

How often to review your own notes

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1 Question

How often should I review my personal notes?

2 Answer

The simple answer is to do it as often as possible.

The more often you can go through your notes and review them, the more they will be fresh in your mind.

However, as you write more and more notes, it will be difficult to go through them all. At one point you will need to start prioritizing what you want to review and at what frequency. I see writing the same way I see programming: certain parts of the code work well and don't need to be touched for a while, so they are left alone. However, sometimes certain parts have become neglected with time and need to be looked at again.

All my notes on this blog, as well as my private project and personal notes are committed to git automatically every time I switch out of VS Code. This means that I have a very granular history of the last time a file was touched. This allows me to look back at the list of files I have and to find the files that haven't been touched in a while. Sometimes I'll read them again, think about them a bit, then close them if I have nothing to add. Other times I'll write about something that I've learned since then. Doing this feels a lot like improving some part of a codebase after you've learned how a piece of code would be used.

Another way you can schedule reviewing your notes would be with a spaced repetition system like Anki. It wouldn't be too much work to have a system that automatically creates an Anki note/card with a link to the file itself. You would click on the link, which would open the file in your text editor of choice, read the note, change it if needed, then close it. You would then go back to Anki and pick between hard/good/easy to decide when is the next time you would review the note.

I'd suggest dedicating a small amount of your week going through what you wrote and refreshing your memory. It is definitely useful to simply write things to get them out of your mind and to attempt to express your thoughts clearly. It's also useful to review what you thought about because your subconscious might have kept working on those thoughts well after you wrote them down and there might be more to contribute on a topic.