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# *The Power of Notes Taking in A Classroom: More Than Capturing The Information*

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Taking notes while listening to a lecture or teacher's talk has decreased and is drowning amongst the pile of technological devices. Some students perceive this way of learning as outdated, especially Generation Z and the newly emerging Gen Alpha, where they mostly prefer digital ready-made materials. These generations are too much dependent on using their smartphone to be used for snapping notes presented in the slides. Moreover, they find it much easier to record the lecture to be used later for revision or as a reference for the assignment. As a result of being pampered with technological devices, students tend to rely on these devices and refuse to focus on class. On the same token, the worst-case scenario is when they feel that the lesson is not important as they can follow up later on through reviewing the pictures taken earlier or through the recorded lesson. This scenario has made the students not appreciate lectures, and they will just sit in the class and somehow hope that the class will dismiss early as they no longer appreciate meeting the instructor in the class. Therefore, the instructors must know how to encourage the students to inculcate the habit of taking notes and some more share the benefits with the students.

Notes taking is considered one of the students' engagements in a classroom. Whether the students use the devices such as the iPad, tab and laptops or pen and paper, all require them to use their psychomotor while jotting down the notes. This action also involves cognitive skills as they are thinking while breaking the notes to the similarities and differences. According to Sung (2023), taking notes is supposed to involve higher-order thinking skills through interactive activity such as drawing a mind map or concept map. Based on the experience he shared in his article writing, he stated how his history teacher used the teaching method by asking the students to

write the notes while listening to his teaching. The teacher believed that if a student falls asleep in class, they are not responsive and engaging in learning. He added that the techniques used for taking notes are not as important as the thinking process while writing the information.



Source: <https://tutor2you.com.au/effective-note-taking-tips-before-during-after-class/>

In his article, Sung (2023) added that the instructors should first encourage the students to clarify terminology and some definitions while mapping out the information according to its similarities and differences. The students should be taught to prepare the notes following the non-linear pattern rather than the linear sequence order. This approach is believed to be more effective and train the students not to become human photocopiers where the act is more on copying the whole thing. Moreover, note-taking is remarked as promoting higher order thinking naturally and powerfully while processing the information. This will help them to regard the lesson learned as important and train the brain to think creatively.

On another note, Schmidt (2019) viewed her students' behaviour while teaching them by walking around the class as to ensure that they would stay focused and engaged in learning. This action is also to ensure the students are aware that the instructor is observing them.

Through her many observations in other instructors' classrooms revealed some of the common behaviours among students. She found that while listening to the lecture, students were not paying attention, instead they were scrolling through WhatsApp, Instagram and Twitter. Some were doing assignments for other courses and quite a few were staring into space even though they looked like they stayed focused on slides. She then will give words of encouragement to the students by saying the phrase "be mindful but not having a full mind" and afterwards she asked students to think and write about their understanding of "mindful vs mind full". Another phrase that she used to say was "be present in class physically and mentally" and again she asked the students to describe it based on their understanding until she proceeds with the lesson. Therefore, all these are to ensure that the students have their awareness that learning will not take place if their mind is elsewhere and taking down notes is crucial for the brain to be engaged during the learning process.



Source: <https://www.coolmindshk.com/en/mindful-vs-mind-full/>

In addition, Morehead, Dunlosky, Rawson, Blasiman and Hollis (2019) studied the note-taking habits among 21st-century college students where they found that it gave the implications for student learning, memory and academic achievement. In their study, Morehead et al., (2019) reported that students were being flexible in note-taking such as half of the participants did not prefer to take notes during online lectures and they believe they could view the recorded lecture at some later time. The recorded lecture will be reviewed, and at the same time, they will be taking the notes to ensure better understanding. Almost 92% of students were reported to review the notes and reread them.

They also used flashcards to test themselves on difficult concepts and ensure they are effective. Furthermore, dealing mostly with the newly emerging alpha generation, with electronic note-taking devices have taken the place of traditional pen and paper note taking; these devices are believed able to assist them in taking notes quickly especially when catching up with a fast-talking instructor. The students were fully aware of the importance of note taking regardless of what devices that they used. Additionally, academic achievement improves when the students practice better note-taking habits.

Even though there are multiple learning strategies that students can employ during learning in the classroom, taking notes is still a magical way of training students cognitively which involves thinking, remembering, and reasoning while writing and disseminating the information they refer to the slides. The students on the other hand learn to choose the similarities and differences among the information given and at the same time they can create a mind map or concept map for better understanding. The mind map and concept map would help the students to easily remember particularly when it is nearer to examination. Through this process, it teaches students to stay focused in class and appreciate the learning time. Moreover, students will learn to appreciate the presence of the instructor in class as they are supposed to ask questions and be responsive in learning. Hence, taking notes while listening to lectures should not be regarded as an old-school way of learning technique as it is proven can assist students in thinking, remembering and analysing the information they get in the classroom.

#### Reference

- Adapted from <https://tutor2you.com.au/effective-note-taking-tips-before-during-after-class/>
- Adapted from <https://www.coolmindshk.com/en/mindful-vs-mind-full/>
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