

# NOTE NINJA

## The Ultimate Guide To Note-Taking Mastery

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A Cassiopian Research Team Production







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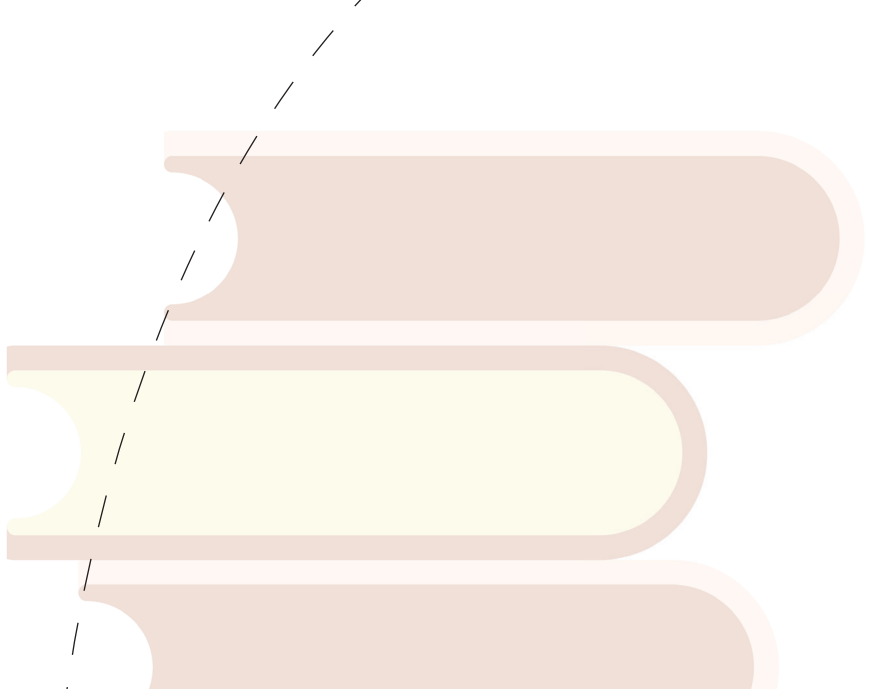
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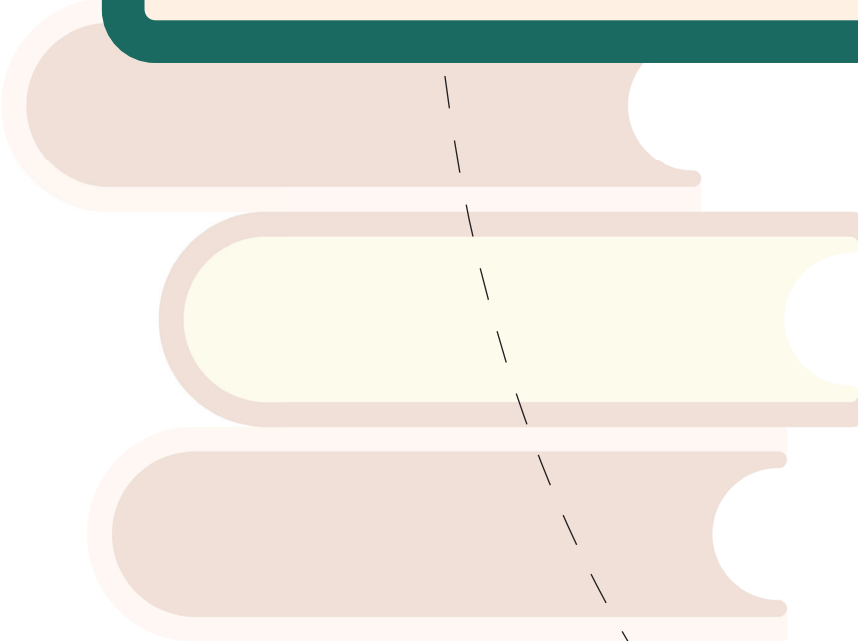
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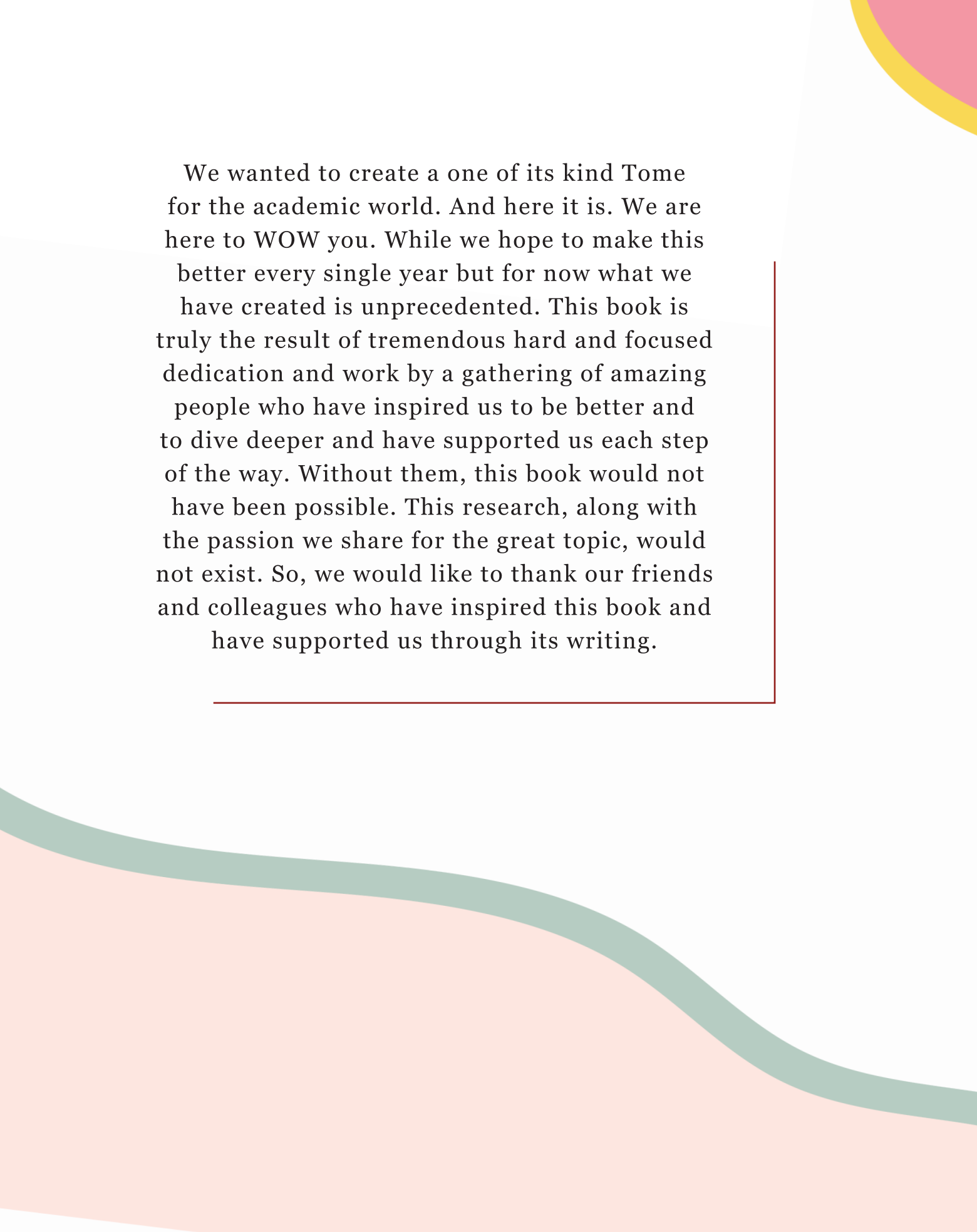
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***Dedicated To:***  
***LIFELONG LEARNERS.***





We wanted to create a one of its kind Tome for the academic world. And here it is. We are here to WOW you. While we hope to make this better every single year but for now what we have created is unprecedented. This book is truly the result of tremendous hard and focused dedication and work by a gathering of amazing people who have inspired us to be better and to dive deeper and have supported us each step of the way. Without them, this book would not have been possible. This research, along with the passion we share for the great topic, would not exist. So, we would like to thank our friends and colleagues who have inspired this book and have supported us through its writing.

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**TEAM CASSIOPIAN**



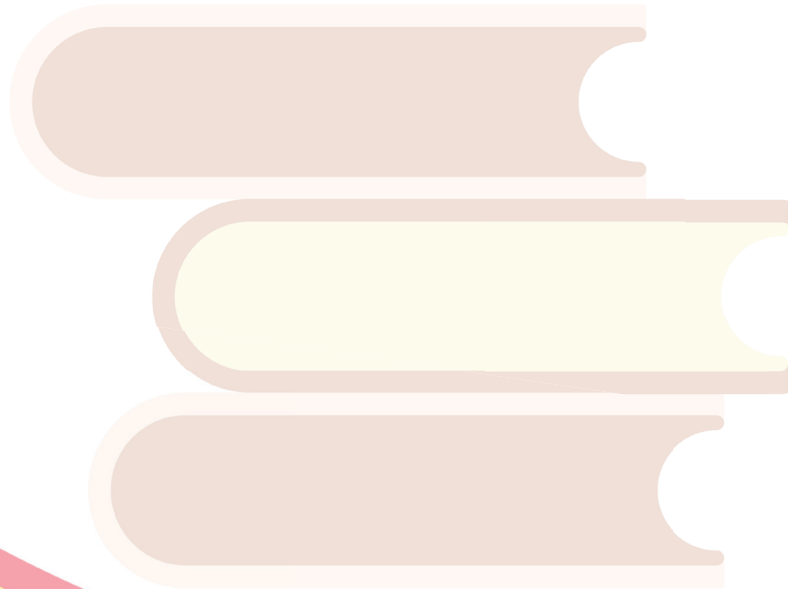
ninja

/ˈnɪndʒə/

- **INFORMAL**

a person who excels in a particular skill or activity.

"the courses vary—you don't have to be a computer ninja to apply"





“I’ve forgotten who it was that said creation is memory. My own experiences and the various things I have read remain in my memory and become the basis upon which I create something new. I couldn’t do it out of nothing. For this reason, since the time I was a young man I have always kept a notebook handy when I read a book. I write my reactions and what particularly moves me. I have stacks and stacks of these college notebooks, and when I go off to write a script, these are what I read. Somewhere they always provide me with a point of breakthrough.

Even for single lines of dialogue I have taken hints from these notebooks. So what I want to say is, don’t read books while lying down in bed.”

**- Akira Kurosawa, *Something Like an Autobiography***

“If you can’t say it clearly, you don’t understand it yourself.”

**- John Searly**

# HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

**“This Book is a tome  
for Note Takers.”**

And since we are anyway and always taking notes one way or the other - physically or mentally—it’s time, we want you to get more done and get more organized.

Before we proceed, we would love to know who you really are. For us to show you the best path, you got to tell us what makes you tick. If you know who you are, that is the first step to guaranteed success. Be it in anything in life, let alone note taking. So quickly complete the Psychometric test we have assigned at the end of the book—in the Appendices section and come back, so that we can proceed.



### **If You are a Research Scholar**

As a scholar if you are someone in a hurry then definitely spend some time on Chapters 3, 4, 6, 8, & 9. Else read the entire book for a better understanding.



### **If You are a Book Lover**

This book will definitely improve how you read and take notes. We suggest you read the entire work or at least check out Chapters 1, 2, 3, 4, & 9 thoroughly.



### **If You are a Nonfiction Author**

For you the entire book is recommended but by no means should you miss reading and re-reading Chapters 3, 8 & 9.



### **If You Are a Content Writer**

Reading the entire book is a must for you. You can't afford to miss the Chapters 3, 4, 6, 8, & 9.



### **If You are a High School Student**

Read the entire book from start to finish—recommended. But if you are constrained by time, then first complete the test given in the Worksheet and then visit Chapters 1, 2, 3, 6 & 7.



### **If You Are a Lawyer**

This would definitely be a fun book to read. Set aside some time every day. If not, then do definitely visit the Chapters 1, 5, 8 & 9.



### **If You Are a College Student**

Read the entire book from start to finish—recommended. But if you are constrained by time, then first complete the test given in the Worksheet and then visit Chapters 1, 3, 4, 6 & 9.



### **If You Are a Corporate Executive**

Go straight to Chapter 1, leap to Chapter 5 and then move to Chapter 8. Come back to read the book in its entirety, when time permits.



### **If You Are a Teacher/ Lecturer**

Please read the book in its entirety. As a Teacher your involvement in this project is our gain. It will help us spread the word and open up new possibilities for your student and their grades. For you especially, we recommend Chapters 3 and 6 as essential reading.

***We'd love to hear from you about the successes you are having in class after using this book.***

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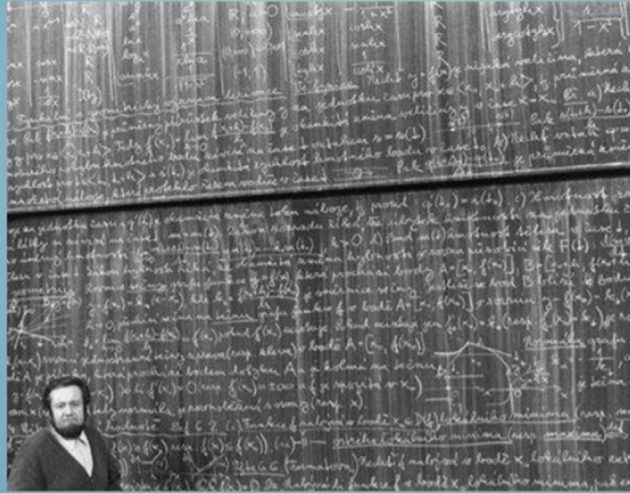


# INTRODUCTION

Whatever your subjects or academic level, this handbook will provide you with the confidence and the means to fulfill your own study potential. It is a 'Goldmine' of Note Taking and other practical techniques that will allow you to not only take fantastic notes but also turn you into a learning enthusiast. And once learning becomes a process, it will be fun you would want to know more.

Note taking is NOT an 'island unto itself'. Taking Notes is in fact a **tertiary** activity. Mastery in taking notes will derive itself from superior **comprehension skill**, which again has a positive co-relation to **concentration skills**. Given this hierarchy of process we would prefer you knowing a little on both. We thus digress a bit from our chief topic (Note Taking) as we dedicate a chapter or two to **Concentration** and **Comprehension**. Do follow them. Our recommendation can radically improve your note taking experience!

# SERIOUS NOTE TAKING



**Professor Lapinski couldn't figure out why so many students dropped his class after just their first homework assignment.**

(Taken from: [www.funnyhub.com](http://www.funnyhub.com))

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## UNDERSTANDING EFFECTIVE (NOT SERIOUS) NOTE TAKING

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Effective note taking is capturing mainly auditory information (though you will discover other mediums), and then reforming it into pieces of shortened text/ images.

Unfortunately, we impart little to no formal education on note-taking at school. Therefore we brought this most fundamental skill for you to master.

Another most important skill is to ‘actively’ listen. For students it could be typically lecture settings. For others this could be anywhere from board rooms to conference settings. This single discipline, along with the note-taking strategies we mention here, will set you apart from your competition. Try to think about lectures before, during and after they occur. Make sure before every lecture you read the preparatory notes and the outline of what’s in store in class. This will lead to better understanding, retention, and recall. Also, as the knowledge of your topic increases, your motivation to study will surge. It requires practice.

Proper note taking is not like copying from the blackboard. When done properly, ideas, theories, processes or important highlights can be connected well with the assigned reading. It will help you get insights into your teacher’s mind and also scope out the key areas in the subject. Without an effective system of note-taking, your knowledge of the topic might be superficial and fragmented.



Your notes are a resource for assignments and exams. Make them easy to work with. Preferably make a fair copy at the end of class every day when you assimilate the information by yourself.

Good note taking will save you tons of time. You will discover a gold mine of ideas and strategies in this book. We promise you that if you follow our instructions and do the practice, your performance will literally transform. You will end up being in that wonderful minority for whom everything is possible (academically).

When you take notes you basically take information you’re exposed to and then record it in a form that makes sense to you. When you do this, you learn more effectively. For example, some keep margins nearby. There you find them drawing those weird “S” things - or elaborately drawn out pieces where required. We will talk much more about these little techniques and strategies as we move along.

“A lot of your questions will be answered in this book. In most cases the urgent queries emerge from the classrooms. Students typically worry, thinking:”



“How will I know what’s important to note? Sometimes everything looks important.”



“How can I listen and take notes at the same time?”


















“How can I keep up when some lecturers talk quickly?”

**Well, you need not worry any more.  
This book will cover almost every  
student’s concerns.**

## Before you even turn a page, ask yourself this:

- Do you fear exams?
- Are you a reluctant learner?
- Are you daunted about the amount of studying you have to do?
- Do you do everything except get down to revising?
- Do you displace time rather than plan it?
- Do you find it hard to keep, remember and recall information?
- Do you feel you have to study a reference cover to cover in order to grasp it?
- Do you work when you're too tired or distracted?
- Do you believe the best way to absorb information is to read a text top to bottom, cover to cover?
- Do you learn by rote without really understanding?
- Do you wonder when exactly you take notes?
- Exactly why do you think you take notes?
- When you take notes from a lecture or from a book do you follow different strategies? Do you apply any technique to make it more effective or fast?
- Are you aware that there are various ways a Note can be formatted?
- How often do you re-write your notes?

-  When you do re-write notes what is your preferred style - copy pasting mostly, rewording them or reformatting the notes?
-  How often do you review your Notes?
-  What is your opinion about 'skimming' a text? Do you know what 'skimming' is? Do you think we mean such a process only for poor readers?
-  Before you go to a class lecture, do you have a simple idea what you want to get out of the lecture beforehand?
-  While in class, do you have a tendency to jot down everything?
-  What is your opinion on student success? Do you think it is only the intelligent students who find success in academics and life?
-  Are you in the habit of 'cramming' before the exams?
-  Do you often forget because whatever you learn you seemed to forget in a short while?
-  Do you find it difficult to concentrate on your subjects?
-  Do you feel you need to really "Love" a topic to excel at it?
-  Do you hate sitting in one place for a long time?
-  What are the different strategies you employ in class to take in different information? What other purposes can you have other than studying for exams?
-  When you start a book, do you know how to most effectively read it in the shortest of time?
-  Do you wonder how to research a Non-Fiction book without having to spend sleepless nights searching Google? Do you need a systematic approach to culling the best information for your Nonfiction work?
-  When you start a new book, do you take some time out to study the table of contents for a few minutes and do the routines the most effective readers secretly do?

Our guess is that you have answered yes to at least one (if not all!) of these questions, making this Note Taking Mastery guide the ideal tool for perfecting your studying techniques. Whatever exam you are studying for in higher education, chances are you are not storing and retrieving information, data, facts and figures and reference as quickly and effectively as you have the potential to do. This may be because of:

**Lack of motivation.**



**Accumulation of bad studying habits.**



**No 'game plan' for revising and note-taking specific essays, exams, projects, subjects or papers.**

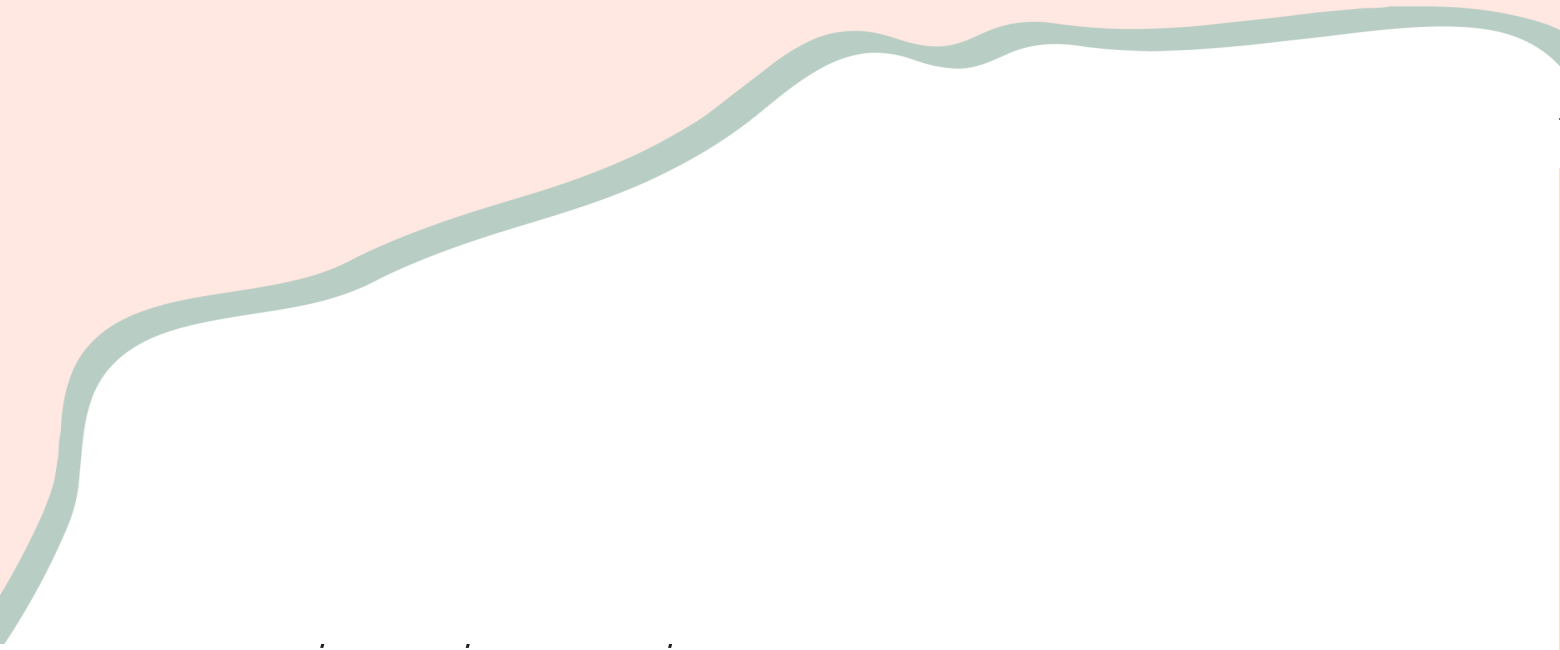


**Apprehension and anxiety about pressures of time and amount of study.**

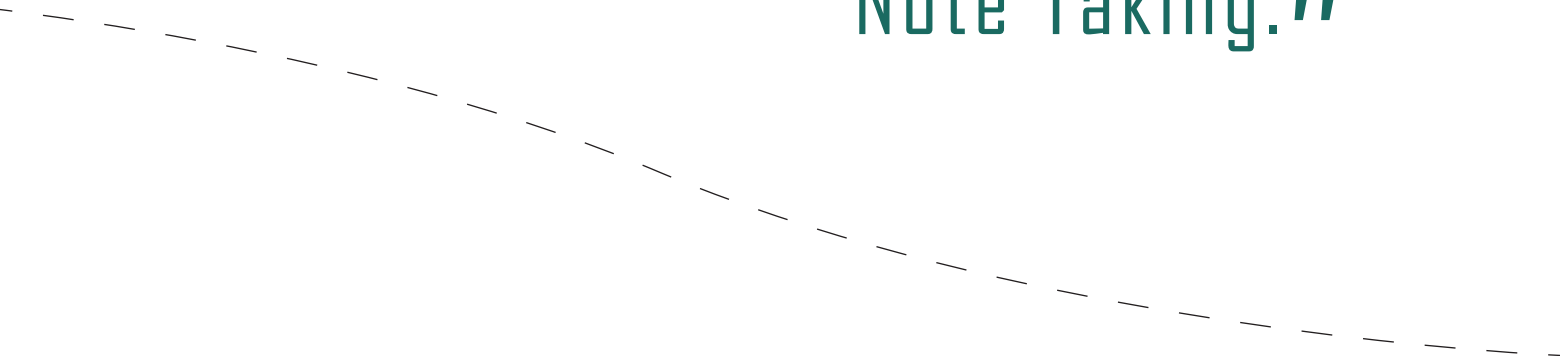


**No 'Operations Manual' for your brain.**





**“ Sit back, read on, work,  
dream, create and soon  
you will gain mastery over  
the Art and Science of  
Note Taking.”**





1

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# FIRST PRINCIPLES

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# FIRST CONTROL THE MIND

## A Wandering Mind Is Your Enemy

Perhaps the biggest barrier to effective note taking is the 'monkey-mind'. Study after study has revealed that note taking gets worse as the lecture progresses. This is because most students - and most of us - find it difficult to concentrate over a long period. You notice that the longer the lecture progresses, your mind will wander more and more.

One study found there were significantly more distractions in the second half of a class (52% to 35%) than in the first. Students who were tested scored better on questions that came from the first half. This can definitely be something educators can learn from and reorganize their lectures to better students' learning experience. However, since organizing a class is not in your control, the only thing which you alternately work on is your Mind.

To become a 'Note Ninja' you have to optimize your lecture session. And you can do this by doing just one thing - controlling your wandering mind. While it is indeed easier said than done, there is a way. And we are going to teach this here. By trying this technique you'll observe over time a remarkable difference in your concentration abilities.

## Is Concentration also Meditation?

No. People often confuse concentration with meditation. This is because most do not realize they are two different mental states of mind.

Concentration involves control, direction, will, decisiveness, and action. It is more about absolute focus. This could be on an object of attention, which could also be an aim which is intangible. It could also involve mental visualization. In fact, the exact opposite of a wandering mind - a mind that is not focused - is a state of concentration.

Acts like mental visualization, using the will and even religious acts like recitation of mantras or counting rosary beads all enhance concentration.

## Improving concentration

The vast majority of people believe they suffer from regular periods of poor concentration. Many people say that they daydream instead of applying themselves to the task at hand. In fact, this is good news and is perfectly natural. Daydreaming occurs naturally every few minutes, and it

is your brain's way of taking a break in order to absorb what it has learnt. If you think about it, you have not actually lost concentration; you have just chosen to concentrate on a series of other points of interest instead: the cat on the chair; the mobile ring tones; a sample of music on the radio; or someone walking along the street - to name but a few distractions.

*The problem is not your powers of concentration. It is the direction and focus which is of concern.* When you master the art of concentration, your entire eye-brain system becomes laser-like, with an extraordinary ability to focus and absorb information.

## A few important points in concentration

1. Concentration relies on self-control and mind focusing.
2. It usually encourages a state of extended focus and being conscious of the mind.
3. It is the link between a person's inner world (mind) with the outer world (environment).
4. A concentrated mind's spectrum includes the past, present, and future.

**Past:** Event based.  
**Present:** Any current Act.  
**Future:** A desired effect which is a modified continuity of what we already know in the past.

5. An act of concentration on the object within a set time line (at least it is not infinite)
6. It may so happen if the desired effect is not got, then that might lead to frustration.

# Meditation

Meditation is opposite to concentration. Meditation is more focused on an uncluttered mind than a focused one. In fact, the more one meditates successfully, the more one can reduce the activity of the brain, unlike concentration.

Meditation is a state of mental freedom, so to say. It absolves one of the requirements to control, will or direct the mind. Mind is free to move and observation of this restless mind is the key to control it. So it is a kind of counter-intuitive where letting go of control leads to better control.

Concentration can lead to meditation. Meditation itself has demands on the mind. Meditative state is a "NOW" state - focused on the present, which is the act itself. The goal of meditation is to reach self-realization, prolonged awareness, and no control or any desired effect. In fact, where concentration is outward, meditation is inward. Meditation may not always lead to material achievements. It is often a function to achieve an inner peace or calm.

Hence for our so called 'material achievements' as in gaining in intellectual capacity to achieve material benefits, we need to master 'concentration'.

## An Ancient Yogic Technique To Increase Your Concentration Manifold



For many of you who have not yet heard of this ancient technique, it will definitely be an eye opener of sorts. It is extremely powerful, provided you stay consistent with the practice. However, since this involves some level of strain on the eye, we recommend you consult your physician before undertaking this exercise.

This meditation technique is called “Trataka”. It is an excellent method to improve concentration and sharpen memory. Trataka literally means “to gaze steadily at a fixed point”. The fixed point could be an object, positioned in front of the eyes, or an inner visualization when eyes are closed.

## How Does Trataka Work?

The impression of the object we view falls on the optic nerves in the retina, which are connected by sensory nerves to several centers of the brain. These centres receive information through the optic nerves and send out commands. Many of these centres are asleep or inactive. Trataka increases the function of perception which awakens these inactive centres of the brain.

## Ninja Powered 'Candle Trataka'

One of the most practical ways to do Trataka is to use a candle and focus on its wick.

### **Procedure:**

- ◇ Light the candle and place it on a small table so that the flame is exactly at eye level. Sit in any comfortable meditation asana (read up: sitting in a Lotus Position) with the head and spine erect. Adjust the position so that the candle is at an arm's length. Close the eyes and relax the whole body. Be aware of the breath for a few minutes.

- ◇ Open eyes and gaze steadily at the tip of the wick. The flame may flicker, but the tip of the wick will always remain steady. Do not blink or move eyeballs. We should completely center the awareness on the wick. If the mind wanders, gently bring it back to the practice. After a minute or two, when the eyes get tired or watery, close them gently.
- ◇ Gaze at the image of the flame left behind. If the image moves up or down, or from side to side, observe it and try to stabilize it. When the image of the flame fades, try to bring it back. When the image is no longer retained, gently open the eyes and gaze at the tip of the wick again and repeat the procedure. Practice 3–4 rounds.

## Benefits of Trataka

Besides concentration and memory, Trataka  
hugely enhances will power.



It is an excellent way to clear accumulated  
complexes, problems and suppressed thoughts  
from the mind.



Regular practice makes the eyes clear and  
bright.



It balances the nervous system, relieving  
nervous tension, anxiety, depression and  
insomnia.



It is an excellent preparation for meditation.





## Additional Tips

- ◇ Choose a clean and dark room for practice.
- ◇ Start with 5 minutes and escalate the time to up to 15 minutes.
- ◇ Avoid undue strain. Slowly train the eyes to avoid blinking during the practice.
- ◇ Slowly move your eyeballs clockwise and anticlockwise 2–3 times and blink rapidly a few times to relax. After completing the last round, rub your palms together to make them warm and place them on your eyelids without applying pressure. Repeat 3 times.
- ◇ Trataka is best practiced after ‘asana’ and ‘pranayama’. Take the guidance from a teacher.
- ◇ We can practice though in the day, early morning or evenings are good.

You should meditate for around five minutes daily before studying. It will calm all your thoughts and you will easily have a better understanding of what you read, watch, or listen to.

**BONUS TIP:** It is natural to feel frustrated sometimes when sitting to focus on your notes. Whenever this happens, try repeating the words ‘RELAX, ‘CALM DOWN’, again and again to yourself. Let your words be heard by you. Notice the immediate difference this brings to your disturbed state of mind.

# HELP YOUR BRAIN TO LEARN

A memory system works rather like a super-sized filing cabinet that contains files on every aspect of your entire life. The only way you are going to find information quickly and easily in your cabinet is to make sure that it is

- ◇ **Well organized.**
- ◇ **Accessible.**

This means that no matter how obscure the memory you want to retrieve, you know what its category is and can find it easily.

In order to categorize and store the information in the filing cabinet that is your memory, it is important to have some understanding of how your brain and memory function while you are learning.

Research has shown that first and last impressions matter to your brain. In every situation, we are more likely to remember things that happen or that are introduced:

1. At the beginning – the **Primacy Effect.**
2. At the end - the **Recency Effect.**

We also find it easier to remember things that are:

1. **Associated** with items or thoughts that are already stored in the memory.
2. **Outstanding or unique** – as this appeals to the imagination.



Your brain is more likely to notice and recall something that has a powerful appeal:

1. **To your senses** - taste, smell, touch, sound or sight.
2. **To your particular interests.**

Your brain is geared to create patterns and maps, and to finish sequences; which is why, if a familiar song on the radio stops halfway through, you will probably keep humming it to completion; or if a sequence of paragraphs is numbered one to six and point three is missing, you will search for the missing point three.

Your brain also needs help to remember facts, figures, and other important reference information that needs to be brought quickly to mind.

As we will see in the subsequent Chapters, the more efficiently you can turn an information into an organized, coherent and accessible whole, the better you are at helping the brain assimilate and keep that information.

