

Student Project

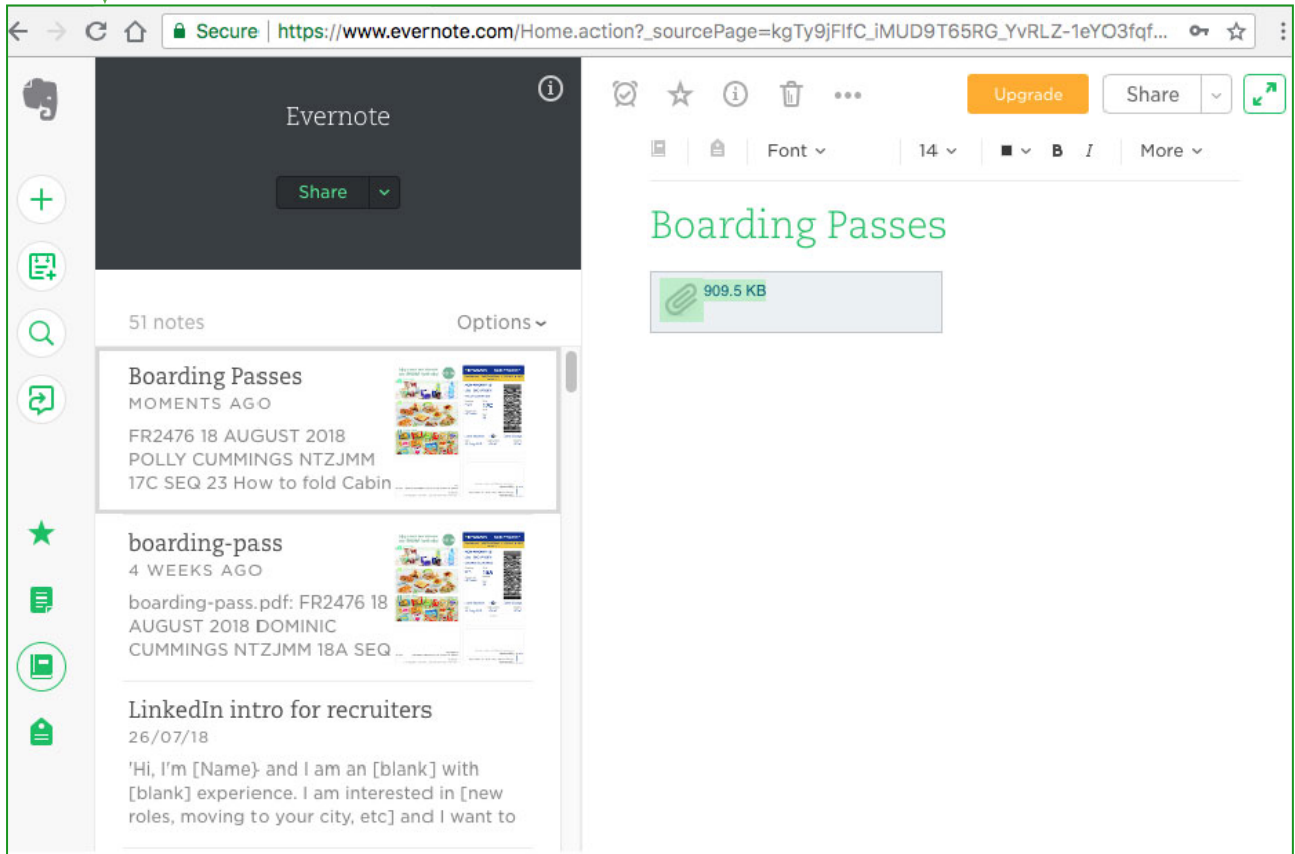
Productivity App

For this project I have chosen a productivity app as frequently use them and love making lists, both digital and paper versions. Feels good ticking off tasks once they're completed as it gives you a boost and helps you to visualise your progress. The best part for me! They're a total necessity in my life as I'm always busy juggling family, work and study, so I have a *lot* to manage and organise! I've been a user of the free version of Evernote since March 2013 and find its notebooks really effective. I'm comparing the following three productivity apps for the purpose of this project:

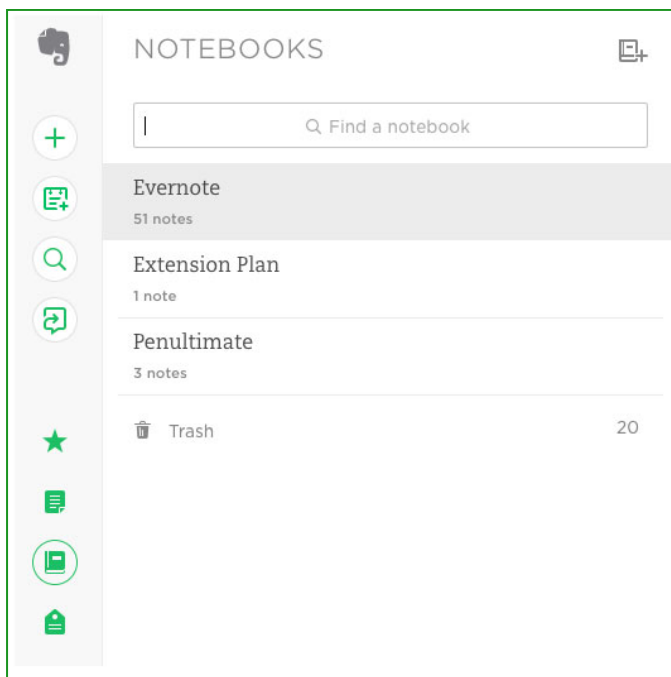


<p>Usability Heuristics</p>	<p>Simple, clear inbox style interface. All on one screen shows at a glance how it all works, what can be done and what's happening and what's expected. Very intuitive and user-friendly with animated tutorials providing engaging user-guidance.</p>	<p>The simplest of the three as it is basically a colour-coded list with automated task prioritisation, due date and reminder settings. All set out in list format so there's zero ambiguity as to how it works, what to do, what's happening and what's expected. Really, really simple.</p>	<p>Now to Evernote with its capability for so much more than just task-listing. Despite this its systems are visible, intuitive and user-friendly. Uses digital notebooks to organise lists/notes/docs/images/clippings in a logical & recognisable 'real world' way. Enables a satisfying virtual equivalent of crossing or ticking off things from a handwritten task list.</p>
<p>Visibility of Systems</p>	<p>Simple, clear inbox style interface. All on one screen shows at a glance how it all works, what can be done and what's happening and what's expected. Very intuitive and user-friendly with animated tutorials providing engaging user-guidance.</p>	<p>The simplest of the three as it is basically a colour-coded list with automated task prioritisation, due date and reminder settings. All set out in list format so there's zero ambiguity as to how it works, what to do, what's happening and what's expected. Really, really simple.</p>	<p>Now to Evernote with its capability for so much more than just task-listing. Despite this its systems are visible, intuitive and user-friendly. Uses digital notebooks to organise lists/notes/docs/images/clippings in a logical & recognisable 'real world' way. Enables a satisfying virtual equivalent of crossing or ticking off things from a handwritten task list.</p>
<p>Match Between System & Real World</p>	<p>Sensible, intuitive and familiar-looking interface with simple navigation features. Follows real-world and common conventions, i.e. looks like a to-do-list, with recognisable add/create list and folder/inbox icons. Nothing unexpected.</p>	<p>All information displayed on a single screen as a list. Very closely matched to real world. Essentially a digitised pen & paper list. As this is a really basic app, using a simple list layout, it's hard to get the consistency wrong. It's got everything organised around the list layout. Simple!</p>	<p>Evernote was designed to 'remember everything'. To 'be an extension of the human brain', in that it remembers the past, builds connections, and creates new ideas for the future. This it achieves very effectively by keeping all of your stuff organised in familiar real-world style notebooks and organisers, just like the ones we carry around with us. It's clever and very effective. See screenshot on next page.</p>

'Evernote makes it easy to remember things big and small from your everyday life using your computer, tablet, phone and the web.'



Screenshot above showing Evernote's clean, minimal interface with the layout following familiar conventions; menu down the left (active notebooks circled in green), a preview of the notes and a main window on the right displaying the notes/docs, with editing/formatting/functions menu at the top.



(Left) Screenshot of Evernote's simple notebooks system of storage and organisation. No more bulging diaries with stuff falling out of them!

Principle of Design



Balance

This design almost has the correct balance of positive elements to negative space, colour and asymmetry. I feel the typeface style and size is a little off in a way that jars with me visually. It's quite small and a bit bland, so it doesn't provide enough impact or contrast, I feel. Functionality wins the race here and that's the main positive, as the focus is purely on the activity of list-making with no frills. It's not what I'd describe as a pleasing aesthetic style but it focuses well on the function.

A good balance of positive elements to negative space has been achieved with this app. It's list style has a well proportioned aesthetic, with a clear symmetry to shape and composition. Also the use of a simple sans-serif typeface in white is also well thought-out. It is well-proportioned and of a size that doesn't interfere with the function, is clear, legible and visually pleasing. My standout favourite for its aesthetic as its form follows function perfectly.

This is another case of function governing over aesthetics. Balance of positive elements to negative space is good, with its composition placing more focus on the function. I feel there could maybe be more visual impact through use of bolder shape and strong colour or a different typeface style. It lacks a little visual va-va-voom. That said it uses a limited colour-scheme of green, black and grey on white. This, I suspect, is designed in order to visually balance the interface with the content, which can be colour images, docs and web-clippings, so it could get a little busy visually.

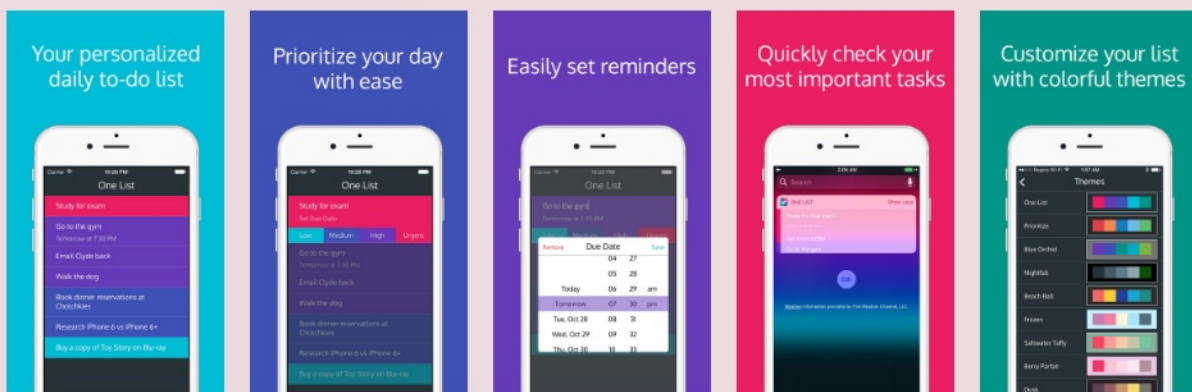
Unity

Unified in its blandness. As described above, it's not winning any prizes for style. Its elements are well unified in terms of colour, proportion and asymmetry and contrast. Enabling the function to win through and for the user to enjoy simply making a list.

The symmetry and use of 4 solid colours are strong unifying elements here. The use of bold, solid colours in blocks to define each task on the list provides strength and impact visually, and also crucially, assists with the function as colour is assigned to priority; low, medium, high or urgent, as illustrated in the app screenshots below.

A unified design in the sense that the colour-scheme, composition and asymmetry combine to provide a clean, minimal interface. It's primary function of providing a digital repository for all kinds of things means that it needs to be pared back in its aesthetic in order to avoid visual overwhelm.

App Screenshots



Gestalt Laws of Grouping



Proximity

The Proximity principle can be applied to UI design in the grouping of similar information, organising content and decluttering layouts. Its correct use will have a positive impact on visual communication and user experience. White space can boost visual hierarchy and information flow. It will help users achieve their goals faster and delve deeper into the content.

Source: 'Gestalt principles in UI design'
by Eleana Gkogka
UI/UX designer
From: [medium.muz.li](https://medium.com/muz.li)

Applying the principle of proximity to Wunderlist, we can tick off the close grouping of the content and information. It's an ordered list, organised logically and in such a way that the information flow is boosted. White space is used to optimise the visual hierarchy and here the list is king so that ALL content is in list form and that hierarchy drives the user towards their goal.

The proximity principle is in full-force with OneList's beautifully simple design. The grouping of information and organisation of content around a simple 4 colour-coded, list layout is why it works so effectively. The clean, minimal efficiency of the design is such that the user experience flows smoothly and easily, enabling users to access content at-a-glance and without distraction.

So, bearing in mind the premise of Evernote's 'remember everything', it certainly has its work cut out to achieve this without visual clutter and overload. However, it does so by correct use of the proximity principle. Here's how it does it. It takes the idea of creating a notebook and organising (grouping) similar notes (information) together in them. Whilst keeping the over-arching space minimal with lots of white space, boosting the visual hierarchy and allowing the notebooks to drive the user to achieve their goal faster.

Similarity

Elements sharing similar visual characteristics are perceived to be more related than those not sharing similar characteristics.

Similarity can help us with organising and classifying objects within a group and linking them with a specific meaning or function.

When Similarity occurs, an object can get emphasised by being different from the rest; this is called 'Anomaly' and can be used to create contrast or visual weight. It can draw the user's attention to a specific piece of content (focal point) while assisting with scanability, discoverability and the overall flow.

Source: as above.

Again, this is a simple interface that by its common visual characteristic, the list, it immediately classifies its function and meaning through the visual hierarchy of a list. It uses the law of grouping in a very pure way by organising its elements into... you guessed it, lists!

With One List the principle of grouping or shared visual characteristic is what gives this interface its strength and why it works so effectively. It's a great illustration of the principle of similarity at work.

To further analyse this, however, I propose that the 'anomaly' here is the use of contrasting colour - the hot pink for high priority, against the cool blue, green and purple of lower priority tasks - to create visual weight. This draws the users attention to the highest priority task on the list - creating the focal point - and assists with discoverability and flow.

Evernote's notebooks help users to interact with its interface through clever application of the principle of similarity. Its icons all share similar characteristics; single-colour, unobtrusive, minimal design.

This is consistently applied throughout the entire interface, logo and branding style. The purpose of this is to link all the elements and create visual coherence. The user experience is one of uncluttered calm, where their stuff can be easily found since it will be emphasised by the contrast (anomaly) and will become the focal point, assisting with scanability, discoverability and flow.