# Testing & Evaluation Sheet

# Notesnook

## 1. Tool Overview

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| Name: | Notesnook |
| Category: | Encrypted Note taking |
| Purpose: | Note-taking app that offers end-to-end encryption and designed to replace mainstream apps without compromising user privacy. |
| Date Tested | 4/21/2025 |
| Status: | Deployed<br>☑ Operational - Actively running/maintained<br>☐ In Testing - Currently being evaluated or piloted<br>☐ Inactive/Deprecated - No longer maintained or functional |
| Deployment Architecture: | ☐ A standalone software - Runs entirely locally (e.g., runs on computer and doesn't depend on external server)<br>☐ A locally hosted service with separate server and client component - Run both backend/frontend yourself (e.g., backend could be on a local network, or self-hosted on cloud)<br>☑ A service with a local client that's hosted by a third party - You install a client on your device, but it connects to and depends on a remote server (e.g., Signal: install app (client), but Signal's servers handle message relaying, etc.)<br>☑ A service that is hosted by a third party but can also be self-hosted |
| Version: | V.3.0.32-904c452-desktop |

## 2. Installation & Setup

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| OS Compatibility | Windows, MacOS, iOS, Android, Linux |
| Installation Manual: | Yes |
| Installation Steps: | 1. Download instructions: https://notesnook.com/downloads/<br>2. Create an account after downloading or on the web page |

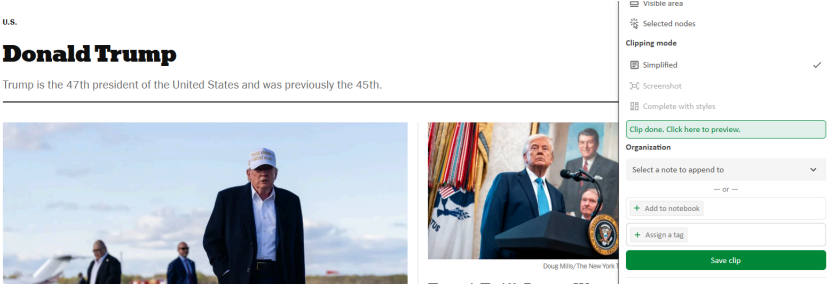| | |
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| | 3. An account can also be created after downloading the app on a mobile device |
| Mention if command-line setup or special configurations are needed | No command-line setup or configuration required for average users |
| Common Installation Issues & Fixes: | Common errors only occurred when using the web clipper function to save clips of a PDF in Chrome |
| User Documentation: | Yes |
| Required Technical Knowledge | Beginner |

## 3. Testing & Evaluation

| Category | Details | Score |
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| **Operational Functionality:** | **Functionality**<br>☐ The tool is mostly non-functional with many broken features and bugs.<br>☐ Several broken features or bugs<br>☐ Minor bugs or issues<br>☐ Mostly functional with few bugs or no bugs<br>☑ Fully functional with no bugs<br>**Internet Dependence:**<br>● The files sync and are available offline<br>● It can function on low network and no network<br>**Localization & Language Support**<br>● Notes can be typed in any language that the user needs (50+)<br>    ○ Including Chinese, Japanese, etc.<br>● Do they have an active community contributing to localization?<br>**Mobile Accessibility**<br>● There is an app store version of the tool available<br>    ○ App is available on IOS and Android<br>● App navigation is the same as desktop navigation<br>● The app needs cloud syncing in order for the files from the desktop to be available on the mobile device and vice versa. | 4.7 |

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| **Usability for Non-Technical Users** | **Ease of Installation & Deployment**<br>● Simple and quick installation and usage through computer<br>● To install the software it take 3 steps, and does not require command line knowledge<br>● Installation took under 10 minutes<br>● There isn't a traditional, regularly updated FAQ page. Notesnook has active support through Discord, email, Twitter, GitHub, and community forums<br><br>**User Onboarding Experience**<br>● Has extensive documentation ranging from installation, implementations, and support.<br>● The interface is not very intuitive as the note keeping software is the first thing you see every time you open the program, and if you wish to import files the website can assist with the process but it is straightforward and easier the more you use the program.<br><br>**Technical Experience Level Required**<br>● Yes, it is simple to download and the note taking software is very straightforward.<br>● No terminal commands for use, the software is menu and option driven | 4.7 |
| **Security & Privacy Strength** | **Encryption Standards**<br>● Uses ChaCha20-Poly1305-IETF for encryption/decryption (modern, secure, and resistant to nonce reuse issues)<br>● Uses Argon2 (specifically argon2id and argon2i) for password hashing and key derivation<br>● Cryptographic functions are handled using libsodium, a highly respected C library known for its secure implementation and wide platform support.<br><br>**Known Strength resilience**<br>● As a general-purpose note-taking app, it doesn't have built-in tools for censorship circumvention (like Tor), but it's built to withstand<br>● Any known weaknesses or risks?<br><br>**Comparison with Known Standards**<br>● Encryption strength exceeds standard benchmarks (AES-256) by using modern alternatives (XChaCha20-Poly1305).<br><br>**Data Minimization**<br>● Collects only what is necessary such as email address | 4.2 |

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| | ● Does not access your notes and everything is encrypted before leaving your device<br>**Privacy Policy Accessibility and Clarity**<br>● Privacy policy is transparent and easy to understand<br>● All data is encrypted client-side, never stored in plaintext; servers are based in Germany using trusted providers (Hetzner, Cloudflare, iDrive e2); the company explicitly states it cannot access or decrypt user data under any circumstances. | |
| **Maintenance/Sustainability** | **Community support**<br>● Yes there is a big community and a lot of support available on Github and Discord.<br>**Development active status**<br>● Last update was 4/8/25<br>● Updated about once a month on average<br>● Very responsive and can be contacted through email, discord, reddit, and twitter for issues or questions<br>**Funding and Sponsorship**<br>● Notesnook is funded solely through its subscription-based Pro plan and small grassroots community donations, with no government backing<br>● Maintains a public ledger of monthly contributions (as low as $1) and total raised funds (~$171 as of April 2025)<br>● The software appears to be well established and financially stable | 3.3 |
| **Performance / Effectiveness & Reliability** | **Testing Environment Setup:**<br>● **Device:** HP Envy x360<br>  ○ 13th Gen Intel(R) i7 processor<br>  ○ 16 GB RAM<br>● **Windows 11**<br>● **Network:** 4G Network<br>**User Experience Observations**<br>● Tool is very smooth and responsive<br>● Small load time with no lag during use<br>**Speed & Responsiveness:**<br><br>● Load times and transitions are just as fast as Google docs; user interface is simple<br>● No noticeable delays<br><br>**Resource Usage:** | 4.5 |

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| | ● 0.2% CPU usage and 125.9 MB of memory<br><br>**Network Performance:**<br><br>● Latency is <200ms<br>● Bandwidth is 10 KB to 50 KB per note per sync<br><br>**Reliability**<br>● Are there independent peer reviews or third-party audits available?<br>● Detail if low error rates and specify uptime percentage<br>    ○ Run core tests multiple times and log how many attempts fail |
| **Deployment Considerations:** | **Open Source & Transparency:**<br>● Yes<br>**Cloud vs. Local Deployment:**<br>● Notesnook runs locally<br>**Dependencies:**<br>● Requires Node.JS and uses typescript or javascript but does not rely on Docker or databases<br>● Global Version Consistency**:** Notesnook enforces using the same versions of dependencies across environments<br>**Post-Deployment Maintenance**<br>● Easy to maintain after download<br>● Yes it is easy to modify the UI but cryptographic algorithms may require higher expertise<br>**Merge/Sustainability:**<br>● Very open to contributions and suggestions<br>● Yes, changes are easy to submit as long as they follow the guidelines. |

## 4. Testing Scenarios

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| **Testing the one time link to a published note** | ● A note can be published using a secure code as well as a one time link to the published note.<br>● Once a user has unlocked the note with a password from the provided link, they can view it once but if the link is closed and they try to re-enter the notes it will cause an error message. |

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| **Testing the Web Clipping software** | • Notesnook offers a browser extension that lets users clip entire web pages or selected text directly into their encrypted notes, making it easy to archive news articles, research, or documentation without risking data exposure.<br>• Web clipper is only available on Chrome and Firefox |

**Abstract**

*Diablos Rojos* are privately-owned heritage buses that the Panamanian government is phasing out in favor of the public MetroBus. The purpose of this project is to document how Diablos Rojos represent the development of subaltern Panamanian identity. With our sponsor, Dr. Grant Burrier, we collected personal stories from drivers, artists, mechanics, and passengers through a semi-structured interview process and conducted personal ethnographies. The communities we met demonstrated how the buses are essential to Panamanian history, cultural identity, and the mobility of the working class.

- When the web clipper was used on a PDF there was eros and it could not be saved

U.S.

**Donald Trump**

Trump is the 47th president of the United States and was previously the 45th.

- Web clipper used on an online article was saved easily.

# 5. Insights & Recommendations

| Key Findings | **Strengths:**<br>- Very easy to use for technical and non technical users. A simple notebook on a computer.<br>- Very open to community contributions with a clearly documented and structured process, including scoped commit messages<br>**Weaknesses:**<br>- A person forgetting their password leads to all the data being lost by design. |
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| **Suggested Improvements** | a. User Interface Improvements: UI changes to improve clarity and navigation<br>    i. Consolidate and simplify instructions across platforms<br>b. Documentation: Step-by-step installation guides, tutorials for technical users<br>    i. Clear guides for a lot of issues a user may face with step by step instructions and visual screenshots |
| **Alternative Tools:** | 1. Obsidian<br>2. Joplin<br>3. Standard Notes |
| **License** | GPL 3.0 |
| **Cost/Resource Implications** | **Total Cost of Ownership:** |

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| | <ul><li>**Basic (0.00 USD/month)** – For casual note-takers who want to keep it simple: includes real-time unlimited sync, up to 20 notebooks, text-only exports, limited organization features, manual backups, and basic web clipping.</li><li>**Pro (4.47 USD/month)** – For professionals, journalists, and power users who need more: includes everything in Basic plus unlimited storage, advanced web clipper, exports in PDF, HTML, & Markdown, recurring reminders, and unlimited notebooks & tags.</li><li>**Education (4.47 USD/month or 11.55 USD/year)** – For students, teachers, and faculty members who deserve better privacy too: includes everything in the Pro plan.</li></ul> |
| **Why is this useful to civil societies in authoritarian environments?** | All notes are encrypted directly on the device using advanced encryption algorithms (XChaCha20-Poly1305 for data and Argon2 for password hashing) before any syncing happens. This means that even if a server is hacked or seized, no readable data is exposed — the notes are simply inaccessible without the user's key.<br><br>While Notesnook can sync notes across devices, the local-first encryption model means it is still functional offline. This is crucial for activists operating in areas with unstable internet or government-imposed shutdowns.<br><br>Because Notesnook can function largely through its app without requiring constant communication with centralized servers, it is less vulnerable to region-specific internet censorship and firewall blocks. However, publishing notes (via monographs) might require internet access<br><br>Activists and organizations concerned about routing sensitive data through foreign servers can self-host the Notesnook sync service, keeping full control of their data. |
| **Notes** | <ol><li>If users forget their password or lose access to their encryption key, data recovery is impossible (by design).</li><li>No support for anonymous sign-ups (email is required)</li><li>Privacy Mode is not supported on Linux, which may limit protection on that platform.</li></ol> |