



Why taking notes is so important in learning

(excerpt from *Great Lies We Live By*)

by Dr. Stephanie A. Burns

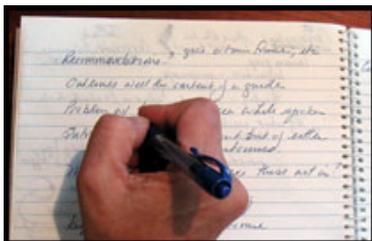
Introduction

There is only one reason for taking notes and if you are not using them for this reason DON'T BOTHER.

There are two types of things that you learn. You learn new skills, meaning things that you DO with your body-actions. You also learn information, data, facts, and ideas - things that you want to KNOW. Notetaking is primarily useful for this second type of learning. Once your nervous system has mastered a skill, it needs physical rehearsal to maintain or improve it. In the same way, new information also needs rehearsal to fix it as a permanent part of your thinking.



When you first learn new information, it sits very precariously in your mind unless it has been given to you in a highly memorable way. You need some means to transfer your new facts and information from short-term memory to long-term memory. This is where notes come into play. **Notes are the means for stimulating or refreshing your memory of information you want to remember.**



The party bore

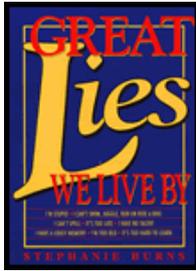
Think for a minute. How many pages of notes have you taken and never looked at again? Most adult students never look at their notes after writing them. So what good are they?

We don't look at our notes for the same reason that most information gets lost when we write it down. It's boring. It's all the same.

When you take notes using a ball-point pen on white paper, writing the same size, the same shape, within the same margins, you are creating some very non-stimulating, non-memorable notes. When you look at your notes and they all look the same, your brain automatically drops out of gear.

If you studied the section "MAKING INFORMATION MEMORABLE", you already know how to do this. Your notes need to be different or unique. What can you do to make notes different? Well, lots of things.

- **Use coloured markers.** Colour is an easy way to make notes look different without really working at it. Also, coloured textas tend to make you write a bit differently - slower and larger. Much better for inspiring short phrases and single words which is for



Great Lies We Live By
is available for purchase on this site.

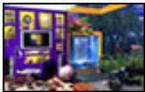


the most part, what you need.

- **Write in different sizes.** When your eye is scanning your notes it will look more like a picture than like words and you are easily attracted to stimulating images.
- **Draw pictures and symbols.** My notes are full of arrows, ticks, dashes, numbers, and drawings. The old saying about a picture being worth a thousand words is somewhat true. If you can capture the data in an image, it'll stick.
- **Experiment with something other than linear writing.** What law says you have to write from the top of the page to the bottom? For one week see what happens when you write from the bottom to the top.

This is one of those skills that has to be experienced in order to be understood. Meaning, it might make some sense as you read this, but it is in the action of it that you will learn. And, of course, you can not judge its value without the experience. For one week in your office, give it a try. Better yet, if you are heading off to a conference try something different. You might just come home with notes that you will review and therefore notes that serve the purpose of supporting you to remember what you have learned.

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