

# 1. Structured Note-taking

## What is it?

As the name implies, Structured Note-taking (Smith & Tompkins, 1988) helps students take notes more effectively. Over 50 percent of the material that students read or hear in class is forgotten in a matter of minutes (Vacca & Vacca, 1993). Therefore, using a note-taking system that assists in recall and retention of information is essential. Structured Note-taking is one of a variety of note-taking strategies; however, it offers students a visual framework that can help them determine just which information to include as they take notes. Initially, the teacher provides students with a graphic organizer that mimics the organizational pattern in the text to be read. Eventually, as students practice this skill, they learn to devise their own graphic organizers.

## How to use it:

1. Instruct students in the various organizational patterns authors use. Seven of these were described earlier in the manual. Explain that understanding these patterns improves understanding of the text and also provides a structure for taking notes on the material.
2. Once students understand the different organizational patterns, model structured note-taking. Give students a short passage for which you have already created a graphic organizer and walk them through how you would use it for note-taking.
3. Next, assign a passage from the text from which students can take notes. Provide each student with a copy of a graphic organizer you have constructed for that passage. You may want to include major headings on the organizer, so that students can be successful at ordering subordinate ideas on the graphic. Point out that at first you will be giving them graphic organizers, but that eventually they will be able to

4. Continue to scaffold student learning over time, constructing graphics for students but leaving all of the boxes or circles empty for them to fill in. Then, show students how to preview text as the basis for constructing an accurate visual representation of the material.
5. As students develop confidence with Structured Note-taking, they will begin to develop their own visual frameworks.

## Examples of Visual Representations: Structured Note-taking

