

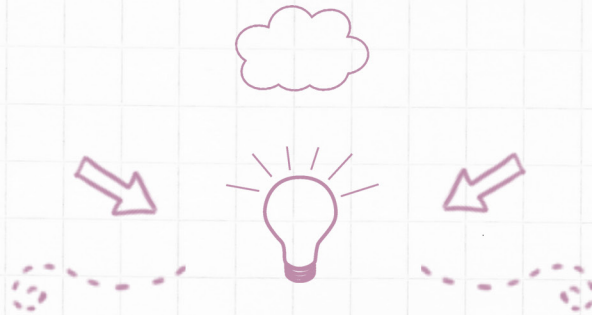
can art help you learn?

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We're all guilty of it — we get bored in class, and we start to doodle. It passes the time and keeps us grounded. Numerous studies have proven that drawing and coloring can relieve stress. However, many people criticize art for being trivial or pointless, and many say careers in art are not worth pursuing. Art and music programs are constantly at risk of being cut, because they are not “essential” to education. But is art really a useless skill? Visual note taking is increasing in popularity, and even if fancy notes aren't your thing, you can still utilize art as a way to learn. This article will cover two things: first, how to begin, and second, how it can help.



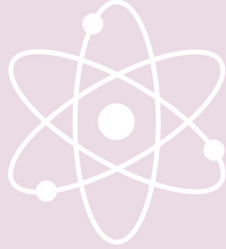
What is Visual Notetaking?

Visual note taking, as described by Scholastic, is a way to synthesize information by using images to convey information simply and effectively. Also called graphic visualization or sketchnoting, the practice consists of drawing banners, letters and objects to allow for information recall. Core77.com goes into detail about how to begin your sketchnoting journey, and how to make the most of it.

The site identifies a few key elements you'll use to begin your notes:

1. Text, of course!
2. Containers — These are things like boxes or clouds that enclose words for emphasis.
3. Connectors — These are the lines and arrows you see in flowcharts.
4. Icons — These are small images that represent concepts and ideas, such as a lightbulb to represent a question or definition. Icons don't have to be perfect or even coherent as long as they make sense to the student creating them.

There are other elements that you can include in your notes such as color or shading, but these are personal preferences! Coloring an outline made by yourself or someone else is also beneficial in its own way.



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How can it help?

Sketchnoting can be used to learn grammar rules, compare topics, expand vocabulary, and take notes (Murray State University, 2013). It doesn't require any artistic skill, it's fast, and it's completely personalized in a way that helps the student. So, why are people so dismissive of this technique?

As someone who prefers outlining their notes, I will admit that I was skeptical of visual notes at first. They didn't always help and I regularly changed or forgot my system. However, while sketchnoting may not be effective for every class, there is no denying that drawing is helpful in certain subjects. Drawing diagrams is especially useful in the three basic sciences: biology, chemistry, and physics.

According to scientist Kim Quillin, using visual models is fundamental to teaching subjects such as biology. The article titled "Drawing-to-Learn" states that drawing is a process integral to the practice of science, used in the generation of hypotheses, design of experiments, and interpretation and communication of data. This is why in physics it helps to visualize a problem before attempting it. For example, I participate in Science Olympiad, and drawing diagrams helps me remember what certain anatomical structures look like. Reproducing a model of an organ is more effective than just examining one.

Coloring is also a pastime that is increasing in popularity. This change is not without reason; apart from reducing stress, color gets our attention — a bright field of flowers would catch our eyes sooner than a plain gray wall. The impact of attention on memory is discussed in a 1974 study by Frank H. Farley and Alfred P. Grant, amongst other studies. Clinical interventions involving color have revealed that color improves memory in Alzheimer's patients and people with learning disabilities (Dzulkifi).

Some illustrators even create coloring books specifically for learning science! A popular example and one of my personal favorites is the Anatomy Coloring Book by Wynn Kapit. Kapit's book in particular has readers color in the name of the structure and the structure itself. This allows for visual association and kinesthetic learning, as promised in the book's summary.

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If you're still not convinced, I have one final argument: it has been proven that **when you are happier, you are more productive**. So, if you love art, why not integrate it into your studies somehow? It doesn't hurt to try new things, and you may just discover a new method that works for you!