



**fiveable**

**ULTIMATE**

**GUIDE TO**

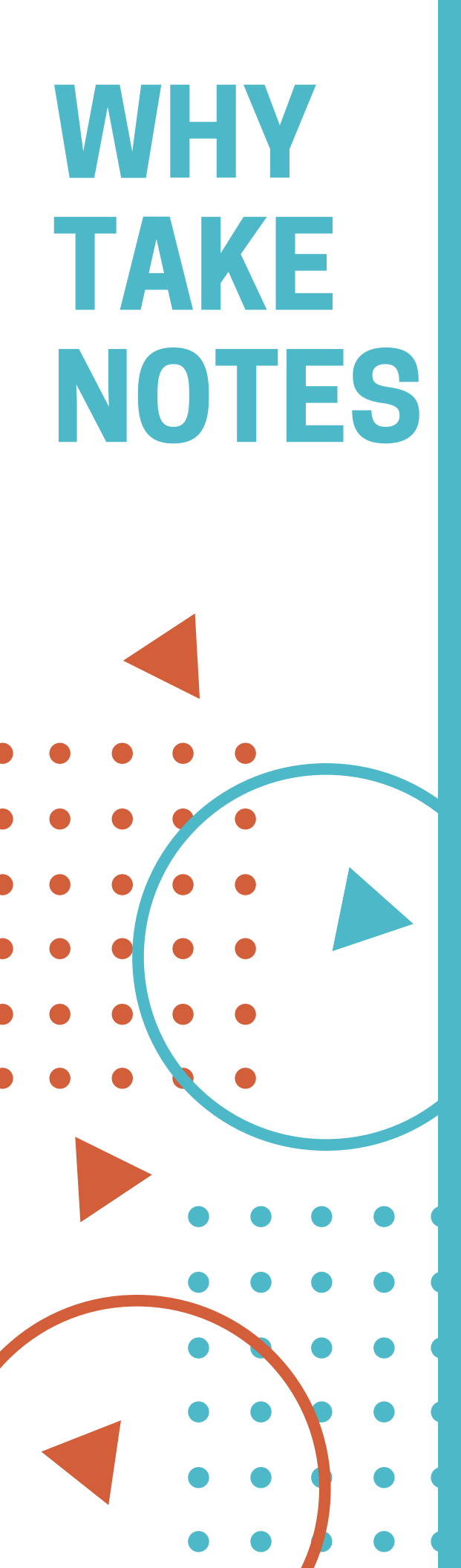
**NOTE-**



**TAKING**



# WHY TAKE NOTES



## REAL TALK



Note taking is a personal art. There is no one-size fits all and no top-secret hack. Oh and no, teachers are not part of some note-taking conspiracy.

Every teacher across the world assigns some version of note taking from textbooks, articles, videos, podcasts, and lectures to...

### ▶ **MAKE SENSE OF INFORMATION**

The best way to understand something, especially if it is complicated, is to organize it in ways that make sense to you. It can take your brain several times of reading or hearing something to process, but when you write things down, you're helping your brain make sense of the material.

### ▶ **REMEMBER KEY FACTS**

The notes you write down will help you understand the content, but you also are working towards committing it to memory. By hand writing your notes, you are giving yourself an extra chance to process the material and to make connections, which helps you remember things.

### ▶ **REFER BACK TO CONTENT**

The most practical reason to take notes is so you don't have to flip through an entire textbook to find information. With organized notes, you can quickly find what you need, which saves you time! If you look back at your notes enough, your brain will remember what they look like, which gives you a chance to remember the information by picturing the notes in your head. It works, I'm serious.

To take great notes, you have to understand what works for you.

# TYPES OF NOTES

## TWO-COLUMN aka Cornell Notes



Great for chapters with sections, articles, lectures, etc.



**How to set it up:** Create two columns and box in the last 4-5 lines on the paper. Label the left column “Main Idea” and label the right column “Notes”. The bottom box is for a summary.



**What to write:** As you read or listen, track the main ideas or headings on the left column and bullet related notes on the right column. When you are finished, you can turn your main ideas into questions and fold the paper to practice. At the bottom, summarize that page in 3-4 sentences.

## OUTLINES



Great for anything with headings!



**How to set it up:** These notes are in an outline style. The first heading is written next to 1. or I. or A. and then bullet and indent notes as you go, creating a hierarchy of the content.



**What to write:** Each top level is a section or subsection heading. For each paragraph you read, bullet 1-2 facts related to the heading.

## MIND MAPS



Great for organizing lots of material, reviewing, etc.



**How to set it up:** Write the main idea or concept in the middle of the paper and draw any kind of shape around it. Make sure the concept is a central theme, something very important.



**What to write:** As you read, use lines to connect related topics or key terms to the center shape and bullet a short explanation of what that topic or term is about. Continue adding more lines until you have fully explained the main idea.

## Ready for some examples?

Remember, all three of these types of notes can be used for any subject, any medium, and you can always modify or even combine features to make it work better for you.

Each of the following examples are notes of the attached article on WWI, since most students cover that event at some point.

# WORLD WAR I (1914-1918)

## BACKGROUND & CAUSES

World War I, also known as the Great War, was a global war centered in Europe that began on July 28, 1914 and ended on November 11, 1918. More than nine million combatants and seven million civilians died as a result of the war, a rate that was greatly increased by the use of new technology such as machine guns. The war drew in all of the world's economic powers, which were assembled into two opposing alliances: the Allies (United Kingdom, France, Russia) and the Central Powers (Germany, Austria-Hungary, Ottoman Empire). The United States did not enter the war until 1917, but they joined the Allies.

The spark that led to the outbreak of war was the assassination of Austria-Hungary's Archduke Francis Ferdinand and his wife, Sophia, while they were visiting Serbia. Austria-Hungary asked for punishment and an apology from Serbia. Serbia refused and Austria-Hungary declared war on Serbia. This led to a chain reaction of countries declaring war on one another because of a complicated web of alliances that existed in Europe. However, this event was just the spark. Historians generally agree on four MAIN causes of World War I: militarism, alliances, imperialism, and nationalism.

Between 1870 and 1914, all of the major powers except Great Britain and the United States doubled the sizes of the armies because of militaristic policies. For reasons of prestige and self-defense, the more one nation built up its army and navy, the more other nations felt they had to do the same. Many countries also began mobilizing, or preparing for war, even in peacetime, using tactics such as "universal conscription", which drafted boys over a certain age into the army.

At the same time, several complex alliances, or agreements between countries to work together and defend each other, and secret treaties appeared in Europe throughout the 19th and beginning of the 20th centuries. The treaties were agreements between nations that were actually promises to defend one another in case of attacks. The danger of these alliances was that an argument between two countries could draw all the other nations allied with them into a fight.

European nations also continued to rule over and compete for colonies. Imperialism amassed an enormous amount of wealth for European countries. Both France and Britain had many colonies in Africa and Asia and in the 1880s, Germany and Italy decided they wanted a colonial empire too. This global competition for land caused confrontations and conflicts in many places. All of this competition was ultimately fueled by nationalism, which is the belief that one's own nation or culture is superior to all others. This is what led European nations to compete to build the largest army and navy. It also gave groups of people the idea of forming independent nations of their own.

While some historians have presented arguments over which cause was the most consequential, most agree that the outbreak of World War I was caused by the deadly combination of these political and economic forces. The timing of the war, at the cusp of mass industrialization, also played a role in the war becoming as explosive as it did.

## THE WAR

WWI is remembered as especially brutal due to the strategies and weaponry that were used to fight. After war broke out in Europe, the Central Powers were able to advance to the border of France. This became known as the Western Front. However, as the powers collided, neither side was able to advance their troops any farther as both dug themselves into trenches. For several years, the front line remained locked in a stalemate. New weapons, such as the machine gun, artillery shells, and poison gasses made advancement by either side extremely difficult. Both the Central Powers and the Allies felt that they could eventually wear the other down and win the war, but in reality, they were stuck.

When the war began, the U.S., led by President Woodrow Wilson, declared that it would remain neutral. The U.S. felt it was important to stay out of the domestic affairs of other countries unless it had a direct interest in the outcome. By 1917, however, the U.S. was finally dragged into the war for several reasons. First, German submarines had been attacking passenger ships, the most famous of which was the sinking of the Lusitania, which killed 139 Americans. Second, it was discovered in the Zimmerman Telegraph that Germany had secretly asked Mexico to join in their fight against the United States with the reward of regaining lost territory. Third, the US was concerned about aligning with Russia, a country many Americans did not trust, but when the Russians left the war in 1917 because of a domestic revolution, the U.S. found an opening. Just a month after the Russian exit, the US declared war against Germany. Once in Europe, the reinforcement of American troops proved to be the key in breaking the stalemate. The Central Powers surrendered on November 11, 1918.

## RESOLUTION

Even though the fighting ended, the peace treaty officially ending the war wasn't signed until 1919. Ironically the U.S. never actually sign the treaty that its own president was involved in creating. President Wilson felt future wars could be prevented by getting the Europeans to agree on several key points, or what he called his Fourteen Points. He felt that all parties should agree to end secret treaties, reduce their weapons, agree to allow countries "freedom of the seas," and join a League of Nations. The League of Nations was to be an international organization that would result in peace by providing a place for countries to discuss differences before hostilities could break out. President Wilson did not want the allies to punish the Central Powers, but the Allies did not agree with Wilson. They felt the Central Powers needed to be punished, especially Germany, so the Treaty of Versailles contained a number of harsh conditions imposed on the Germans. It also created new nations from German and Ottoman colonies.

## EFFECTS

World War I had a number of both immediate and long-term effects on the world. In the aftermath of the war, there were nearly 15 million casualties, both from soldiers and civilians, and millions of others were physically wounded or suffered mental illness, or post-traumatic stress disorder, because of the horrors on the front lines. Further, many hundreds of miles of land were completely destroyed due to the warfare. This resulted in the forced migration of thousands of people. Finally, the extremely high cost of the war put countries into debt and created several problems for their governments and citizens.

In the long-term, the war had several ripple effects. First, the Treaty of Versailles placed an enormous burden on Germany, both financial and for the blame of the war. Germany remained humiliated and in debt for decades, which eventually amounted to the rise of Adolf Hitler and the outbreak of the Second World War.



# TWO-COLUMN NOTES

## Main Ideas

### **Causes of WWI**

What were the MAIN causes of WWI?

### **The War**

Who fought in the war?

Where was it fought?

What did the fighting look like?

### **Resolution**

What happened at the peace negotiations?

### **Effects of WWI**

What were the short-term and long-term consequences of the war?

## Notes

- Militarism (more weapons, soldiers)
  - Alliances (webs of secret treaties)
  - Imperialism (competition for colonies)
  - Nationalism (belief in superiority)
  - Assassination of F. Ferdinand sparked war
- 
- Central Powers vs. Allies, 1914-1918
  - Mostly on Western Front in France
  - Stalemate, both sides stuck in trenches
  - Use of new weapons led to high casualties
  - US joined war in 1917, tipped the balance
- 
- Central Powers surrendered in 1918
  - Allies disagreed on key points of treaty
  - US Pres Wilson wanted to keep the peace
  - Fr, GB, and Italy wanted to punish Germany
  - Treaty of Versailles established League of Nations and created new states, but forced Germany to take the blame and pay lots
- 
- 15 million casualties, more wounded and traumatized, changed entire generation
  - Forced migrations because of destruction
  - Burden on Germany led to mass frustration and sparked rise of Nazis in 1930s

## **Summary:**

WWI (1914-1918) was fought mostly in Western Europe between the Central Powers and the Allies. The war started because of strong forces of militarism and nationalism, intense competition for overseas colonies, and complex webs of alliances that were triggered after the assassination of Franz Ferdinand. The war itself was characterized by modern weapons that devastated the front lines and led to a lengthy stalemate. The entrance of the US in the war finally tipped the balance, which led to an Allied victory in 1918. After the war, the Allies struggled to balance peace-keeping with retribution, which culminated in the Treaty of Versailles that treated Germany harshly, but also attempted to create international peace through the League of Nations. The Treaty was ultimately a failure because the burdens placed on Germany were a major cause of the rise of the Nazis and World War II.



# OUTLINE NOTES

## World War I

### I. Causes of World War I

- A. Sparked by assassination of Franz Ferdinand, but caused by four MAIN forces
  1. Militarism - more weapons, more soldiers, led to competition for power
  2. Alliances - webs of agreements (some secret) pulled everyone into war
  3. Imperialism - competition for power abroad made this a world war
  4. Nationalism - belief in "superiority" increased competition between nations

### II. The War

- A. Central Powers (Germany, Austria-Hungary, etc) vs. Allies (GB, Fr, Russia, etc.)
- B. Most battles on the Western Front (W. Europe)
- C. New weapons led to lengthy stalemate, troops stuck in trenches
- D. US remained isolationist until 1917, finally entered bc of three main reasons:
  1. Unrestricted submarine warfare, sinking of Lusitania (lost American lives)
  2. Intercepted Zimmerman telegram (Germany offered Mexico lands back if they helped defeat US on the side of Central Powers)
  3. Exit of Russia bc of 1917 Revolution opened the door for US to join allies

### III. Resolution

- A. US in the war tipped the stalemate to an Allied victory, Central Powers surrendered 1918
- B. France, GB, Italy, and US part of peace negotiations - disagreed on peace treaty:
  1. US President Wilson argued for methods to keep peace (League of Nations)
  2. GB, Italy, and France felt destruction of war and wanted to punish Germany
- C. Treaty of Versailles negotiated, placed harsh blame & reparations on Germany, created new nations from German and Ottoman colonies, launched the League of Nations, etc.

### IV. Effects of WWI

- A. Short-term effects:
  1. Millions of casualties, millions more wounded or suffered PTSD
  2. Environmental destruction led to forced migrations
- B. Long-term effects:
  1. Harsh treatment of Germany led to increasing resentment against the Treaty of Versailles and the Allied powers
  2. Eventually led to the rise of the Nazis in the 1930s and the outbreak of WWII

*\*\* You can also try turning the headings into questions and then bullet info that answers the question.\*\**

# MIND MAP NOTES

Assassination of Franz Ferdinand sparked the war. Militaries were ready, tensions were high, alliances pulled everyone in.

New technologies were massively destructive, led to stalemate.

1. Militarism (increased weapons & soldiers)  
2. Alliances (web of agreements)  
3. Imperialism (global competition)  
4. Nationalism (belief in superiority)

Who: Central Powers vs. Allies  
Where: mostly Western Front  
When: 1914-1918

## The War

## MAIN causes:

remained neutral, practiced isolationism until 1917

## US involvement

# World War I

- Joined in 1917 for 3 main reasons:
1. unrestricted warfare (sinking of Lusitania)
  2. Zimmerman Telegraph
  3. Exit of Russia

- Short term -
1. High casualties
  2. Wounded, PTSD
  3. Destruction led to forced migrations

## Effects

- Long term -
1. German resentment
  2. Rise of Nazis
  3. WWII

## Resolution

US troops & resources tipped the balance of power and ended the stalemate. Central Powers surrendered in 1918

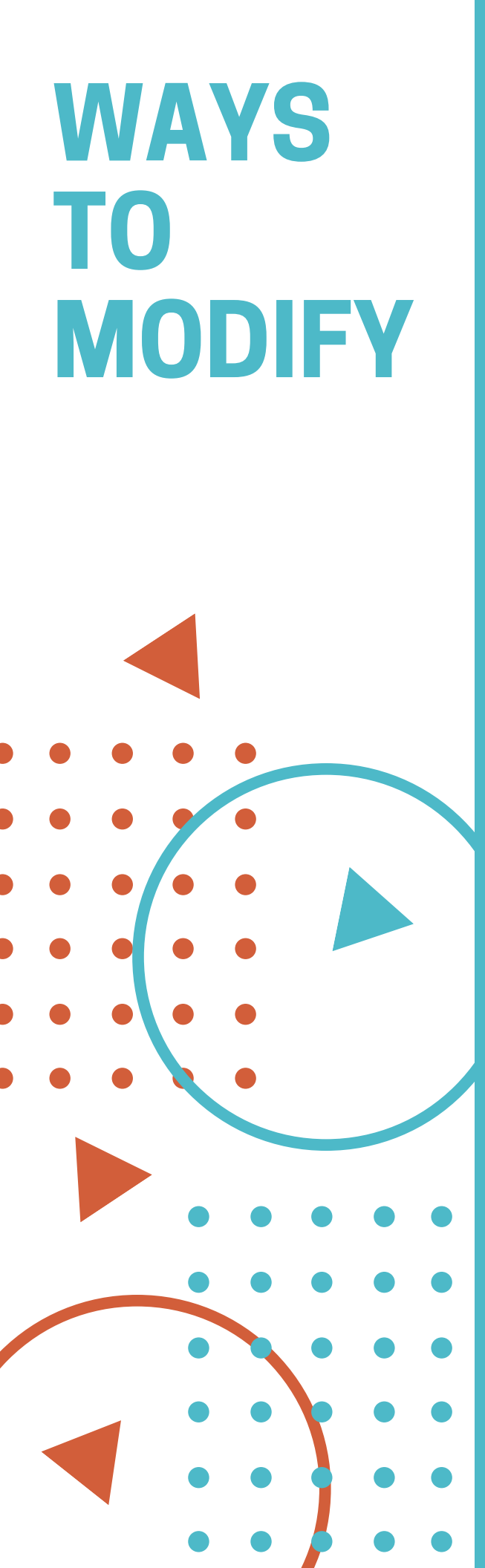
Treaty of Versailles signed in 1918, forced all blame on Germany, created League of Nations

Allies (France, GB, Italy, & US) negotiated peace treaty, but had disagreements

GB, Italy, & Fr experienced more destruction, pushed for harsh punishments for Germany

US Pres Wilson wanted long lasting peace. Pushed for League of Nations, self-determination, freedom of seas

# WAYS TO MODIFY



## KNOW YOURSELF



These are just three types of notes, but there are ways you can adapt these styles to better fit your own needs. Find what works for you and do that!

### ▶ **COLOR CODING**

Where you write your notes on the paper is just one level of organization. You can add more levels through color coding or highlighting. Try writing key terms in a different color or highlighting what you feel comfortable with versus what you need more time understanding.

### ▶ **POST ITS**

Use post its or small stickies to bookmark or identify key pieces of information. This is similar to color coding, but gives you yet another layer of organization that will help you process the information.

### ▶ **DOODLES**

Add little drawings around your notes to help make sense of information. Instead of just bulleted information, draw a picture of the scene or a diagram of the process. Even if you are not confident in your artistic expression, you can use the most basic doodles to make notes more approachable.

### ▶ **READ ALOUD**

As you read the textbook, try reading aloud or dictating what you are writing out loud. It will feel silly at first, but can be especially helpful for audio learners. It also helps you become a better reader and writer.

### ▶ **SHORTHAND**

Develop abbreviations and ways to shorten words so that you can take notes faster. Just make sure you remember what they all mean! Make a key if you have too many acronyms.

# HOW TO STUDY

# NOTES

If you are taking notes and then never looking at them again, you are doing it all wrong. Your notes are meant to be worked with, marked up, and used! Here's a few ideas of how you can study your notes. Find what works for you by testing them out!

## ▶ SKIM YOUR MOST RECENT NOTES EVERY DAY

Choose a time every day that you can spend 10 minutes looking over your most recent notes. Make it the same time every day, set an alarm on your phone, and stick to it by finding ways to reward yourself! If you do this every single day, you'll be adding 70 minutes of studying to your week. That could be a game changer for you. As you get better at this, make it 15 minutes!

## ▶ CODE YOUR NOTES BY LEVELS OF UNDERSTANDING

You can combine this with the strategy above or build this in at the end of your note-taking process. Go through everything you wrote and either put a symbol or color by concepts you feel confident about, a different code for concepts you feel *meh* about, and a third code for concepts you do not know/understand. You can even add a score to your notes based on how many topics you understand. Throughout the week, ask questions or read more about your weakest concepts. Spend your time studying what you do not know.

## ▶ NOTE CARDS OR QUIZLET

Any notes that you take will have plenty of key terms (people, events, concepts, models, theories, etc.) that you will have to know. After you have completed your notes, take the extra step to make note cards or use Quizlet for all the key terms. Quizlet is especially useful because you can download the app and practice on the go. Just like the first suggestion, schedule 10 minutes every day to play through your Quizlet deck. If you know the key terms, your multiple choice and essay grades will increase. No doubt.

## ▶ READ ALOUD

This was listed as a modification to help you understand what you are reading, but it can also really help you learn your notes. After you have completed your notes, read them out loud and mark down any places that were confusing. Then, go back and add details to those sections. Reading aloud builds several skills and can be very helpful.

## ▶ THE BUDDY SYSTEM

Work with a buddy that is taking the same class and compare your notes to theirs. Not to copy them, but to see how they interpreted different sections. Sit together and discuss the concepts that are the most confusing. One of the best ways to learn is by teaching, so if you and your buddy explain concepts to each other, you both win!

## ▶ BE CONSISTENT, BUT RESPONSIVE

Just like note-taking, studying is a personal art. You need to find what works best for you based on so many different factors. Test out one of these suggestions this week, then adapt next week to make it even better. Just make sure you do something every week,

# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

TWEET ANY OTHER QUESTIONS TO US @THINKFIVEABLE

## ▶ HOW LONG SHOULD MY NOTES BE?

There is no magic number of pages. Your notes should be as short as possible without missing important details or simplifying the content too much. Notes from ~30 page textbook chapters should be around 4-6 sides of pages, but there are exceptions of course and it depends on your handwriting.

## ▶ HOW DO I KNOW WHAT TO WRITE DOWN?

This is one of those things that just gets easier over time. Use the headings to help guide you. Textbooks often include background information that is not crucial to the topic, so focus on the big themes of the course and make sure what you are writing is directly related to one of those. One way you can start to train yourself to detect key information is to highlight or mark up your notes after your test or quiz and see what information you are writing that is not tested. Could it have been assessed? Or is it extra detail?

## ▶ HOW CAN I TAKE LESS TIME WITH MY NOTES?

Notes should not take you hours and hours. Ideally, 5 pages of reading should take about 30 minutes to read and take notes. Any number of factors can contribute to why it might take you longer including distractions and comprehension. In that case, control the factors that you can. Silence your phone, take out your headphones, turn off the TV, make sure you have good lighting and space, and zone in to full-focus mode. If you have trouble staying focused, try setting a timer for 5 or 10 or 15 minutes and then taking a break.

## ▶ HOW CAN I GET BETTER AT READING?

In an AP class, you are using a college-level textbook, so it's totally normal to have to re-read sections to understand them. Teachers do this too, especially when a concept is really complicated or the paragraph has tons of run on sentences. Chunk things down and just focus on one section at a time. Keep track of any words you come to that you do not know and look them up. It will take longer at first, but you will build your vocabulary. You can also try reading out loud or do a little bit of research about something that is confusing and see if you can find an easier explanation online. It gets better!

# NEED MORE SUPPORT?

Fiveable teachers host weekly live streams to explain concepts, practice prompts, and answer questions in 10 different AP subjects. Join us this week!



<http://fiveable.me/live>

## You can also find us on social media:



<http://youtube.com/thinkfiveable>



<http://twitter.com/thinkfiveable>



<http://instagram.com/thinkfiveable>

Questions? Comments? Suggestions?

Hit us up! [hi@fiveable.me](mailto:hi@fiveable.me)