

Notion — what it actually is, and how I run every project in it

A plain-English explainer for anyone whose plans live in six places at once. This one I use every day, so it also shows you exactly how.

THE PROBLEM IT SOLVES

Your projects live in your head, and your head drops things

The moment you are building more than one thing, the status of everything scatters: half a plan in a notes app, tasks on three lists, decisions in a chat thread you will never find again. The tools are all fine. The problem is that none of them can see the others.

WHAT IT IS

Documents and databases in the same place

Notion pages are documents you write in, like any notes app — except a page can also be a **database**: a table where every row is its own page. That one idea is the whole product. A table of projects where each project opens into its own notes. A table of tasks where each task knows which project it belongs to.

The honest framing: Notion is not the best writing app, and it is not a real database. It is the only mainstream tool where the plan, the notes and the task list are one thing instead of three — and that is the part that sticks.

USED, NOT JUST REVIEWED

How I actually run it

Everything I build — the apps, this newsletter, the video pipeline behind it — is tracked in one Notion workspace, and it is two databases:

- **Projects** — one row per thing I am building, each opening into its own page: what it is, what state it is in, links, next steps.
- **Tasks** — one row per job, with a status (*Not started* · *Up next* · *In progress* · *Done*) and a link to its project. The "Up next" view is the to-do list.

The part worth copying: **Notion has an API, so software can keep it current.** My AI assistant updates the task board as work actually finishes — the board matches reality because nothing relies on me remembering to tidy it.

WHAT IT COSTS

Free covers a lot more than you would expect

Personal use	Free — pages and databases, no time limit
Sharing	A handful of guests on the free plan
API access	Included, free plan too
Paid plans	From roughly \$10 a month, mostly for teams

Checked August 2026 — plans move, confirm on notion.com/pricing before paying for anything. One person tracking their own projects may never need the paid tier.

BE HONEST ABOUT THIS BIT

Who should not bother

You love plain files

If Markdown files in folders already work for you, Notion adds a login and an internet dependency and takes away your file system.

Your list fits on paper

One project and a short to-do list needs a to-do app, not a workspace. Come back when the projects multiply.

You need it offline

Notion is built for being online. Offline support exists but it is the weakest part of the product.

You like tinkering too much

The template gallery is a rabbit hole. If you know you will spend a week decorating instead of working, that is a real cost.

IF YOU DO WANT IT

Twenty minutes to a working board

- 1 **Make the free account.** Skip the templates gallery. All of it.
- 2 **Create one table called Projects.** One row per thing you are building or running. Three is plenty to start.
- 3 **Create one table called Tasks.** Add a Status column (Not started / Up next / In progress / Done) and a Project column linking to the first table.
- 4 **Put five real tasks in.** Real ones, with the project they belong to. Fake ones teach you nothing.
- 5 **Make one view: Tasks where status is "Up next".** That view is now your to-do list. Open it every morning.
- 6 **Stop there for a week.** The system earns extra columns by being used, not by being designed.

Try Notion free

Personal use is free, no time limit

[Download this as a PDF](#)

DISCLOSURE

Not an affiliate link. Notion runs an affiliate programme but it is closed to new applicants as I write this (checked August 2026), so I earn nothing if you click. This page exists because I use Notion every day to run everything you see from me — if the programme reopens and this becomes a paid link, this box will say so plainly.

WHERE THIS CAME FROM

Nocturne

One email a week: what actually happened in AI, what it means for you, and one thing you can use. Three minutes, no jargon, no hype. If a tool is bad I say so; if a week is boring the email is short. Plan details checked August 2026 against Notion's own pricing page. They change — confirm before paying for anything.
