

The Best Notebooks for Writers: A Practical Guide to Choosing Your Perfect Companion

I have been writing for a living for over thirty years, and in that time I have filled hundreds of notebooks. Some were cheap spiral-bound pads that fell apart before I finished them. Others were beautiful hardcovers that sat on my shelf mostly empty because the paper bled through with my fountain pen. The search for the right notebook is a personal journey, and it matters more than most people think. The physical act of writing by hand changes how you think. It slows you down, forces you to edit in real time, and leaves a trace of your mind at work. That is why the market for notebooks for writers is so crowded with options. Every writer wants something different, and that is exactly as it should be.

Over the years I have tested dozens of brands. I have filled notebooks with morning pages, novel outlines, character sketches, and grocery lists. I have dragged them through airports, coffee shops, and writing retreats. I have learned what holds up and what does not. What follows is not a ranking. It is a set of observations from someone who has made every mistake you can make with paper and ink, and who has finally settled on a few reliable companions.

Paper Quality Is Everything

The first thing I look for in any notebook is the paper. If the paper bleeds, feathers, or ghosts so badly that I cannot use the back of the page, the notebook is useless to me. That is why I have become a devoted fan of Tomoe River paper. It is thin, lightweight, and surprisingly resistant to bleed-through. I have used it in notebooks from Hobonichi Techo and some smaller makers, and it handles fountain pen ink beautifully. The downside is that Tomoe River paper is delicate. It crinkles easily and does not stand up to heavy erasing. But for a writer who uses a fountain pen and values a smooth writing experience, it is hard to beat.

If you prefer a heavier, more tactile paper, look at Clairefontaine or Rhodia. Both use the same smooth, coated paper that makes fountain pens glide without skipping. Rhodia notebooks are especially reliable for everyday writing. I keep a Rhodia No. 13 pad on my desk for drafting letters and notes. The paper is bright white, which some writers find too clinical, but I like the contrast it gives to dark ink.



Leuchtturm1917 is another brand that has earned a loyal following among writers. Their notebooks use a slightly off-white, 80 gsm paper that works well with most pens. I have used a Leuchtturm1917 for several years of journaling, and I appreciate the numbered pages and the table of contents at the front. The paper is not as fountain-pen friendly as Tomoe River or Rhodia, but it is good enough for most ballpoints and gel pens. The Pilot G2, for example, writes smoothly and dries quickly on Leuchtturm1917 paper.

Notebooks for Writers: Size and Portability

Size matters more than you might think. A notebook that fits in your back pocket is perfect for capturing ideas on the go, but it is terrible for extended writing sessions. I have tried Field Notes notebooks for quick notes and lists. They are small, durable, and come in many attractive covers. But the paper is thin, and the grid lines are faint. I use them for grocery lists and phone numbers, not for serious writing. For that, I prefer something larger.

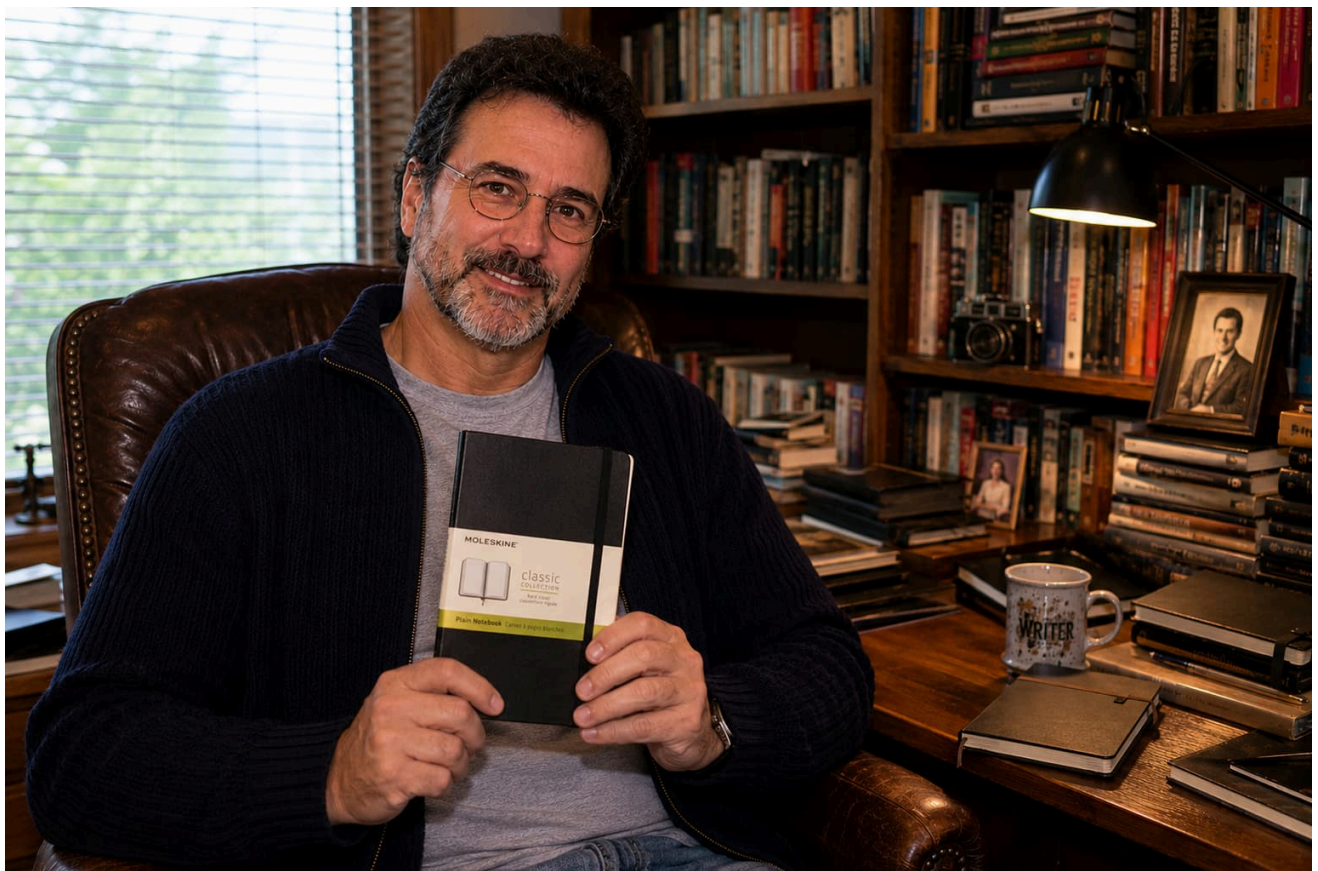
Maruman Mnemosyne notebooks come in a range of sizes, and I have found their B5 size to be ideal for longhand writing. The paper is smooth and white, and the spiral binding lies flat. I have used them for NaNoWriMo planning sessions and for drafting scenes by hand. The only downside is that the cover is thin. If you toss one in a bag without protection, it will get scuffed. But for the price, they are excellent.

Midori MD notebooks are another favorite of mine. They come in simple, minimalist covers that feel like they have been around for decades. The paper is creamy and soft, and it handles fountain pen ink well. I use a Midori MD for my morning pages. It is large enough to let me write freely without feeling cramped, and the paper does not ghost too badly. The binding is thread-stitched, so it opens flat. That is a small thing, but it matters when you are writing on a train or in a crowded cafe.

Special Features for Writers

Some notebooks have features that writers find especially useful. The Baron Fig Confidant, for example, has a lay-flat binding, a ribbon bookmark, and an expandable back pocket. I have used it for project notes and story outlines. The paper is 100 gsm, which is thick enough to handle most pens without bleed-through. The only drawback is the price. It is more expensive than many alternatives, but if you value craftsmanship, it is worth it.

The Rocketbook is a different beast entirely. It uses special paper that can be wiped clean with a damp cloth and reused. I was skeptical at first, but I have found it useful for brainstorming and rough drafting. The pages scan easily with the companion app, so you can save your work digitally before erasing it. It is not a replacement for a permanent notebook, but it is a great tool for writers who go through a lot of paper and want to reduce waste.



Kokuyo and Exacompta both make notebooks that are designed for office use, but they work well for writers too. Kokuyo notebooks have a unique binding that allows them to open flat and stay open. The paper is smooth and fountain-pen friendly. Exacompta notebooks are made from a coated paper that is resistant to bleeding and feathering. I have used both for drafting articles and letters, and they perform well.

Finding Your Own Way

There is no single best notebook for every writer. What works for me might not work for you. That is why I encourage every writer to experiment. Buy one notebook from each of the brands I have mentioned. Fill them with different kinds of writing. See which paper feels best under your hand. See which size fits your routine. The journey of finding the right [notebooks for writers](#) is part of the process itself.

I have gone through phases where I used only Moleskine notebooks. They are stylish, widely available, and come in many sizes. But the paper has become thinner over the years, and I have had too many pens bleed through. I still keep a Moleskine pocket notebook for quick notes, but I no longer use them for serious writing. The same goes for the Lamy Safari fountain pen. It is a reliable pen, but it is not for everyone. Some writers prefer the smooth flow of a Pilot G2 or the crisp lines of a fine-tipped rollerball. The point is to find what works for you and stick with it.

The Role of Habit and Routine

A notebook is only as good as the habit that fills it. I have seen writers buy expensive journals and never write a single page in them. I have seen others fill cheap spiral notebooks with brilliant prose. The notebook is a tool, not a talisman. The magic comes from showing up every day and putting words on paper. That is why I recommend starting with a notebook that is good enough to enjoy using, but not so precious that you are afraid to mess it up.

Doane Paper makes a line of notebooks that strike that balance well. They are simple, affordable, and use a paper that is fountain-pen friendly without being too fancy. I have used them for first drafts and for writing exercises from *The Artists Way*. The paper is off-white and has a slight tooth that gives your pen a bit of resistance. Some writers love that. Others prefer the slick surface of Rhodia. Again, it is personal.

Morning Pages, as described in *The Artists Way*, require three pages of longhand writing every morning. I have done this practice on and off for years, and I have found that the notebook matters. If the paper is too thin, the ink bleeds through and the back of the page is unreadable. If the binding is too stiff, the notebook does not lie flat and your hand cramps. That is why I have settled on a Midori MD for my morning pages. It is not too expensive, the paper is

excellent, and the binding lies flat. It is a small investment in a habit that has paid off in clarity and creativity.



Final Thoughts

The search for the perfect notebook is a personal one. I have tried many, and I keep coming back to a few that work. Leuchtturm1917 for journaling, Rhodia for drafting, Midori MD for morning pages, and Maruman Mnemosyne for brainstorming. I keep a Field Notes in my pocket for random ideas. I use a Hobonichi Techo for daily planning, thanks to its Tomoe River paper. I have a Rocketbook for when I need to experiment without wasting paper. And I always have a Pilot G2 or a Lamy Safari inked and ready.

If you are new to the world of notebooks for writers, start simple. Pick a brand that appeals to you, buy one notebook, and write in it every day for a month. See how it feels. See if the paper holds up. See if the size fits your bag and your desk. If it does not, try another. The process of finding your notebook is itself a writing practice. And that practice, more than any specific brand, is what makes a writer.