

AI Assisted Research: Google NotebookLM

For this activity I picked Google NotebookLM. It is a bit different from tools like ChatGPT because it does not just answer from general internet knowledge. Instead, you upload your own documents, like PDFs, notes, or web links, and then the AI only answers based on what you gave it. This is called "source grounded", so it will not make up random facts, it just works with your own sources. I also found out that Google recently renamed it to "Gemini Notebook", but most people online still call it NotebookLM.

For availability, it has a free plan and a paid plan. The free plan is already very generous, you can make many notebooks and add up to 50 sources in each one. If you want more limits and extra features, the paid plans start from about £6.99 a month, going up depending on how much extra usage and features you need.

I tested it by uploading a few documents and asking questions like "summarize the main points" and also more specific questions about the sources. It gave clear answers with citations showing which document and even which part the answer came from, so I could check it myself. One feature that really surprised me is called "Audio Overview", it can turn your documents into a talk between two AI voices, like a small podcast, which explains your notes in an easy way. This makes studying feel less boring.

From what I read online, users really like this tool, it has good ratings and many students said it helped them study faster and understand long readings without getting lost. But it also has limits, it cannot search the internet by itself, so if you don't upload good sources, the answers will not be good either. It also cannot write full essays for you, it is more for understanding and organizing information, not for creating content.

Overall, NotebookLM is very useful and easy to use for research and studying, especially because the answers are based only on real documents you choose. But it works best when paired with good quality sources, and it should be used as a study helper, not the only tool for research.