

PDF Annotation Applications for iPad

The purpose of this document is to provide a comparison between three PDF annotation tools available on the iPad. The iPad has a large selection of similar apps and those included in this document provide important key features at various price points.

The applications covered in this document are:



GoodReader

<http://itunes.apple.com/au/app/goodreader-for-ipad/id363448914?mt=8>



iAnnotate PDF

<http://itunes.apple.com/au/app/iannotate-pdf/id363998953?mt=8>



Paperport Notes

<http://itunes.apple.com/au/app/paperport-notes/id476134017?mt=8>

Key Features

The key features of each app will assist in determining the most appropriate one to use, depending on the needs and style of the user.

Features	GoodReader	iAnnotate	Paperport Notes
Add Notes	Y	Y	N
Add Text	Y	Y	Y
Annotate Text	Y	Y	N
Audio Annotation	N	Y	Y
Cloud Service Integration	Y	Y	Y
Customisable Toolbars	N	Y	N
Draw Freehand	Y	Y	Y
Merge PDF Files	N	N	Y
In-Built Speech-to-Text	N	N	Y
Zip File Support	Y	N	N

GoodReader Summary

GoodReader's annotation tools feature all the most commonly used tools. When used in combination with the navigation and viewing tools, along with an easy-to-use interface, it forms the basis for a very solid annotation tool.

A key feature is the file management system which includes zip archive functionality. In this way GoodReader can compliment EASTS batch downloads and/or uploads without the need of another device such as a desktop PC.

The downside to this, however, is that GoodReader does not allow you to merge documents, so while you can batch download directly to your iPad from EASTS for Academics, depending on your marking style/requirements you will not be able to add marking sheets/rubrics.

Pros

- Fully featured annotation suite
- Complex file manger
- Zip file support
- Simple interface

Cons

- No document merging

iAnnotate Summary

This application has a vast array of annotation tools which outnumbers most other apps. The user interface (UI) is fully customisable and can be altered and arranged into any number of ways to suit the user's workflow. The default settings offer a sufficient level of functionality for most users, but there is a moderate learning curve to get the most out the UI and each tool, so many of the features may not be immediately accessible to novice users.

The file manager is functional with a visual style layout using thumbnails and icons, but it is light on features and doesn't have a consistent method of accessing each tool. It is ideal for those who like a simple interface and don't need to juggle a large number of files between folders.

Documents cannot be merged with this app, so you will not be able to add marking sheets/rubrics.

iAnnotate is suggested for intermediate or advanced users, or those that have the time to experiment with each tool and the UI structure to develop familiarity.

Pros

- Large array of annotation tools
- Customisable UI

Cons

- Moderate learning curve
- Basic file management

Paperport Notes Summary

This application has very basic functionality in regard to visual annotation of documents with the tools being limited to freehand drawing and text boxes for typing notes. This limited functionality also makes it very simple to use for beginners wanting to experiment with annotation (combined with the fact that this app is currently free on the iTunes store).

This app's strength lies in the functionality it provides that other apps do not. You can merge multiple PDF files into each other, so if you have marking sheets/rubrics you can insert them into the document you are marking.

Speech-to-text is natively supported by the latest iPads, however Paperport Notes has this feature in-built so it can be used on older iPads.

Note that file management is very basic, although some cloud services such as Dropbox are supported.

Pros

- Simple UI
- Merge documents
- In-built speech-to-text

Cons

- Very few features
- Very basic file management

Overall Summary

GoodReader – For users who want a fully featured annotation program with the entire functionality at their fingertips; who wish to use the iPad for the entire batch download/upload process via EASTS; who require fine control over their files.

iAnnotate – For experienced users who want to fully customise the UI to create their own unique workflow; who require a large number or variety of tools.

Paperport Notes – For users who want an entry-level app for ease of use; who have an iPad 1 or 2 and want to eliminate the bulk of the required amount of typing/drawing; who want to include document merging for marking rubrics.