

NOTE TAKING

When asked, memory researchers reported the number one “memory aide” which they themselves use is “write it down.” Teachers should require students to take notes in all mathematics classes. Notebooks keep students engaged in learning, help them complete their daily homework assignments, enhance their study, and act as a foundation from which to prepare for tests. Also, since students are not allowed to keep their textbooks, the student notebook is usually the only mechanism available for review in later years.

Note taking is a process used by students to record important information that they are trying to understand and need to remember. Because of the importance of a student notebook, teachers need to be prescriptive in how notes are taken and accommodating in their instruction. Notes should usually include a title, the date they were taken, objectives, definitions, identifications, pattern or concept development that leads to some conjecture, a formalized rule or algorithm, and an number of example problems used in guided practice. Teachers should also encourage students to write an explanation of what led to the procedure being used to manipulate or solve problems. Explanations are especially important when a problem-solving method might be construed as a “trick” and whose rationale would not be immediately obvious to the student when reviewed at some future date.

Finally, while note taking is a student responsibility, teachers need to hold students accountable for taking notes. This need not be complicated or time consuming, but it must be done frequently and consistently to further encourage students to take notes.