

Taking Notes for Test Success

In this age of cell phone cameras and voice recorders, students may find fewer reasons to write down notes during lessons. But there is one good reason why you should take notes in class and then spend time organizing them: it improves exam scores.

In a recent experiment, groups of students in a class were randomly chosen each week to reorganize their notes as homework. Halfway through the semester, all of the students took an exam. The results of the exam showed that students scored much higher on questions from the week in which they organized their notes.

Taking careful notes is helpful for several reasons. First, it forces you to pay attention to key information and thus avoid distractions. Second, it lets you create a personalized record that you can look at later when you review for your exams. Third, it helps you draw connections between major points in the study material more easily. Lastly, you can share your notes with classmates; comparing notes makes it easy to study together. In these ways, note-taking can effectively improve your learning.

Taking notes may sound simple, but there are many tricks and techniques that you can employ to make your notes more effective. To begin with, don't try to write down every word the teacher says. Otherwise, you'll be so busy writing that you could miss important points in the lesson. For efficient note-taking, listen carefully and think about the ideas the teacher is trying to get across. What are the main topics? What are the important details? Are there any key words? Don't worry about your notes being messy; they need to be useful, not beautiful.

When you write, use your own words. Take what the teacher says and put it in a nutshell. You could write down your notes one point per line or use a diagram. For example, spider diagrams are especially useful for showing how ideas relate to one another. When class is finished, reread what you've written.

The next time you're in class, grab that pen and notebook and get busy. Then spend some time organizing your notes. Note-taking may just be your key to test success.

How to Improve Your Self-Control

Discipline is never easy. You sit down to study but decide to check Facebook first. As you look at Facebook, you start chatting with friends. Soon, an hour has passed, and you haven't even touched your textbook. If you have days like this, don't worry: discipline can be learned.

To improve your self-control, you should ask yourself what your goal is. Make your answer as specific as possible. For example, instead of saying "I want to concentrate better on my studies," you could say "I'm going to study for one hour without checking Facebook." This way, your goal is easier to achieve.

It's also important to stay away from temptations. If you're trying to lose weight, don't leave junk food in your house. If you don't see it, then you'll be less likely to think about it.

Speaking of food, studies show that following a regular diet helps improve discipline. When you're hungry, it's harder for you to focus and to make the right decisions. Therefore, remember to eat healthy meals and snacks each day.

Improving your discipline means turning a new behavior into a habit, and that can feel uncomfortable at first. Our brains will try to resist and do things the old way. However, this bad feeling won't last forever. Just tell yourself to keep at it, and soon your new habit will feel good.

To develop a new good habit, it helps to keep track of your progress. Write down the number of hours you studied, the food you ate, or the exercises you did each day. Review your list often. Seeing your own successes is a great reward, and it helps build confidence.

There are also some ways to make your task easier and more attractive. Clean your desk and maybe put on some nice music before you sit down to study. If you're watching your diet, find some new, healthy dishes that you might like. Soon, discipline becomes fun. Lastly, remember to forgive yourself if you do lose self-control from time to time. Just know that you can increase your discipline, so keep on trying.