

# The Benefits of No-Tech Note Taking

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## *The Chronicle of Higher Education:*

The moment of truth for me came in the spring 2013 semester. I looked out at my visual-communication class and saw a group of six students transfixed by the blue glow of a video on one of their computers, and decided I was done allowing laptops in my large lecture class. “Done” might be putting it mildly. Although I am an engaging lecturer, I could not compete with Facebook and YouTube, and I was tired of trying.

The next semester I told students they would have to take notes on paper. Period.

I knew that eliminating laptops in my classroom would reduce distractions. Research has shown that when students use their laptops to “multitask” during class, they don’t retain as much of the lecture. But I also had a theory, based on my college experience from the dark ages—the 70s, aka, before PowerPoint—that students would process lectures more effectively if they took notes on paper. When students took notes on laptops they barely looked up from their computers, so intent were they on transcribing every word I said. Back in my day, if a professor’s lectures were reasonably well organized, I could take notes in outline format. I had to listen for the key points and subpoints.

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It turned out my theory was right and now is supported by research. A study published last year in *Psychological Science* showed that students who write out notes longhand remember conceptual information better than those who take notes on a computer. “Whereas taking more notes can be beneficial,” the article’s abstract reported, “laptop note takers’ tendency to transcribe lectures verbatim rather than processing information and reframing it in their own words is detrimental to learning.”

The researchers, Pam Mueller and Daniel Oppenheimer, wanted to learn if students could recall more factual and conceptual information from notes taken longhand or from those typed on a laptop.

Read the whole story: [The Chronicle of Higher Education](#)