**Improving Memory with Note Taking Skills**

Wycoff, J. 1987. *Mindmapping:your personal guide to exploring creativity and problem solving.* New York: The Berkely Publishing Group, p. 143-144.

\*Taking notes can improve memory by **six times**. Confucius reportedly said:  *“Short pencil better than long memory.”*

However, the standard way of taking notesusually involves writing down certain phrases or ideas in a more or less verbatim fashion. This is actually more repetition than involvement. We are repeating a written form of what we heard or saw. This form of note taking actually has many **hazards:**

* Although we can **listen at up to 800 words per minute**, the speaker we are listening to can only **speak about 135 words per minute** and we can only **write about 40 words per minute**! Trying to take notes verbatim will cause us to miss much incoming material.
* The process of trying to remember the previous passage and write it down while listening to new material causes **inaccuracies** and actually **interferes with thought processes**.
* One of the **primary purposes of note taking** is to be able to **increase memory**. The bulk of verbatim notes are made up of nonessential words and phrases. This makes the process of review lengthy and usually prohibitive. Standard, verbatim notes give us little opportunity to add our own organization and associations. These notes make few connections with our current stores of information and are, therefore, quickly “lost” or forgotten.

**Mind mapping** is a more efficient form of note taking. This technique of noting allows you to quickly get ideas down in **key word form**, to do **basic organization** of the material as it is given, and gives you a chance to **make connections and associations**. You allow yourself to get involved with the material by **adding your own thoughts, ideas, and feelings** as you go. **Main elements** include:

* **Key Words-** When using mind mapping to learn new material or take notes, it is important to use key words only. Key words are generally concrete nouns or verbs. Studies have shown that the higher the percentage of key words in notes, the higher the recall.

Mind mapping automatically eliminates the bulk of non-key words and allows preliminary organization of the material received. Extracting the key words requires attention and involvement. Attention and involvement with the material increase understanding and memory. The more you are involved with the noting process, the higher your understanding and recall.

* **Printing** the information in the mind map has two benefits: words have a clear visual image and are easily remembered. Using one key word for your idea allows the mind to more easily make other associations. Material which needs to be quoted or remembered verbatim can be written in a column down the side of the paper.
* **Associations-** Adding associations and connections while you are taking notes helps make the material more meaningful and establishes it in your memory.
* **Images-** Adding images and symbols in your notes activates your right brain and increases memory and retention.

**Mind mapping** has been shownto be a successful study tool and children as young as third or fourth grade are using it to improve their learning skills, their writing skills, and their organization skills. It takes a little practice for children to learn to use this strategy.

Complete the sample Mind Map of this information below:

