

Handwriting Or Typing

Education

A famous note-taking finding, a failed replication, and what can still be said.

Mueller and Oppenheimer, 2014, reported that students taking notes by hand outperformed laptop note-takers on conceptual questions, attributing it to slower, more selective processing.

ORIGINAL CLAIM
handwriting better

STATUS
contested

- The original effect was widely reported as settled.
- A large 2021 replication failed to find it.
- Laptops do enable distraction, a separate effect.
- Distraction spreads to nearby students' screens.
- What matters is the processing, not the instrument.
- Verbatim transcription is the actual problem.

LOOK FOR IT

The defensible advice: take fewer, more selective notes and review them by retrieval. The medium is secondary to what is done with them.

Educational reference. Contested. A useful case study in how one striking study becomes a rule before replication catches up with it.