

# Thinking in Lego Bricks - My Method for Building Knowledge in the Age of AI

In a world increasingly shaped by abundant information and generative AI, how we learn, process, and retain knowledge is radically transforming. Traditional systems like the Zettelkasten method have long emphasized the importance of writing in your own words, linking ideas, and distilling thoughts from source material. But today, I find myself rethinking this process — not abandoning its core principles, but evolving them to meet the demands and possibilities of our era.

At the heart of my method is a shift in **how understanding is generated**. I no longer believe that merely putting everything into my own words — without assistance or iteration — is necessarily the most efficient or insightful approach. Instead, I use **AI as a collaborator**, not a crutch.

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## From Highlight to Idea: Co-Creation with AI

The process begins with **highlighting a source note**—a book passage, article segment, or idea from a conversation. This highlight is the *mane*, the raw intellectual material. From there, I engage AI not to summarize it passively, but to **dialogue with it**: I prompt, explore, reframe, and test variations of the idea.

This is not about outsourcing thinking. It's about **using AI as a Socratic partner**—one that challenges, clarifies, and accelerates the process of turning external content into internalized knowledge. The result is a note that resonates with my understanding but often emerges through this interactive exploration.

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## Atomic Notes as Cognitive Lego Bricks

The centerpiece of my system is what I call the **Atomic Note**. Each note is a **standalone, screen-length mini-essay**, written in my own voice. This constraint —

a single screen with no scrolling — is deliberate. It forces clarity, precision, and narrative flow. Each Atomic Note is more than a thought. It is a **complete, self-contained idea**, ready to be reused, referenced, and recombined.

Think of these notes as **Lego bricks for thought**:

- Each has a defined shape (one idea).
- Each is written to be durable and usable on its own.
- Most importantly, **each can snap into the others**.

Through **deliberate linking**, I connect Atomic Notes. A note on “Deliberate Practice” may link to one on “Cognitive Load,” which links again to “Learning in Public.” Over time, this creates a **living network of understanding**, where new insights aren’t just stored — they’re **built upon existing structures**.

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## **Connection is Meaning**

Links are not decorative. They are **semantic bridges** — evidence that one idea led to another. These connections are where **insight compounds**. Instead of folders or hierarchies, I think in **networks**. When I write a new note, I ask:

*What does this connect to? What assumptions is it built on? Where might it lead next?*

This mirrors the way human memory works—through **association, not categorization**.

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## **Writing in My Own Words: A Reclaimed Discipline**

Despite the role of AI in my process, **writing in my own words remains sacred**—but not for tradition’s sake. It’s because *expression is cognition*. **If I cannot articulate the idea in my language, I don’t yet own it**. AI helps me *develop* my ideas, but I **finalize them**. The voice in the Atomic Note is unmistakably mine.

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## Toward a Living System of Thought

In practice, this method feels more like **gardening than archiving**. I plant seeds (highlights), I co-cultivate ideas (with AI), and I harvest essays (Atomic Notes). Each note is trimmed to a precise shape, linked to others, and available for reuse in future thinking, writing, or teaching.

Over time, my collection of notes becomes not a static database but a **thinking environment** — a toolbox of meaning. With enough of these Lego bricks, I can build anything: an argument, a book, a strategy, a course.

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## Final Thought: AI Didn't Replace Me—It Reflects Me

This is not a method of automation. It is a method of **amplification**. I still do the thinking — but I've extended my cognitive boundaries with a conversational tool. The result is a hybrid system:

**Part Zettelkasten. Part digital dialogue. Entirely mine.**