Guided Notes: Increasing Student Engagement During Lecture and Assigned Readings

Study & Organization [1]

Create Guided Notes online using 'Guided Notes Maker' [2]

Description: The student is given a copy of notes summarizing content from a class lecture or assigned reading. Blanks are inserted in the notes where key facts or concepts should appear. As information is covered during lecture or in a reading assignment, the student writes missing content into blanks to complete the guided notes.

Purpose: Guided notes promote active engagement during lecture or independent reading, provide full and accurate notes for use as a study guide, and help students to identify the most important information covered (Heward, 2001).

Materials: Guided notes

Preparation: The instructor identifies the lecture content or assigned reading that will be covered in the guided notes.

Intervention Steps: Guided notes can be prepared and implemented through these steps:

1. A set of notes is prepared that contains the essential information to be covered in the lecture content or assigned reading.
2. The instructor reviews the notes and highlights or underlines the key facts, concepts, or information that the student will be responsible for writing into the final version of the guided notes.
3. Using a word processor, the instructor replaces the segments of notes identified in the previous step with blanks.
4. Prior to handing out copies of the guided notes in class, the instructor ensures that students understand their responsibility to attend to content covered in the lecture or the reading and to fill in each of the blanks in the guided notes with the appropriate concepts, definitions, or other content.
5. During lecture or while reviewing assigned readings in class, the instructor displays the guided notes (via overhead projector, computer projector, or smartboard) and fills in blanks with appropriate facts or concepts as they are presented.

Adjusting/Troubleshooting: Here are recommendations for using guided notes and addressing issues that might arise:

Keep guided note entries brief. Shorter guided note entries promote student understanding of content as well as or better than longer entries (Konrad, Joseph & Eveleigh, 2009). Also, short entries can increase student motivation to write in responses.

Distribute entry items throughout the guided notes. Guided notes help to promote active student engagement during lecture or reading (Heward, 2001). When entry items are distributed evenly throughout the guided notes, they require higher rates of active student responding (Konrad, Joseph & Eveleigh, 2009), which can both promote mastery of content and increase levels of on-task behavior.

Verify student completion of notes. To ensure that students are actively engaged in completing guided notes, the instructor can occasionally collect and review them for accuracy and completeness (on a random and unpredictable schedule).. As an incentive, those students correctly completing their guided notes can be assigned bonus grade points (Konrad, Joseph & Eveleigh, 2009). Or students can periodically pair off and compare their guided note entries for completeness while the instructor circulates through the room conducting spot-checks of individual students' guided notes.

Have students tally notes-review sessions. Guided notes are a powerful tool for reviewing course content. Students can be encouraged to write a checkmark on the cover of a set of completed guided notes each time that they review them (Lazarus, 1996). These tallies assist students to monitor whether they have adequately reviewed those notes in preparation for quizzes and tests.

Fade the use of guided notes. As the class becomes more proficient at note-taking, the instructor can gradually 'fade' the use of guided notes by providing less pre-formatted notes-content and requiring that students write a larger share of the notes on their own (Heward, 1996).

Give students responsibility for creating guided notes. The classroom teacher generally is responsible for preparing guided notes. Instructors of older students, however, may discover that they can hand some responsibility to their students to prepare guided-notes. For example, as a cooperative-learning exercise, a group of students might be assigned a chapter-section from a biology text and asked to compose a set of guided notes based on its content. The teacher can then review and edit the notes as needed.

Attachments

- Guided Notes: Example [3]

Jim's Hints

Accommodating Diverse Learners. Students who have difficulty keeping up with even the modest writing requirements of guided notes may benefit from being assigned a peer helper from the class with whom they can meet at the end of the lecture. The peer helper reviews the student's notes to ensure that each section contains complete and accurate information about the day's lecture content.

As another accommodation for students of diverse abilities, the instructor might prepare several

versions of guided notes. Students who find note-taking most challenging would be given a version of guided-notes that requires relatively little writing, while more skilled note-takers could have a version of notes that call for the student to record and synthesize a greater amount of lecture information.

References

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