

Flexible Skeletons

Guided Notes for Adolescents with Mild Disabilities

Larzarus, B.D., (1996, Spring). Flexible Skeletons - Guided notes for adolescents with Mild Disabilities. *Teaching Exceptional Children*. Pg. 36-40.

This strategy is designed to help students, particularly students with Mild disabilities, with guided notes during lectures. As the lecture occurs, the student completes a *skeleton outline* that contains the main ideas and related concepts of a lecture, with designated spaces. Skeleton outline can contain very little or extensive information. They can be developed to in accordance with the particular students level of need.

Developing Guided Notes - Building the Skeleton

Use Existing Lecture Notes

- Guided notes are most effective if created from existing lecture notes.
- They should contain main ideas covered in the lecture, at the least.
- Key phrases, definitions, related issues, and contrasting viewpoints, may also be beneficial (i.e. Figure 1, IIIA - provided definitions to avoid confusion).

Use a Consistent Fromat

- Using a consistent format that corresponds with the structure of the lecture helps students use guided notes efficiently.
- The format should parallel the sequence of the lecture, correspond with the structure and content of the course, and organize information to facilitate note-taking and comprehension aids in the review and retention of the material.
- Students can put a check mark on a review tally to keep track of how many times the notes are used or reviewed.
 - Don't place too many boxes, students may see that as a requirement, be reasonable.

Provide for Maximum Student Responding

- Students should be given numerous opportunities to respond and receive feedback.
- There are several ways that students and teachers can use guided notes.
 1. During lectures, show transparencies of completed copies of the guided notes on an overhead projector (see Figure 2). By covering the transparency and revealing each related phrase as it is discussed, teachers give students access to accurate information in a way that helps them keep their place.
 2. Visual cues such as blanks, alphabet letters labels, etc. (see Figure 1) on the students' copies of the notes convey the amount and type of information to record. For example, the letters 'a' through 'e' under numeral 1 of the "Mitosis is used for the replacement of": section on Figure 1 alerts students that five related concepts will be presented.
 3. Although a chapter in a textbook may take a week or more to cover in class, give the students copies of the guided notes for the entire chapter before you give their reading assignment. Students may then use the guided notes as a reading guide while reading the assignment.
 4. Holding a 5 or 10 minute supervised review period at the end of each class gives you an opportunity to evaluate randomly selected students' guided notes and provide corrective and reinforcing feedback. The in-class review time not only gives students review time, but also provides them with the opportunity to clarify any confusing information in their notes before the notes are reviewed extensively.
 5. Provide guided notes for all students in the class. All students benefit, and the student with Mild Disabilities is not set apart.

Tips for Making Guided Notes

- Initially, preparing guided notes takes about 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ to 2 hours per chapter, but can be used over and over.
- First highlight information from existing lecture notes with a felt tip marker or in a transparent shade to create the skeleton for students to use.
- Ask a secretary, paraprofessional, or volunteer to word process the highlighted information for students' notes in any format you choose (i.e. Figure 1) and save a copy on a disk.
- Highlight the additional information using a marker in a second transparent shade so your assistant can simply add the information to the disk copy of the guided notes, saving it under a different file name. Use this to make transparencies.

Instructing Students in Using the Skeleton

Initially, teaching students to use the guided notes may take three to five class periods. Student notes' should be checked periodically to make sure they continue to use them properly. After explaining the value of notetaking and describing the guided notes use - modeling, guided practice, and independent practice - to teach students how to use the notes.

Model the Necessary Student Behaviors

- After distributing guided notes to each student, use an overhead projector with a split screen or two projectors to simultaneously show student copies and completed copies of the guided notes, based on a short (3 to 5 minute), prerecorded practice lecture.
- This allows you to show the students the kinds of information needed, and common elements.
- When the purpose is understood play the practice tape and point out the main ideas as they arise.
- Demonstrate several review strategies.

Provide Guided Practice

- A one-page, in-class reading launches the guided practice training session.
- After distributing a short reading with accompanying guided notes, allow the students 5 to 10 minutes to silently read the material.
- Show students copies and completed transparencies of the guided notes on the overhead projectors and play a prerecorded lecture on the reading.
- During guided practice, the students should complete their copies of the guided notes with you as the information arises in the lecture and appears on the transparency.
- Instruct the students to copy at least the information contained on the transparencies and encourage them to personalize their notes with any information that will help them better understand the concepts.
- Students may use self or peer evaluation to compare their notes with the transparencies while you circulate to answer questions and evaluate students' notes. Also, during the evaluation session, you may reteach or demonstrate strategies to personalize notetaking.
- Finally, once the students' guided notes are corrected, a 5 to 10 minute review session provides students with the opportunity to practice review techniques and gives you additional time to provide small-group instruction for students who need additional practice.

Provide Independent Practice

- Independent practice closely simulates an actual class. First, for homework, assign a 3 to 5 page reading related to a current class topic and accompanied by guided notes.
- After making sure that the students have their copies of the guided notes, conduct the "practice" class just like a typical class lecture and discussion, with only completed copies of the guided notes shown on the overhead projector.
- Remind students to add at least the information contained on the transparencies in their notes; and provide a 5 to 10 minute, supervised review period at the end of the class.
- While students are reviewing their notes, evaluate individual student notes and provide feedback.
- Also, a short quiz following the review helps convince students that the use of the guided notes and review produces tangible results.

Figure 1

Student Copy of the Guided Notes with Cues and Review Tally

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Review Tally

Chapter 20 Cell Reproduction

I. All life starts out as a _____.

A. -----

B.

II. _____ are formed by _____.

III. Types of cell division.

A. Mitosis - DEFINITION:

1. Mitosis is used for replacement of:

a.

b.

c.

d.

e.

2.

3.

Figure 2

Transparencies with Completed Guided Notes That Correspond with the Students' Copies

**Chapter 20
Cell Reproduction**

- I. All life starts out as a single cell.
 - A. single cells ----- millions of cells
 - B. Humans have millions of cells.
- II. New cells are formed by cell division.
- III. Types of cell division.
 - A. Mitosis - DEFINITION: process of cell division in which two cells are formed from one cell.
 - 1. Mitosis is used for replacement of:
 - a. red blood cells
 - b. skin cells
 - c. muscle cells
 - d. root tips
 - e. leaf cells
 - 2. Before cells divide, the cell parts are copied so the result is two identical cells.
 - 3. Mitosis is a series of steps.