11 Note-Taking Tips For The Digital Classroom

By Katie Lepi on January 13, 2014 [http://www.edudemic.com/digital-classroom-note-taking/]

With less books, paper, and pencils and more laptops, smartphones, and tablets gracing our classrooms these days, it would be logical to say that the nature of note-taking in class has changed, too. Especially with digital tools such as Evernote, writing things down on paper seems less likely to be the #1 way of taking notes.

That said, does taking notes really help? Does the physical act of writing something down help you to remember it? What is the most effective way to take notes? How does all of this play into a more digitally based classroom? The handy infographic below takes a look at these questions and more – keep reading to find out some of the answers!

Note Taking in the Digital Classroom

- Not surprising: humans forget things easily, especially as more time passes
- Most can recall only about 10% of a lecture, but if you take notes, that figure comes closer to about 80%
- Only about 65.5% of students take notes in class
- The Cornell System of note taking provides a format for organizing and synthesizing class notes, and has proven effective for many students
- Other systems of note taking that are widely popular and useful are the outline system and the flow based system
- The most effective system will be different for each student and their learning style
- When you are taking notes during a lecture, this enables your brain to help decipher what is important and what is not – this is much harder for the brain to do when you're just listening
- Writing with a pen and paper helps you to remember more, but typing notes allows you to have a greater quantity of notes
- 38% of people prefer handwritten notes
- 21% prefer typed notes
- 40% prefer a combination of typed and handwritten notes

In the digital classroom then, the primary shift parallels blended learning: a mix of physical and electronic information that serves as a compromise between "old" and "new" learning. Recording pens, tablets, laptops, audio software, and social media make recording, reviewing, sharing, and storing these notes different than it was even 10 years ago.

WRITE IT DOWN

NOTE-TAKING EFFECTIVENESS AND THE DIGITAL CLASSROOM REVOLUTION

From laptops to traditional pencil and paper, there are many ways to take notes. But is one more effective than the other? Is note-taking actually beneficial, and is the increasingly digitized classroom helping students? Read on to find out.

DOES NOTE-TAKING REALLY HELP?

Humans forget things easily, and the more time passes, the more we forget. According to Professor Walter Pauk at Cornell:

After 20 Minutes	After 1 Day	After 2 Days	After 75 Days	After 78 Days
47%	62%	69%	75%	78%

Note-taking combats forgetfulness by providing a reference point for later. Only 10 percent of an audio lecture may be lost to memory, but students who take and review their notes can recall about 80 percent of a lecture.

Despite this benefit, only 66.5 percent of students take notes during class, according to a 2010 Chronicle survey.

65.5%

BEST NOTE-TAKING PRACTICES

There are a number of note-taking styles. Here's the breakdown of the more popular techniques.

The Cornell System
Developed by Professor Pauk, this system helps students condense and organize notes.

A **Cue Column:** This is known as your "recall" column. You write in here only after you have taken notes in class. Write questions to test yourself and become more familiar with the material.

B **Summaries Area:** Here you'll write a brief summary of your notes. Try to use your own words, not just regurgitated facts, to help you describe the info in a way you understand.

C **Note-Taking Area:** Here is where you write in-class notes.

Cornell Guided Notes Recap:
This method requires participation from teachers and students. Teachers prepare outlines with fill-in-the-blank areas for key concepts. Students interactively take notes, so they don't miss important points.

*Research suggests both the Cornell System and Guided Notes help students perform better on exams. A 2008 Wichita State University study found those who used Guided Notes scored 84% on a quiz, while those who used the Cornell System scored 81% on the same quiz. Though the Cornell System group scored lower, they were better able to answer higher level questions than those who used Guided Notes. This suggests that Cornell System Notes are better for synthesizing information and making connections between ideas, while Guided Notes are better for recalling specific facts such as names, places, history and characters.

Additional methods include:

Outline System
This system creates a clean and efficient pattern that's easier to review when studying later. Outline your page in the following way:

Primary Topic
L **Secondary Topic**
  A. Detailed bullet point paragraph notes
  B. Repeat
I **Secondary Topic**
  A. Detailed bullet point paragraph notes
  B. Repeat

Flow-Based System
This system encourages the capturing of main ideas rather than structured paragraphs and sentences. This type of note-taking is believed to be better for in-class learning because you're making connections while you hear them.

One note-taking method isn't definitively better than another. Try them all and stick to whichever works best for the way you learn.

WRITING NOTES: THE BRAIN HAS A SAY
University of Washington research suggests that physically writing activates regions of the brain that involve thinking, language, and working memory. Unlike typing, writing engages your brain during the process of forming and connecting letters.

The brain is broken into cognitive regions that process information. The two most active while taking notes are the occipital and the temporal lobe.

- **Occipital:** Visual perception, spatial recognition, color recognition
- **Temporal:** Auditory perception, memory, speech, emotions, visual perception

If you're not taking notes during a lecture:
The brain transfers auditory information to memory. However, it can't easily decipher between what is important and what isn't.

When you are taking notes during a lecture:
As you write, your brain is filtering and organizing the relevant information you're recording. It is this sorting process that helps us remember the information.

$$E=MC^2$$

However, technology has made it easier to take notes on your computer. Is typing better?

Average Student Writing Speed: .3-.4 words a second	Average Student Typing Speed: 1.5 words a second	Average Professor Words Per Second 2-3 words a second

Trade-off:
Writing notes with a pen and paper helps you remember more, whereas typing gives you a greater quantity of notes.

Try both:
If you feel you need to type notes to capture as much as possible during a lecture, consider writing out the most important points when you get home to ensure you retain the key topics.

DIGITIZATION OF THE CLASSROOM: HOW WILL IT CHANGE HOW WE LEARN?
Classrooms are becoming increasingly "smart," and more and more students are using technology to complement their studies. Is this the beginning of the end for pen and paper?

When it comes to note taking, a Lifehacker poll showed:
- **36%** of people prefer handwritten notes
- **21%** of people prefer typed notes
- **40%** of people prefer a combination
- **3%** other

Teachers and Technology
According to a PBS study:
- **80%+** of teachers use a TV or video to teach a lesson at least once a month.
- **62%** of teachers use digital media twice a week.
- **76%** of teachers are streaming live on the Web.

The Best of Both Worlds:
Technology in the classroom improves active participation and creativity in the classroom.
Taking notes ensures higher information retention rates and higher grades.

Integrating new technology and classic note-taking can lead to better information retention as well as increased classroom creativity, engagement, and participation.

COOL CLASSROOM TECH

Recording Pens: Allow students to engage in the classroom without worrying about writing everything down. This encourages in-class participation while capturing comprehensive notes to review at home.

Laptops: allow students to type notes quickly, which frees time to engage, ask questions and be involved in discussions.

Videos: Some professors allow their lectures to be recorded so students can review the lecture in its entirety on their own time. Processing visual material complements traditional note-taking.

Internet: The Internet allows students to share information and students to share notes via email and other communications platforms, allowing for more collaboration.

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