

Kiet's Binder Note Taking Strategy

Background

Every school year I try to improve my note taking strategy to find the most efficient and space saving way to take notes. After a decade of schooling I think I've finally found the best solution for me, and in this document I will share my findings to you.

The old way

Previously what I would do was have a composition book for each class, and this was the way I did things till the end of high school, but there were several problems with this:

- The more composition notebooks I carried, the heavier the burden when walking between classes
- Composition notebooks take up too much space in my backpack
- After finishing a quarter I would still have over half of my pages left (wasteful)
- Or, during the same quarter I found I ran out of pages in my composition book. So I would need to get another composition book
- The middle gap of the composition notebook made it difficult to take notes, especially when taking notes on the left page

I had always wondered if there was a better way to take notes so that I wouldn't have any of the above problems. The ones most crucial to me was the fact that the composition notebooks was a hefty burden to carry around campus and that I was wasting too much paper as most of the composition notebooks I used would be mostly empty by the end of the quarter.

Goals

So the goals are clear:

- Reduce the amount I have to carry for each class
- Reduce the amount of paper waste per quarter
- Make note taking better (don't have to deal with the middle gap on composition notebooks)

The new way

I had always thought about taking notes using a binder, but I couldn't figure out the best way to do it until college. My biggest gripe was always the fact that I had to deal with the rings when taking notes on the left page, but I realized one day that I could just take out the paper (lol).

So here's how my binder is set up.

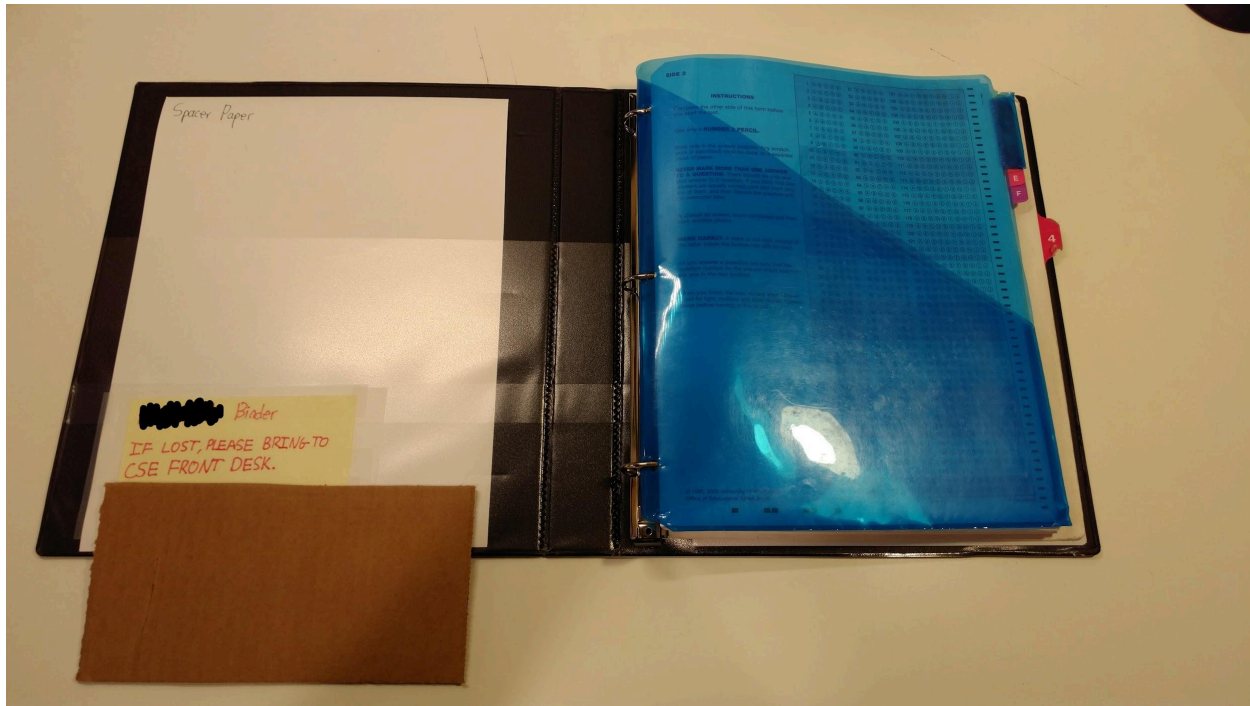


Figure 1 - The binder has 2 pockets per side. You can see in one pocket there is a **spacer paper**, on the right is a plastic add on to hold more miscellaneous stuff.

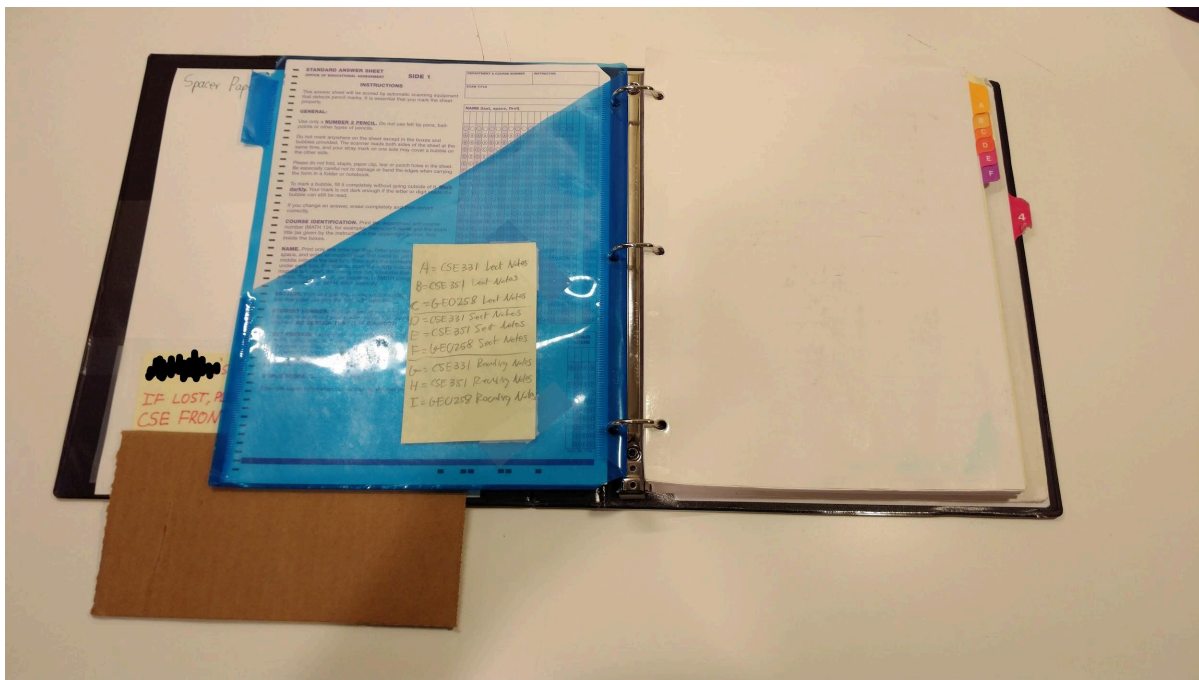


Figure 2

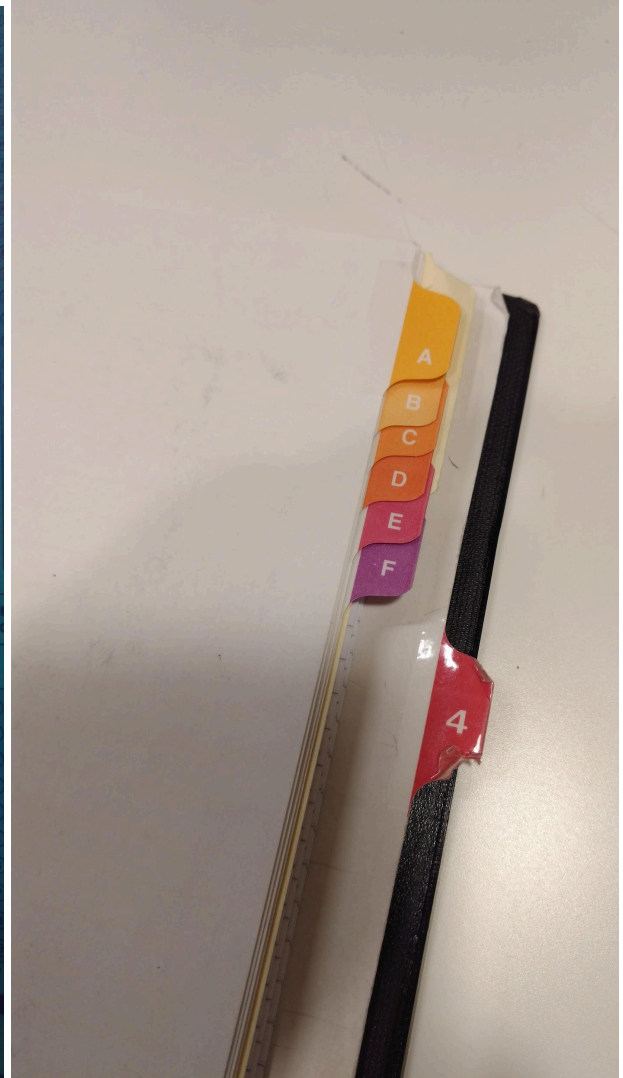
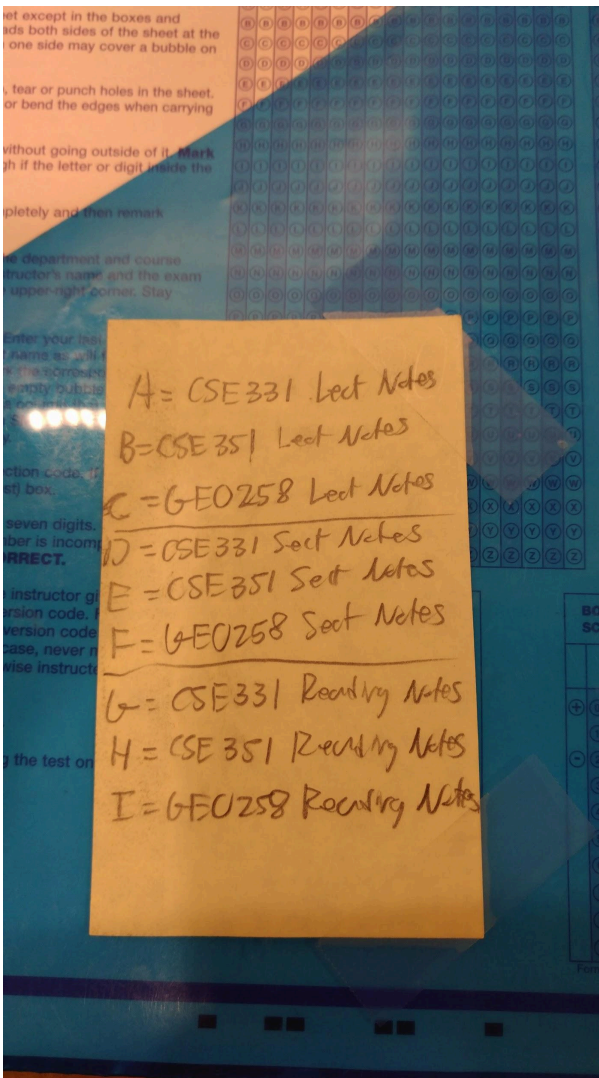


Figure 3 (left) - This is an index telling you how the binder is segmented. This index was the 2017 spring quarter.

Figure 4 (right) - Labeled tabs for separating categories.

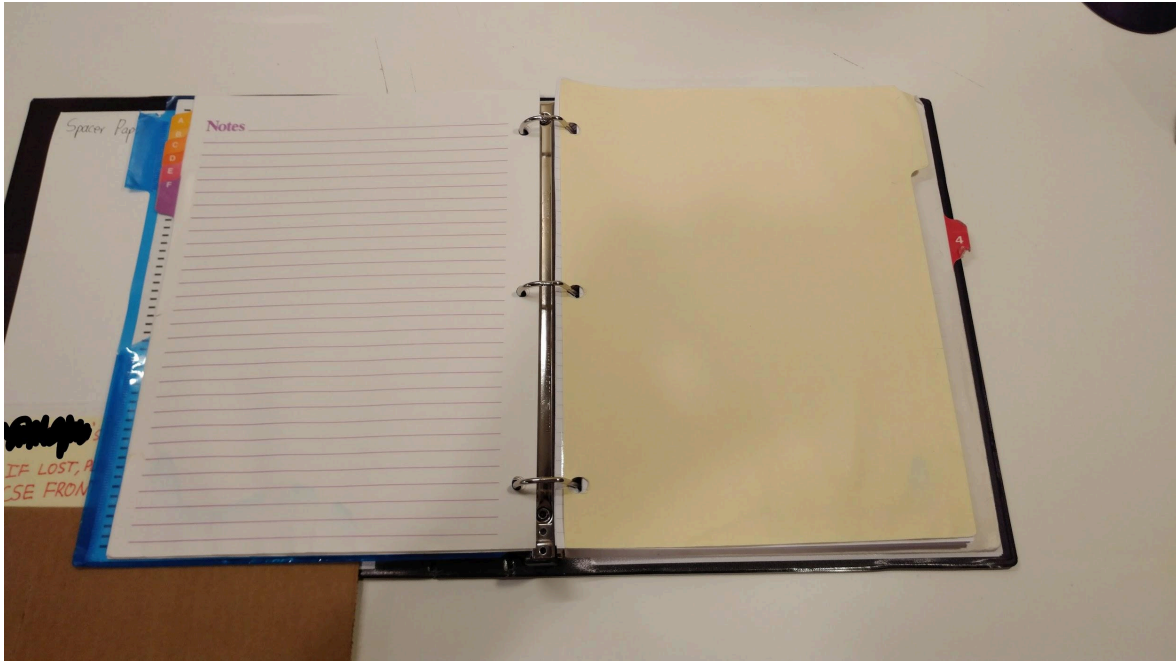


Figure 5 - Note that for the last section, there is a yellow separator after separation F

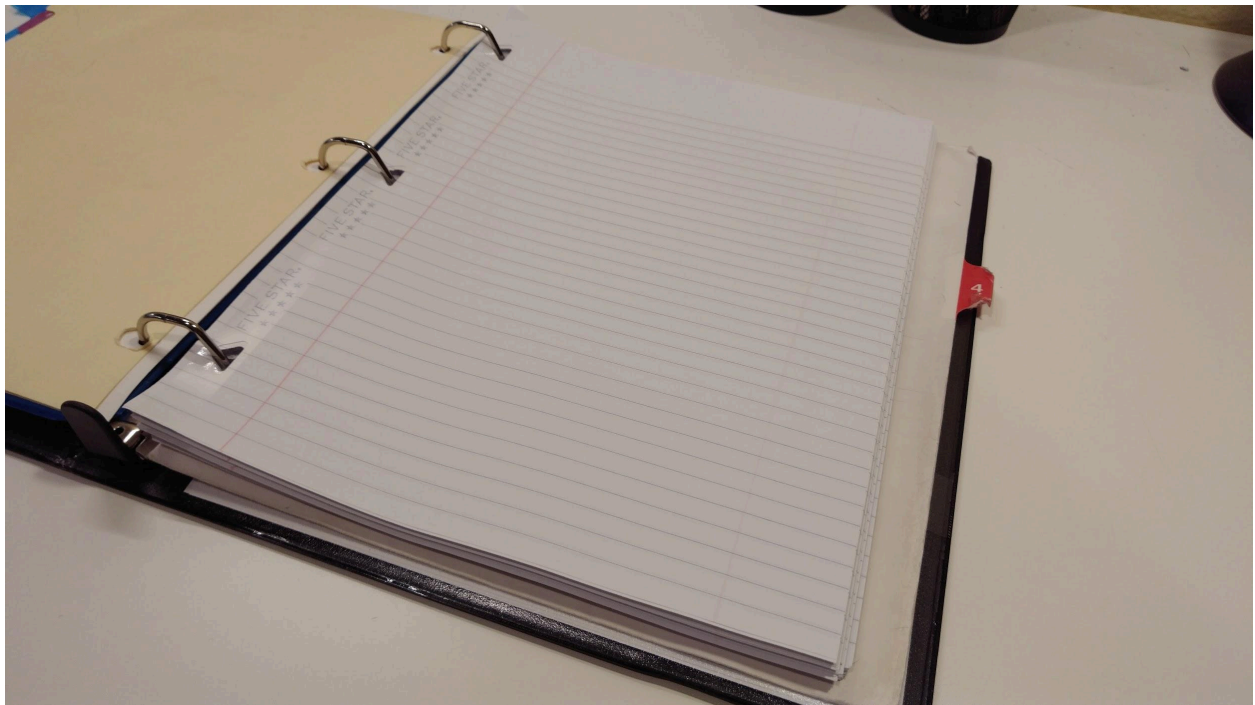


Figure 6 - A pool of reinforcement paper



Figure 6 - Left is a paper pocket for storing stuff. The right pocket holds printer paper for scratch paper.

Explanation

So as you can see from the way the binder is setup, this is way more space efficient than just using composition notebooks for each class. Instead, we separate out the classes via the various separators. Recall that you can see the index of how classes are separated in **Figure 3**.

The pool of reinforcement paper in **Figure 6** is the **maximum** amount of paper to be used and distributed across the various categories that you've made. The advantage of this, is that **your entire notebook is already technically filled**, you just have to **distribute the paper however you want as you take notes**. This also means that this is pretty much the only thing you have to carry for all your classes, and the weight will be constant throughout the quarter as you take notes (unless you have handouts and stuff, which could just be put into the various pockets or another folder).

The disadvantage of this comes when you've used up all your pool of paper, but this could be circumvented by taking out some of your old notes when you get to that point and filing them away via [file folders](#), afterwards, you can just refill some of your pool of paper.

This is great because this means by the end of the quarter, you're never left with half empty notebooks or unused paper, and the paper you have leftover, can be used for the next quarter!

Taking Notes

Here's how my process for taking notes.

1. I get to my class, sit down, pull out my binder and take out 3 pages of paper from my pool of paper

2. I take out the **spacer paper** (found in **Figure 1**) and use it as a spacer between the first page of paper and the other two pieces of paper.
3. I close my binder and take notes on the cover of the binder if my desk space is too small, otherwise I just take notes on the paper on top of the spacer paper without any other paper underneath the spacer paper.

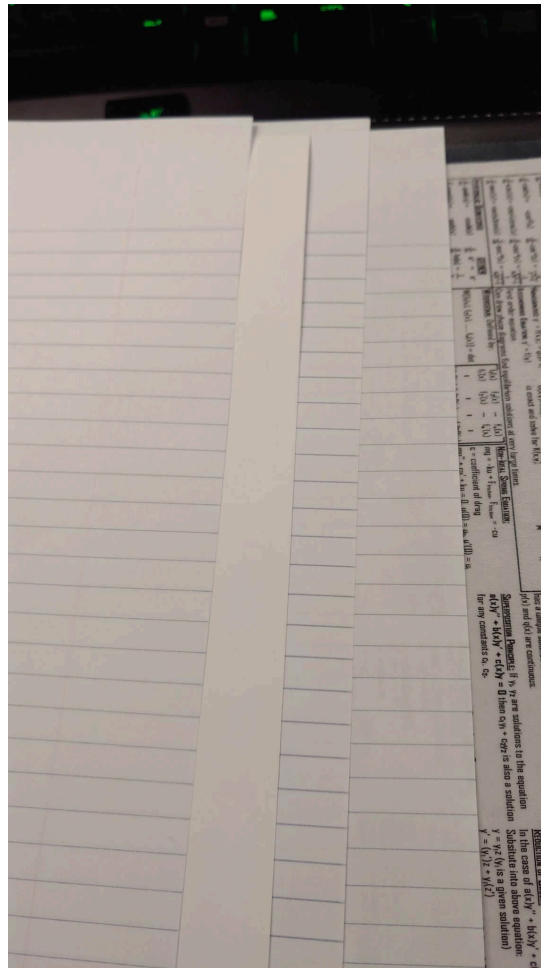


Figure 7 - How I layer the spacer paper and the note taking papers.

The benefits of taking notes this way is that I don't have to deal with any stupid middle gaps like I do when taking notes in a composition notebook. The reason I why I have a **spacer page** is so that pencil marks don't bleed onto the next page. It also provides a good cushion for when I actually do take notes. After I'm done taking notes I just put the pages into their respective categories, but if I'm in a rush I would just put the papers into the pockets of the binder and organize them later.

So yeah, this is pretty much how I take notes in college. This might or might not fit you, but this works for me and it solves many of the problems I outlined in the beginning. I hope this helps, or not, whatever.

Suggested Buying Guide

- [Binder](#) - Hands down the best binder I've ever used. [Video](#)
- [Binder Separators](#) - Doesn't really matter which ones you buy as long as it's enough for you.
- [Reinforced College Ruled Paper](#) - These are top-tier, if it's too expensive then just use regular hole punched paper.
- (Optional) Pocket dividers

Questions?

If you have any questions then comment in this document and I will get to it. You can also ask me on facebook, but only if you know me.

Have you tried taking notes electronically before? How was it?

I took all of my calculus 2 notes on my Surface Pro 2 before it was cool to take notes on a tablet. I also did all of my homework on the tablet as well. It went okay, but by the end I really missed the tactile feel of just writing on normal paper. Haven't gone back to writing on a tablet since.