentor me in the subject, I will happily hear you out. But I have not learned it yet.⁴

Let's see: We've talked about:

1. The Terrible Things this notebook system will Do to you.
2. The Nonexistence of an Internet field of Notebook study.
3. How I am just spitting this text out into the world.

Lastly, I want to briefly introduce some of the unique features of my notebook system. Things that my notebook system does that NO OTHER NOTEBOOK SYSTEM that I have ever seen does. These are the results of years of keeping different types of notebook systems, and taking the best ideas from each.

1) Strategy.

This notebook system allows you to STRATEGIZE. Very few notebooks do that. I mean, sure, you can start some pages on, "what will my strategy be now?", but then you have to figure out what all your options are. The notebook system I describe has built in strategy management. You will always know what your options and priorities are in notebook management.

It does this with the aid of maps...

2) Maps.

Tables of Contents (TOCs) are TERRIBLE. TERRIBLE TERRIBLE TERRIBLE. Their main utility is in providing you the next number to number something.

³ First, I wrote about the things that my notebook system will do to you, then I wrote about the dearth of notebook study on the Web, and now I'm writing about this third thing.

⁴ I actually believe that we should all communicating with what Robert Horn calls "Visual Verbal Language". The problem is that we don't have good tools to do so. Damn. It's a shame. When the tools come, there will be a revolution in communication just as big, if not bigger, than the revolutionary introduction of the Internet. So: Double Apologies for swabbing a mass of text at you.

You want MAPS of Contents, or what I call “MOCs”. This is like a table of contents, but far more dynamic. Is an entry really important? Make it’s MOC entry really big. Unimportant? Make it small. Or even pull out the name, and just surround the page number in parenthesis. If you are ever investigating that area, you can look it up to see what it is.

You can put related concepts close to each other, REGARDLESS of the actual physical position of the pages.

YOU CAN MOVE THINGS AROUND.

TRACE PATHS OF CONNECTION THROUGH. MAKE NON-ORDINAL ORDER APPARENT. ALL WITH MAPS.

So don’t keep a TOC, unless the material is intrinsically linear (a chronology, without episode tracking.) Keep a MOC!

More in the text on this subject. This is just a brief introduction for the sake of introducing some major concepts from my notebook system.

3) Color and Glyph Management

Abbreviations/Shorthand, and Color. You **MUST** use a 4color pen. (I mean, you don’t **NEED** one, but it’s so amazingly helpful, that once you start using it, you’ll **NEVER** want to go back.) You’ll develop shorthands, and you’ll want to trust that you can decipher them later. You’ll thus need systems for cataloging your shorthands, and there is such a system in the notebook system I am describing.

4) Speed Lists

You will be capturing EVERY SINGLE THOUGHT. Well, every thought that is more interesting than “I need to go to the bathroom”, or “I need to take the trash out”. (Actually, needing to take the trash out may enter, as per the *Getting Things Done* system. **SHOULD** you decide to integrate my system with the GTD system. More later on the subject.) Speed lists are the answer to the demand. Speed lists are vast lists of simple thoughts- about 1-50 words. Generally around one line.

*There are two types of speed lists- pan-subject and subject. Pan-subject speed lists are for all thoughts, you take a pan-subj speed list out with you to work or to wherever you are going. Subject lists you keep in a cache notebook, and you have one per subject. You’d prefer to just use your subject lists, but sometimes you have to make do with a pan-subject speed list, and then transfer out from there to the individual speed lists. **More on all of this later.***

In particular: You do **NOT** want to be just scribbling thoughts out on a piece of any old paper. You want at least a pan-subj speed, with a few exceptions. (If you are having a thought-attack, you may need to make do with just any old piece of paper, and then go from there to the subject pages.)

Okay: I’m getting too much into details.

So four advantages are:

- **Strategy**
- **Mapping**
- **Color/Glyph**

They work together marvelously. In particular, Strategy, Mapping, and Speeds all directly affect and rely on one another.

So there we have it.

1. What this system will do to you. (**EXPECT IT.**)
2. The nonexistence (to date!) of an Internet study of Notebooks.
3. How I am spitting this text out.
4. The advantages of my system.

The Introduction is over.