Answers to **16 questions asked by educators** about Sonocent Audio Notetaker

1 What is Sonocent?

Better notes lead to improved productivity, organization, retention of course material, and, ultimately, better learning outcomes*.

Unfortunately, many students aren't aware of the importance of note taking and fail to develop effective note-taking practices. This is no surprise given that most receive little or no guidance on how best to take notes before entering higher education.

To provide a solution, we have developed **Sonocent Audio Notetaker**: software that enables ALL students to take effective notes. Rather than trying and failing to do everything at once, with Audio Notetaker students can break down the techniques essential to good note taking into two manageable steps, which almost any student can perform:
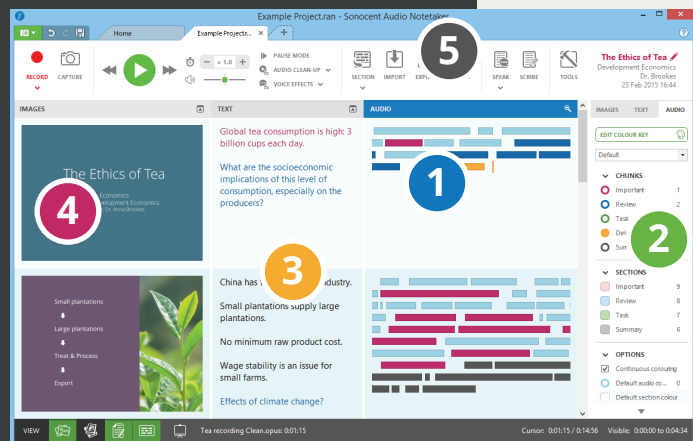
1- Listening, capturing, and annotating
2- Reviewing, summarizing, and outlining

First, students record their class with their laptop, using Audio Notetaker's visual workspace to highlight key information, import slides, organize their audio into sections, and type thoughts or questions. This can be done as they listen, much of it with shortcut keys or the click of a mouse. They can also download our free **Sonocent Recorder** companion app for iOS and Android and use it to record and annotate on their smartphone or tablet.

Second, students return to their project, taking summaries in their own words of the key concepts. They can type these summaries or, if they are an auditory learner, record themselves speaking through them. And they can do it all at a pace they are comfortable with. Once they are done, their Audio Notetaker project can be revisited and utilized when composing essays and revising for exams, with options to take transcriptions or export their audio, text, and images into other file formats, such as a text document or iTunes album.

...Sonocent have developed software that enables ALL students to take effective notes.

1 Recorded or imported audio is visualized phrase-by-phrase as colored chunks, which you can quickly navigate, edit and organize.

2 Color highlight chunks instead of writing things down. Use color to extract audio, images and text into new projects.

3 Add notes, summaries and transcriptions.

4 Import images, slides and PDF documents.

5 Export your project as text documents, music files or videos.

Conducted in May 2015**, the latest Sonocent user survey indicates that this approach to taking notes leads to deeper understanding, increased student engagement, and long-term retention of course content.

97.9% of the educators surveyed agreed that Audio Notetaker would be beneficial for student note taking. While, of regular student users, 90% said that they were confident that their notes would help them study, a jump of 60% from before they used the software. (To download a white paper detailing the results of our 2015 user survey and providing analysis of our findings, visit **www.sonocent.com/usersurvey2015**.)

*Michael C. Friedman. Notes on Note-Taking: Review of Research and Insights for Students and Instructors. Harvard Initiative for Learning and Teaching, Harvard University

**Results based on the responses of 1,624 students, educators, and assistive technology specialists with Sonocent Audio Notetaker licences

2 *Does it improve grades?*

Our users overwhelmingly believe that it does.

In our 2015 user survey, only 7% of students said that they thought using Audio Notetaker hadn't improved their grades. While 81% of educators agreed that the software could raise student attainment.

Independent research supports our findings. Several studies have found that creating good quality notes from lectures is directly related to performance in exams*
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Titsworth, B. S., & Kiewra, K. (2004). Organizational lecture cues and notetaking facilitate student information processing. Contemporary Educational Psychology, 29, 447-461.

"The real proof came at the end of the semester with my drastic improvement in cumulative GPA, all thanks to Audio Notetaker!"
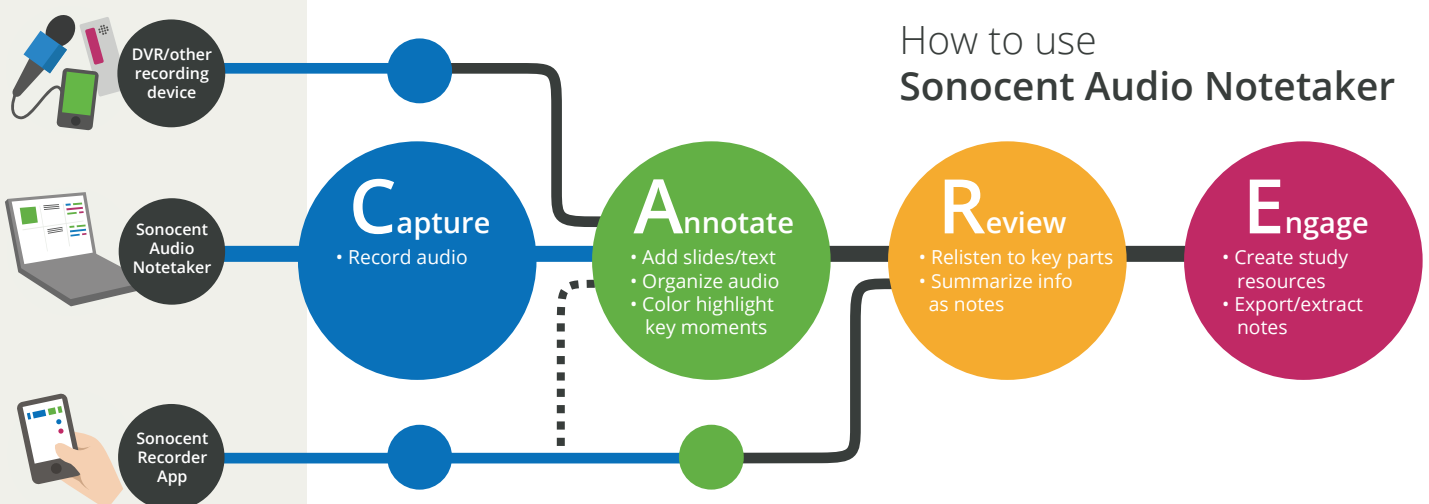
Eric Rosenstock, Law Student

3 *Is it simple to use?*

One of the great things about Audio Notetaker is that almost all students can use it to create brilliant notes.

At the most fundamental level, they can record the class they are attending and do nothing else. Then they can use the software's innovative visual-audio display to easily navigate through the recording, color highlighting the parts that they want to remember.

Even this simple task is far more efficient and conducive to learning than having someone take notes for them. Moreover, they are actively engaging with the content, which has been shown to embed information in the long-term memory.

How to use
Sonocent Audio Notetaker

DVR/other recording device

Sonocent Audio Notetaker

Sonocent Recorder App

Capture
• Record audio

Annotate
• Add slides/text
• Organize audio
• Color highlight key moments

Review
• Relisten to key parts
• Summarize info as notes

Engage
• Create study resources
• Export/extract notes

"The product is clean, easy to use and, for those like me who are not particularly computer literate, it's very easy to navigate and get used to."

Student feedback

4 How much training do students need to use the software?

Familiarizing students with the key features of Audio Notetaker should take no more than 30-minutes. But we recommend that your team spend some extra time showing students the most effective way of using the software for a range of study strategies, including essay composition, revision, presentation practice, and taking Cornell notes. We demonstrate these in our regular training webinars.

When you adopt Audio Notetaker, you will also receive a guide to the software which you can email to your students. This includes simple step-by-step instructions for creating brilliant notes from lecture recordings. Plus we will provide you with additional resources, developed in partnership with support staff at major colleges, which your staff can use when providing training to students.

Your students can also a pool of resources from the Audio Notetaker Home Tab. These include a tutorial file which will introduce your students to the key features of the software, plus four 'getting started' videos, which outline each stage of using Audio Notetaker right through from recording and annotating to utilizing their projects for revision and essay composition.

Around 30 minutes of training or less will be sufficient for most students...

5 Is it simple for colleges to administer & manage licenses?

We have gone to great lengths to ensure that administering and managing your Audio Notetaker license is as hassle-free as possible. And the feedback we have received from institutions such as UC Davis, UC Berkeley, and the University of Central Florida is that it compares well to other educational technology from the perspective of administration.

Most institutions choose to manage their Audio Notetaker licenses with our online Loan License Manager. This way you can lend the software to your students for defined periods of time, and then allocate it to other students -- all from your computer. So there's no need to chase up the software from individual students, which is a big time-saver.

When you adopt Audio Notetaker, in addition to a guide to the software for your students, you will receive a comprehensive welcome pack which includes all the information you will need to manage your license and set the software up on your students' computers. The pack also includes resources that you can send to staff who will be training students, while we run regular free webinars that they can attend if they require further instruction.

Our online Knowledge Base features dozens of useful articles about everything from managing your license to making the most of the features of the software. You can check it out here: www.sonocent.com/support. Plus you can access tips and support on social media, through the Audio Notetaker YouTube channel, Facebook page, and Twitter account.

"We install other software products for student use as accommodations, and Audio Notetaker is probably the most trouble-free in terms of installation and license-management."

**Dave Medearis, Senior Disability Resource Liaison,
Madison Area Technical College**

6 Are you a member of any industry bodies?

Our team regularly give talks at some of the world's leading education conferences on the improvements technology can make to learning outcomes. We have strong working relationships with the following bodies, among others:

...we put our software through three stages of rigorous testing before making any releases...

7 Is the software secure and reliable?

Absolutely.

When developing our software, we use system architecture that meets the standards applied in the development of large-scale high-reliability products. These are the same architectural methods that Microsoft and Apple recommend and use when developing their products.

Moreover, to ensure that no stone is left unturned, we put our software through three stages of rigorous testing before making any releases: programmers unit test, system/build tests, and independent user tests.

8 What about data privacy?

We would normally expect users with very sensitive files to protect their system at the file, disk, or system level with encryption, using 3rd-party products designed for that purpose.

We do not offer any direct recording of encrypted files within the software itself. This is a very complex area, but we expect to tackle it at some stage in the future, by recording directly into encrypted files, regardless of whether disk encryption is in use.

9 Has the software received any industry recognition?

Sonocent has received several awards including an Education Resources Awards in the ICT category in 2014, and a prestigious Bett Award for 'ICT Company of the Year' in 2015.

bett AWARDS 2015 WINNER

era 2014 WINNER

"Audio Notetaker from Sonocent is widening its appeal with every update. Plenty of potential users are likely to find annotating and visually organising audio a boost to productivity."

-PC Advisor magazine

10 How many people have used the software?

Since the launch of Audio Notetaker, nearly 100,000 students have used the software to take better notes. The number continues to grow as word spreads about how Sonocent can improve learning outcomes for all students.

100,001 users and counting...

11 What other institutions have you worked with?

Some of the most-respected universities in North America have implemented our software as a note-taking provision. They include:

Berkeley
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

UCDAVIS
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

University of
Central Florida

12 What is your team's background?

...we're geared to provide our clients with the support they we're geared to provide our clients with the support they need...

As a company, Sonocent is structured to explore how technology can make spoken information accessible to all. At the same time, we're geared to provide our clients with the support they need at each stage of software implementation.

Our team includes specialists in audio engineering, software development, study skills, and accessibility.

Sonocent was founded by Roger Tucker.

After obtaining a PhD in Voice over Packet Switched Networks in 1984, Roger lectured at Aston University, was a Technology Consultant with Ensigma (now part of Imagination Technologies), and then a Technical Lead with Hewlett-Packard Research Labs at Bristol UK. He has publications and patents on a wide range of speech technology topics, and was Director of the Local Language Speech Technology Initiative, before founding Sonocent in 2007.

13 What do your existing users think about the software?

94% of users said that they would recommend Audio Notetaker to a friend or colleague.

For the full picture, download our white paper analyzing the results of the 2015 Sonocent User Survey at **www.sonocent.com/usersurvey2015**.

"I can't see anyone that wouldn't benefit from it. It should be available for all students."

Akhil Shah, college student

14 *What accessibility features does it include?*

Our software can support students who have the following disabilities with note taking:

- *Dyslexia*
- *ADD*
- *ADHD*
- *PTSD*
- *Autism*
- *Dyspraxia*
- *Irlen Syndrome*
- *Certain physical impairments*

Audio Notetaker also includes a number of accessibility features, including customizable background colors, text-to-speech, integration with Dragon Naturally Speaking*, and tools for slowing the speed of audio on playback.

"Students with ADD, ADHD, learning disabilities, processing disorders, and students with physical disabilities benefit from the software, and show it to their friends who see the benefits as well."

Rachel Kruzel, Accommodations Specialist, Augsburg College, Minneapolis, Minnesota

*Audio Notetaker for Windows features integration with Dragon NaturallySpeaking 11 and above, Premium and Professional

15 *Is the recording quality going to be good enough?*

We are experts in audio processing, and there is a lot of technology under the hood to ensure students' recordings are as intelligible as possible.

First, we boost the volume of any recording so that the speech is audible. This one feature will make the biggest difference to the intelligibility of a recording. We have also included various audio clean-up tools within the software that can be used to remove many of the background noises common in lecture theatres.

For a guide to the recording quality obtainable with different devices in lectures, and tips on how to combat the issues that can affect lecture recordings, view our Sonocent Guide to Recording Devices:

www.sonocent.com/en/resources/the-sonocent-guide-to-recording-devices

16   *We already record our lectures, so why do we need Sonocent?*

Research shows that capturing information is only one aspect of effective note taking. Truly effective learning is active learning*, and this applies to note taking as much as to any other study strategy.

Synthesizing lecture material is the beneficial aspect of note taking. Engaging with the lecture content and summarizing it in note form creates connections in the brain, which aids with understanding and recall.

For this reason, having access to lecture capture videos does not alone facilitate any type of meaningful study strategy. It's how students work with those videos as part of a comprehensive study process which is the key.

*Department of Chemical Engineering Bucknell University White Paper, Does Active Learning Work? A Review of the Research, 2004

> **"***I was really worried about failing one class. But I ended up getting 96%, and I think a huge part of that was down to the software***"**
>
> **Leah Nelson, a Music major with ADD at Augsburg College, Minneapolis, Minnesota**

17   *Is it legal for students to record their lectures?*

People often confuse an institution's policy on recording with the legality of the practice. Your institution may have a written policy regarding recording, either prohibiting it or allowing it with certain conditions. Disregarding this policy is likely to have consequences, even if recording itself isn't actually illegal.

These are the facts on the legal issue:

- *Copyright law protects things that are fixed in a tangible medium, such as the presenter writing something down or giving you a video of themselves. A speech delivered off the top of someone's head, such as a lecture, wouldn't be covered by copyright law because it's not fixed in a tangible medium.*

- *Presentation slides are protected by copyright law, but their distribution is covered by 'Fair Use'.*

- *Capturing audio or images for the purpose of better note taking would probably fall under Fair Use.*

- *If you are recording a private conversation then you should get consent, but classes and lectures are not considered private.*

- *However, if anyone in the class reveals personal information, then there is a Data Protection issue and you should get consent from the speaker.*

The above only applies where a student only uses the recording for their own purposes, and not where they distribute it for any reason

IMPORTANT: This is just a guide. It is not legal advice and is provided as general guidance only. The information covered is relevant for those living in the U.S. and EU only, as copyright laws will vary from country to country. This guide pertains ONLY to personal note taking and is not intended to cover questions concerning broader non-commercial or commercial distribution.

18   *Is it worth it?*

If you are considering implementing our software as a note-taking provision, you can be confident that it will cost significantly less than using paid peer note-takers for the task (not to mention the savings in man hours for your team). As we have mentioned, students can take notes completely independently with the software, so it's an all-encompassing note-taking solution.

Most importantly, Sonocent software could make the difference between students who struggle with note taking achieving the results they need to progress from one year to the next. It goes without saying that this has major financial implications for all colleges and universities.

To discuss the range of pricing options and licenses that we have available, please email our sales team at **sales@sonocent.com**, or speak to your local reseller.

"When I produced my annual report on note-taking spending, my boss thought that I had missed a zero from the end! There was a drop of 50% and a big part of that was due to students using Sonocent Audio Notetaker in class rather than paid peer note-takers."

Dave Medearis, Senior Disability Resource Liaison, Madison Area Technical College

Have another question?

Send us an email on **hello@sonocent.com** or call **+1.202.657.4332** and we will do our best to help.