

ACTIVITY 3 – VISUAL NOTE-TAKING



Description: Students use a combination of words and images in order to create a visual narrative of a process, sequence, set of instructions, or procedure related to their study within a specific discipline. The instructor can have them create this to show the steps they have taken in a lab, to organize how they will prepare for a set of exams, to reflect on a strategy used in a particular sport or physical activity, or even to explore how they might handle and unfamiliar task.

Skills: Self Awareness, Critical Thinking, Navigation Skills

Purpose: By the end of the activity, students should recognize the extent to which using a combination of words and images can help them to think in non-linear ways about a given task. There is much to be said when it comes to note-taking of breaking things down into a series of written steps, bullet points, or explanations, but going from the intricate web of ideas in a student's head to the linear is not always easy. The visual note-taking, process description or instruction writing allows them not just to think outside the box, but to put the box aside and just to think.

Critical Thinking Questions:

- When I am encouraged to explain my thoughts both with words *and* images, do I find this easy? Do I have a tendency to want to only words or only use images?
- If I am trying to explain a process or a set of steps with words and images, what benefits do I see in using both?
- How are other students organizing their ideas on the page? What can I learn from this?
- Could I see myself using this activity in other areas of my studies or in my daily life?
- Has the activity helped me to clarify what I am trying to express? Has the visual nature of it helped me to “see” something that I might have otherwise ignored?

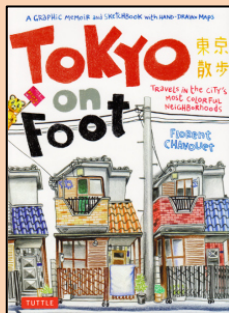
Navigation Skills

- Could I give this process, procedure, or set of instructions to someone and could they follow it?
- What might my classmates indicate are the strengths and weaknesses of my visual note-taking?
- How could I transfer these visual note-taking skills to a laptop, an iPad, or some other piece of technology? Would I be able to accomplish something similar given the right program or app?
- Do I consider the visual note-taking to be an end product in itself, or does it just allow me to get my information together so that I can create accurate and detailed notes, instructions, or procedures as written text?
- Does anyone else take notes, or describe processes or procedures in this way?
- Would there be an advantage to do visual note-taking collaboratively?

How Can Visual Narrative Foster Inquiry in This Activity?

This activity is thinking and inquiry in their purest form—allowing the student to make sense of something without being restricted by the linearity of formal sentence mechanics. If a picture tells a thousand words, and there are a thousand words in the student’s head, do I really want to have them write them all down? The inspiration for the activity comes from the Bayeux Tapestry, a 70 m long woven fabric showing the Battle of Hastings and both what led up to it and what followed. This remarkable medieval comic doesn’t just give us insight into 11th century Anglo-Norman relations, but what the weavers perceived worthy of inclusion, and what they felt they needed to explain or refrain from explaining.

Recommended Read for the Teacher



Tokyo on Foot, by Florent Chavouet,

In *Tokyo on Foot*, Chavouet draws Tokyo as he moves through it. He doesn’t draw it as an exotic place full of Buddhist temples or a crazy place full of karaoke bars. He draws it as a real place with real people—in short, he draws it as it is. His remarkable clarity with which he takes us through Tokyo shows us the power of visual note-taking: that it can allow us to see much more clearly than we can necessarily describe them in words.