

Strategies for Note-taking, Test Preparation and Writing



PARENTING 101: HELP YOUR CHILD MASTER STUDY SKILLS

Laser Notes

Look: Read the title and headings. Look at the key vocabulary words, the pictures, charts, and graphs.

Ask: What do you know about this topic? What do you expect to learn?

Set: Set up your notes by copying the headings and leaving space below each to take notes. You can even rephrase the headings as questions and take notes in the form of answers to the questions; you may have to add new questions as you read.

Read: With your headings and/or questions in mind, read each section. Below each heading or question you set up, write the main ideas of that section and the answers to your questions.

Example:

	Chapter 1: Ecosystems
	Ecosystems: What is an ecosystem? Living + non-living factors in an area = ecosystem Examples: schoolyard, city park, town, pond, forest Hundreds of ecosystems, all with different characteristics
	Living Parts: What are the living parts of an ecosystem? Living, or biotic, parts include producers, consumers, decomposers Producers make their food by photosynthesis, include all plants Consumers must eat to get nutrients, include all animals Decomposers break down dead plants/animals for energy, examples: bacteria, yeast
	Non-living Parts: What are the non-living parts of an ecosystem? Non-living, or abiotic, parts include factors like water, temperature, light, soil type Vary greatly, example: areas of high rainfall are rainforests, of low rainfall are deserts

Take Two: Reviewing Notes

Read your notes and identify key words. Write these in the margin next to their corresponding notes (see example on reverse). Key words could be vocabulary words from the textbook, topics your teacher emphasized as important, or words and ideas you found difficult and need to revisit. Now, you can:

1. Make flashcards for the key words or topics.
2. If you haven't already, rephrase the headings in your notes as questions and practice answering them. Make sure you use the key words and ideas in your answers.

Study Guides

Laser notes and the Take Two process prepare students to create study guides and review material for a test.

Example:

	Chapter 1: Ecosystems
	Ecosystems: What is an ecosystem?
ecosystem	Living + non-living factors in an area = ecosystem Examples: schoolyard, city park, town, pond, forest Hundreds of ecosystems, all with different characteristics
	Living Parts: What are the living parts of an ecosystem?
biotic	Living, or biotic, parts include producers, consumers, decomposers
producer	Producers make their food by photosynthesis, include all plants
consumer	Consumers must eat to get nutrients, include all animals
decomposer	Decomposers break down dead plants/animals for energy, examples: bacteria, yeast
	Non-living Parts: What are the non-living parts of an ecosystem?
abiotic	Non-living, or abiotic, parts include factors like water, temperature, light, soil type Vary greatly, example: areas of high rainfall are rainforests, of low rainfall are deserts

Research & Writing

Gathering	Creating
Research: Of the available topics, what interests you? Will you be able to find information on it?	
	Choose a topic: <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Be sure it is not too narrow or too broad.▪ Be sure resources are available on the topic.▪ If you are unsure, ask your teacher to approve the topic.
Research: What major questions do you need to answer?	
	Outline: An outline is like a roadmap for writing. <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Identify the main ideas in your research results.▪ Main ideas need to be supported with details.▪ Based on the main ideas and details, develop a thesis.
Research: Do your details support your thesis? Do you need more information?	
	Draft: Use outline and research notes to write a draft.
Research: Are main ideas, supporting details complete? Are you missing any information?	
	Edit: If needed, add to draft. Proofread for errors. Review: <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Revisit the prompt; make sure your paper answers it.▪ Cite your sources.▪ Re-read your paper and make final revisions.



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