

All in all, I use MindManager on virtually every project now.

MindManager's one big downside is its price: US\$349. You can try it free for three weeks to see if it is for you. Download the trial version from <http://www.MindJet.com>.

Franklin Covey PlanPlus/GoBinder

Franklin Covey PlanPlus and GoBinder are virtually identical programs that are, at one level, personal information managers. As such, they are fine. It's nice that you can handwrite your entries. It's nice that you can sync them with MS Outlook and with your Pocket PC. But if that were all they offered, I'd have to say *so what?*

But there are several features that set PlanPlus and GoBinder apart. I use PlanPlus, so I'll talk about that one primarily. Other than the Franklin Covey features, which I'll get to in a minute, the two programs are identical and their data files are completely interchangeable. The Covey version costs a bit more, so unless you are an *aficionado* of Covey's *Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*, save some cash and get GoBinder.

Common to both is a powerful eBinder system that keeps related material—notes, documents, material you find on the Web—together in one place.

The note-taking facility is similar to Microsoft's One Note. You can handwrite or type notes and you can cut-and-paste material into a page.



But my favourite method of saving material is to “print” it into PlanPlus using a special print driver the program installs on your system. You simply choose “PlanPlus” as your printer and the contents of the file you have loaded—a word processing file, a Web page, a spreadsheet, whatever—is printed into the currently open section of PlanPlus. Once there, you can mark it up, highlight it, add your own comments, etc. I'm currently researching a book on Hannibal. I found Livy's *History of Rome* on the Web so I “printed” it into my notes area on Hannibal.



I have found the eBinder invaluable in doing research on various film and book projects I have underway.

Try this software even if you don't use a tablet PC. You'll find it invaluable on a desktop or laptop.

Finally, the Franklin Covey version of the software has tools to help you set a mission for yourself and define your values, to set short- and long-term goals, and to plan your week to make better use of your time. The Covey system is a proven time-management system and you don't have to have read his books to use

it effectively. The software will walk you through it step-by-step.

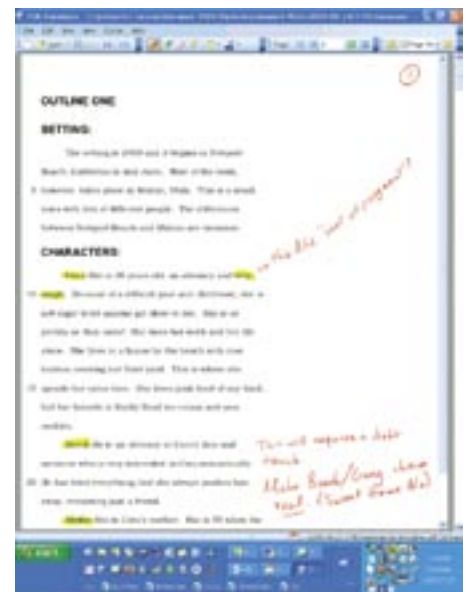
Try this software even if you don't use a tablet PC. You'll find it invaluable on a desktop or laptop.

GoBinder costs US\$79.95—US\$49.95 for students and educators, their primary target market. The free trial version is good for 30 days but, trust me, you'll be hooked. <http://www.GoBinder.com>

Franklin Covey PlanPlus is US\$99.95 with a 30-day free trial available. Go to <http://www.FranklinCovey.com/planplus/xp>.

PDF Annotator

PDF Annotator, from German programmer Oliver Grahl, is a brilliant little piece of work that does just what its title says: it allows you to mark up Adobe Acrobat PDF files. You can't edit them—just mark them up with highlights and arrows and the like. It's like you had a paper copy of something in front of you and you were armed with your trusty red pencil and some highlighters.



I often use it to comment on work done by my creative writing students. In some ways, it is like marking up documents in the PlanPlus eBinder, but here you are working with free-standing PDF files you can send along to anyone you want.

Grahl Software is still a one-man shop and Oliver Grahl answers all technical support requests himself. He's a hands-on

developer. He is responsive and helpful and answered my questions within 24 hours.

The price is US\$49.95. Again, you can get a 30-day trial version. Download the trial from <http://www.ograhl.com/en/pdfannotator/>.

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Other Programs

Here are a few other simple programs I like because they take advantage of the tablet's pen interface.

- A write-on-me calculator that I often use instead of one where I have to hit the keys
- An electronic crossword program that downloads the *New York Times* crossword every day
- A fun program that allows me to literally write music on a tablet PC. I write the notes and the computer plays them for me so I can immediately hear how bad it sounds. It's indispensable for discouraging the untalented (like me) and encouraging all budding Beethovens.

All three of these—and many more—are available from <http://www.Microsoft.com/Canada/windowsxp/tabletpc/>. Click on the link for Power Toys for Tablet PC.

There are dozens more. Websites like TabletPCBuzz.com and TabletPCPost.com can help keep you up to date. ▲

Editor's note: Tim and Terre Perrin are driving the coastlines of Europe. To tune in to their adventures, visit <http://thecoastroad.blogspot.com>.

Timothy Perrin, a former lawyer, writes about technology and other topics. He is currently in Europe researching books on Hannibal and 21st century technology.

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