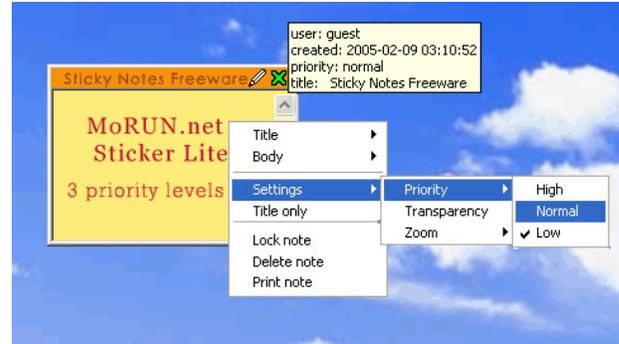Title: **Universal Access using Note Taking Software**
Author: Gerry Kennedy © March 2009
Software: Note Taking – Standalone and Web Resources for Note Taking Software
Category: Creating Notes with Software and Web Resources

1. Introduction

Students and people of all ages when on their computer often want to record information quickly. They also want to remember where it is and locate it in order to start, complete or check a task. Other users want to set an alarm so as to be on time, complete an assignment, contact a colleague or remind themselves of a critical event in the day.

The advent of sticky note programs provided an electronic means to 'stick' a note on the computer display. The various programs that are now available all perform the same type of function. Some provide colour schemes and themes. Others have the facility to run over a LAN or network, whilst some allow for insertion of photos and graphics. Some allow hyper linking to web sites, other documents on a LAN and emails.

Fundamentally, they all provide a means by which students can become more independent as they can plan ahead and schedule events or record information on the fly. These small and discreet programs have features that allow users to better organise and prepare their work.

Students with acquired grain injury, short-term memory loss issues and poor organisational and planning strategies often enjoy have these utilities to assist them in remembering to attend to tasks that might often be forgotten, dismissed or allayed.

Programs are available for all of the major operating systems including *MS Windows*, *MAC OS* and *Linux*. Software companies provide a range of programs, with some catering to corporate use with collaborative sharing mechanisms whilst others are just handy little utilities that assist in recording information, to be acted upon later by an individual user.
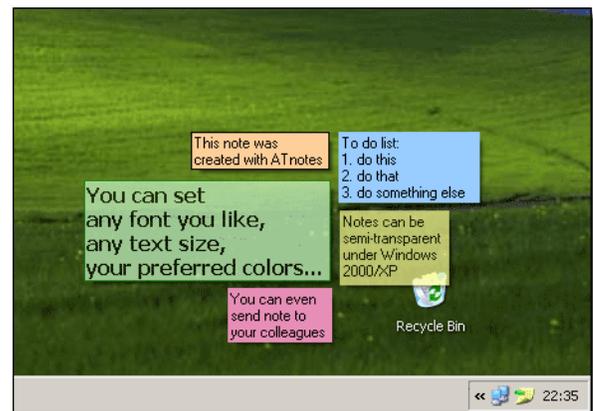
2. Implications for Users Who are Poorly Organised

Students who misplace their work, forget to reference web site addresses, or who do not take accurate notes and leave things to the last minute often enjoy having a sticky note program on their display. They can quickly type a note, or scribble a diagram. Data can be copied and pasted from any source and an image can be inserted or attached. Their notes can be displayed one at a time or as a list. Some programs will help students timetable their activities with use of visual and auditory reminders.

3. Benefits of Note Taking Software

Benefits to students include:

- The ability to plan and keep notes for poorly organised students
- To assist students and users with acquired brain injury
- To assist students who need support and own their own PC Notebook so that there notes are portable and always with them
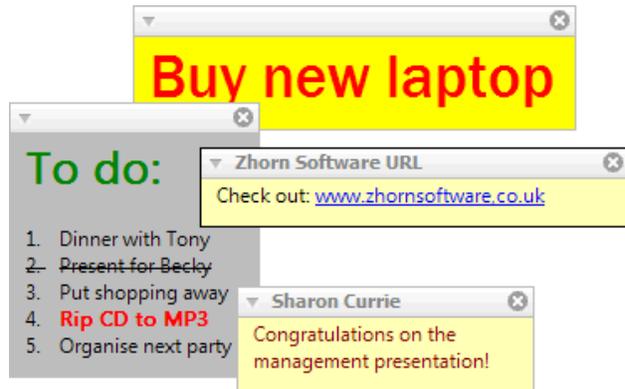
- To alert students to minor and major events during a day
- To take notes from CDs, DVDs and other resources
- To copy data to and from web sites
- To set timers and alarms for critical events
- To quickly jot down notes or scribble ideas for further referencing or annotation

As with all software utilities and programs, the particular program that has been chosen has to work within an operating system (i.e. versions of *MS Windows*, *MAC OS, Linux* or *Ubuntu*). It also has to accommodate the visual, cognitive and physical needs of the user and perform the task to a satisfactory level of performance or better, to warrant continued use.

Most programs have web sites to download user guides, FAQ sheets or help files.

They can also be used alongside text-to-speech programs including *Natural Reader* (www.naturalreaers.com) that will run as a floating toolbar.

4. Note Taking Programs

Commercial Programs

PostIt Digital NotesV4.5 -   [www.3m.com/us/office/postit/digital/digital_notes.html.*M*](http://www.3m.com/us/office/postit/digital/digital_notes.html) - formerly a free program but now is a commercial product. It is a very reliable and robust with excellent features.

MoRUN.net Sticker desktop notes http://www.sticky-notes.net/windows-sticky-notes-free.html

NovaMind Express -   www.novamind.com/mind-mapping/mind-mapping-for-students.php - offers a free download trial copy

Freeware and Open Source

To assist in keeping notes and being more organised whilst working at the computer, a number of handy small programs are available freely to download, install and use. Freeware versions at no cost to the user include:

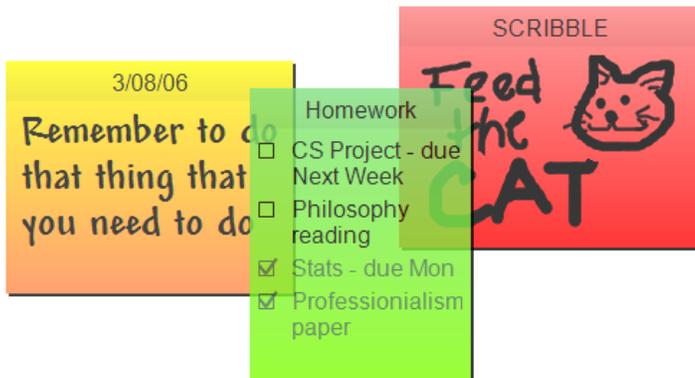|	
Free Sticky Notes V2.0	www.batchconverter.com/FreeStickyNotes-download-3012.shtml
Hott Notes	www.hottnotes.com/ (portable version also available)
Stickies V6.7	http://www.zhornsoftware.co.uk/stickies/
Sticky Notes V2.0.0.4	www.cs.utexas.edu/~tbone/stickynotes.html
Sticker Lite	www.freedownloadmanager.org/downloads/desktop_free_notes_software/
Memo Fix Digital	www.freedownloadmanager.org/downloads/desktop_free_notes_software/
Freebie Notes V3.13	www.freebienotes.com/stick-notes/index.html
AT Notes	*http://atnotes.free.fr/*

ATnotes is a FREE program that creates notes on the desktop. It lives in the system tray, takes very few resources, and supports a lot of languages.

Creating and maintaining a large number of notes is easy. A Note Manager allows you view your desktop, wastebasket, and archived notes and perform batch operations on them.

Most of these programs offer similar facilities, including:

- Time and date stamping
- The ability to insert and append graphics
- Customised colouring of text and background colour
- Reminders and alarms
- Ability to place notes on your desktop, visually reminding you of important events every time the computer is turned on
- Creation of checklists to keep track of what students have accomplished or have yet to complete or do
- The ability to scribble, draw, annotate and copy pictures to decorate the desktop, or use a Tablet PC or external drawing tablet to write notes with a stylus.
- Usually, the scribble note feature allows users to draw in a set or freeform size
- Most offer a simple and direct, intuitive interface
- Users can choose colour, font, or translucency level for notes
- Most allow you to create and save themes
- Editing notes is easy and non-obstructive, usually by double-clicking on the note body and editing it
- Managing a large number of notes is usually easy where a facility allows users to view the desktop, wastebasket, and archived notes and perform batch operations on them
- Users can store and print notes as well
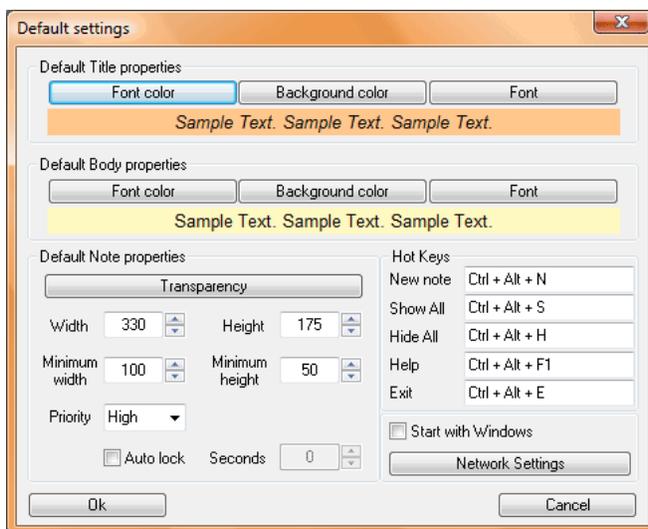- Students can copy cut and paste data between programs and their note taking program

Portable Solutions

The Hott Notes is packed within the AccessApps suite of programs. It can be downloaded from http://www.rsc-ne-scotland.ac.uk/accessapps/. *Hott notes V4.1* portable edition is available for use from a USB flash drive so that users can take their notes wherever they go.

In Conclusion

Note taking programs are not new. Students who require reminding, or are forgetful or who can't organise their work satisfactorily usually respond well to this genre of software. They are more in control and can create quick, useful notes to remind them of tasks - instead of relying on teachers, aides, friends or family members. It gives them a greater degree of independence.

The notes can be saved, archived, printed or displayed in a number of ways. Text can be copied and pasted to or from applications. Alarms and visual reminders can keep students on task and more prepared to meet deadlines and keep to timetables.