Interactive Note Making

What is it?

A note-making and study tool that helps students extract and check their understanding of key ideas from an assigned text; the steps are adapted from Robinson's (1946) SQ3R reading strategy

What are the benefits of using this tool?

The Common Core State Standards remind us that teaching students how to read and understand informational texts is critical for their future success. This tool helps students get more out of assigned texts by using pre-reading questions to focus their attention on what's important, and by having them search for the answers to those questions as they read. It improves the quality of the notes that students take by helping them extract and record key ideas, and it teaches students how to use their notes as a review and study tool.

What are the basic steps?

1. Teach students to create an Interactive Note Making organizer by dividing a sheet of paper into four columns and labeling the columns *Questions*, *Main Ideas*, *Supporting Details*, and *Monitor*.

2. Have students preview an assigned text by examining section headings, opening and summary paragraphs, topic sentences, bold-faced terms, images, and/or end-of-chapter review questions.

   Note: This tool is typically used with textbook chapters or sections, but any informational text with section headings will work.

3. Have students convert each section heading or subheading into a question(s) and record these questions in the Questions column. If students are new to the tool, introduce them to the six question-starter words (*who*, *what*, *when*, *where*, *why*, *how*) and model the conversion process for them. For example:

SECTION HEADING	POSSIBLE QUESTIONS (students can record one or more)
The War of 1812 Begins ⟶	*Why* did the War of 1812 begin? *Who* started the War of 1812?
Covalent vs. Noncovalent Bonds ⟶	*How* are covalent bonds different from noncovalent bonds?

4. Tell students to keep the questions in mind as they read the text slowly, carefully, and one section at a time. Have them record the answers (main ideas and details) on their organizers. Encourage them to use their own words rather than copying from the text.

5. When students finish, instruct them to check their understanding and retention of the material. ("Fold your organizers so that only the questions are visible. Try to answer without peeking.")

6. Tell students to indicate what they know (✓), need to review (★), or have questions about (**?**) in the Monitor column and allocate their study time accordingly.

7. Instruct students to repeat the review-and-check process from Steps 5–6 several times (a day later, a week later, while studying for a test, etc.) and adjust their study plans accordingly.

How is this tool used in the classroom?

✔ To help students identify the main ideas and key details from an assigned text

✔ To have students review and check their understanding of what they've read

✔ To promote active reading and develop students' note-making skills

EXAMPLE: A health teacher used Interactive Note Making to have students extract, review, and test their understanding of the key points from a textbook chapter on the circulatory system. One student's organizer is shown below.

QUESTIONS	MAIN IDEAS	SUPPORTING DETAILS	MONITOR
What is the function of blood?	Brings food and oxygen to cells and carries away wastes. It also carries hormones, proteins, and infection fighters to where they're needed.		★
What are the components of blood?	Red blood cells, white blood cells, platelets, and plasma		✓
What is plasma?	Cells travel through the blood in a yellowish fluid called plasma.	Plasma is approx. 90% water.	★
What is the function of white blood cells?	White blood cells (WBCs) help the body fight infection and disease.	White blood cells can destroy infected cells and make antibodies.	? What's an antibody?

🌑 Teacher Talk

➔ When using this tool for the first time, or when using it with younger students, model the note-making process on the board and/or have students complete an organizer as a class. Scaffold and practice specific steps as needed.

➔ Remind students to leave space between each question (Step 3) so they'll have room to take notes. Encourage them to revise and/or add to their list of questions as they read.

➔ Have students record their questions in the Monitor column (Step 6). Encourage them to ask these questions during class or research the answers on their own.

➔ The process of generating questions, reading, and taking notes can be done section-by-section (i.e., convert a section heading into a question, read the section, take notes on the section) or as it's described in the Steps (i.e., generate all questions, read all sections, take notes on all sections).

➔ Once students have mastered the skill of converting section headings into questions, challenge them to transform other text features (e.g., pictures, bold-faced terms, tables) into questions as well.

➔ To have students take notes from a lecture instead of a text, list the key points in advance, have students convert each point into a question, and record the answers during the lecture.

➔ Encourage students to generate multiple questions for particularly dense sections of text. The student whose work is shown in the example above did this by creating questions about each individual component of blood that was mentioned in a single section of his textbook.