

PARENT TEACHING TIPS

... on Your Child and Note-taking

By Bill Welker, EdD

Note-taking is an important study skill that your child should possess, especially for the scholastic academic subject areas. Of course, it is also essential for success in college and technical schools. Unfortunately, many students are not fortunate enough to have received formal instruction in the note-taking study skill.

The remainder of today's column should help you, as parents, to solve this problem for your children. It is divided into two sections: textbook and lecture note-taking. You would be wise to share this with your sons and daughters.

Textbook Notes

Taking notes on materials read for your classes can be helpful as an aid to comprehension and memory (or retention). Well written notes can save you lots of textbook study time. Why, because you need to only review your notes rather than re-read the entire chapter.

To take good notes, you are forced to think about the textbook materials you are readings. Furthermore, just the act of writing down important ideas and details will help fix them in your memory.

The following are guidelines for textbook note-taking that should help you understand and retain what you read:

- 1. Key concepts should be found in your notes followed by important related facts. Likewise, it wouldn't hurt to jot down page numbers for future reference.**

2. Write down enough textbook information so that your notes are still understandable later.
3. Direct quotations should be copied exactly and kept to a minimum. Write quotes for only very important ideas.
4. Make sure you can tell the difference between actual textbook quotations and your own reworded material. Quotation marks should separate exact quotes from your paraphrases.
5. Finally, abbreviations can make note-taking less time consuming. For example, + could be used for therefore; w/ for with; and& for and. I am sure students can come up with an individual system that works best for them.

Most students are not gifted with the ability to retain all the major points and facts they listen to in lectures.

Lecture Notes

Note-taking during classroom lectures is similar than taking notes while reading textbooks. So, you must learn about a note-taking strategy for lectures that I refer to as the general statement and examples approach. It involves the following three formats:

1. The Question-type General Statement

Question-type Example: “What are the causes of the American Civil War?

Well, listen carefully and you will learn about more causes of the ‘War Between the States’ than you ever imagined.”

2. The Concept or Theme General Statement

Concept Example: “Many characteristics are found in ‘civilized’ societies.

Think about the following points.”

Theme Example: “The Five short stories you will read in this unit involve the ‘coming of age’ theme. Now listen as I cite some vivid details about this theme in real-life situations.”

3. The Principle General Statement

Principle Example: “Outer space is a void where no weight, atmosphere or friction exists. Consider these illustrations.”

Outstanding lecturers use the general-statement approach when speaking to their classes. Moreover, they support important points with specific examples. Your job is to write main points and at least two or three supporting details. If you are confronted with a teacher who does not clearly develop general statements with vital details, then ask questions that will lead to better understanding of the materials presented.

Most teachers are obliging and will gladly accommodate your requests. To be honest, by asking such questions, you are not only helping yourself, but also assisting the lecturer to more fully organize lecture notes.

So remember, never be afraid to ask questions if you don’t comprehend the main points of a lecture topic. The only stupid question is the one which was never asked.

Whether it be taking textbook or lecture notes, you may come up with personal strategies that are different from the preceding approaches mentioned. That’s OK. There are many student variations to note-taking. As long as it works for you, that’s all that matters.

Parent Proverb

“If you want truly to understand something, try to change it.”

- Kurt Lewin

Next Month’s Column: “Classroom Listening Skills”

(Editor’s Note: Dr. Bill Welker is a retired reading specialist who was a K-12 classroom teacher for 40 years. He was selected as a “Teacher of the Year” by the Wheeling Area Chamber of Commerce. Dr. Welker is also a nationally recognized authority on amateur wrestling who has written 100s of articles and two best-selling books on the subject. His e-mail is mattalkwv@hotmail.com.)