

Doodling

NOTE-TAKING & READING



What is it and why do I care?

We've all done it, doodling in the margins of our notes when we struggle to remain focused. Turns out our coping mechanism is actually a powerful tool that affects the cognitive processes of our brains. It can be used while you learn, to augment your study (concept maps and mind mapping), and as a way to express emotion and cope with stress.

Benefits of doodling.

Learn more effectively



Students who draw during lectures and assignments retain more information and can make better sense of complex ideas. Doodling is thought to increase the enjoyment of learning, which helps make you more engaged with the course materials. Plus, it can reduce distraction and promote innovative thinking.



Listen better



According to Jesse Prinz, a philosophy professor at City University of New York Graduate Center, doodling keeps participants in a state of "pure listening" that is close to meditation. Pure listening makes you a more engaged and focused listener, so you can take in what the other person is saying without getting distracted by thoughts of tonight's dinner or your weekend plans.

Improve big picture thinking



Often, when we're trying to solve a problem or complete a task, we get 'tunnel vision' and are laser-focused on only what's right in front of us. Doodling allows us to take a step back and connect overarching ideas and concepts – whether that's from past memories or our sub-conscious. This process is conducive to the type of big picture thinking that leads to innovative solutions.

Be more creative

The act of drawing is creative in itself and can help you come up with ideas to solve whatever problems you might be stuck on. It can also help you generate and refine ideas you've already had and may help you see connections you previously missed.

Process emotion



If you're antsy in class, doodling can burn some of that energy, allowing you to settle and engage with the information. Doodling can also be a way to literally express your frustration, anxiety, and fears when words aren't enough.

Reduce stress and boost your mood

Much like other visually creative activities (e.g. coloring, collages, etc.) doodling can help you unwind. It's thought to calm the amygdala, the part of the brain that controls the 'flight or fight' response – which is linked to stress and anxiety. To actively boost your mood, try doodling things that make you happy (puppies and ice cream perhaps).



A word of caution.



Like most things in life, doodling should be done in moderation. If your lesson or task is already highly visual, avoid doodling. Your brain will struggle to retain the excessive amounts of visual stimuli. When doodling to process emotion, reduce stress, or boost your mood, limit your sessions to 30 minutes for the optimum effect; more than that can negatively impact your productivity, ultimately heightening your stress.



Video Resource

<https://youtu.be/7fx0QcHyrFk> (6 min)

<https://www.vox.com/ad/16772236/the-benefits-of-doodling> (2 min)

