



Reading Comprehension Worksheet

Grade 12

Name: _____

Date: _____

Pen or Keyboard? Two Views on Taking Notes

Directions: Read both passages. Then answer the questions that follow.

Passage A: "The Case for the Pen"

by Ruth Alvarez, high school history teacher

Every September, I watch the same scene. Thirty laptops open, and thirty students type furiously as I speak, capturing nearly every word. They look productive. I am no longer convinced they are learning.

In 2014, psychologists Pam Mueller and Daniel Oppenheimer published a study comparing students who took notes by hand with students who typed. The laptop users wrote more, but they tended to copy the lecture word for word. When tested on conceptual questions, the students who wrote by hand often performed better. The researchers offered a simple explanation: because handwriting is slower, students are forced to decide what matters and put it in their own words. That act of choosing is where understanding begins.

There is also the matter of distraction. A notebook does not send notifications. It does not offer a second tab or a quick look at a group chat. I am not asking students to give up technology. I am asking them to notice that the fastest tool is not always the best tool for thinking. In my classroom, laptops stay closed during discussion. The pen slows us down, and in this case, slowing down is the point.

Passage B: "In Defense of the Keyboard"

by Jordan Lee, college sophomore

In middle school, I was diagnosed with dysgraphia, a learning disability that makes handwriting slow and physically painful for me. For years, my notes were a few smeared words and a lot of frustration. When I was finally allowed to type, I could keep up for the first time. So when I hear that laptops should be banned from classrooms, I want to ask:

banned for whom?

The famous 2014 study is often treated as settled science. It is not. When other researchers later tried to repeat it, the results were weaker and mixed, and some found little difference between handwritten and typed notes. More importantly, the study's own explanation points to habits, not devices. Students did worse when they copied lectures word for word. Nothing about a keyboard requires that. I summarize, abbreviate, and reorganize as I type, exactly as a good note-taker does with a pen.

Distraction is real, but it is a problem of discipline, not hardware. Teach students how to take notes, and the tool matters far less. A blanket ban punishes the students who most need technology in order to solve a problem that better teaching could fix.

Part A: Multiple Choice

Circle the best answer.

1. What is Ruth Alvarez's main concern about laptops in class?
 - a) Students often copy lectures word for word without truly understanding them.
 - b) Laptops are too expensive for most students.
 - c) Typing is harder to learn than handwriting.
 - d) Laptops break too easily in classrooms.
2. According to Passage A, why might handwriting improve understanding?
 - a) Handwritten notes are easier to share.
 - b) Teachers prefer to grade handwritten notes.
 - c) Its slower speed forces students to decide what matters and use their own words.
 - d) Handwriting uses more paper, which helps memory.
3. Why does Jordan Lee personally rely on typing?
 - a) Typing is faster for every student.
 - b) Dysgraphia makes handwriting slow and painful for Jordan.
 - c) Jordan's professors require laptops.
 - d) Jordan never learned to write by hand.
4. How does Passage B describe later attempts to repeat the 2014 study?
 - a) They proved the study completely correct.
 - b) They were never published.
 - c) They showed typing is always better.
 - d) The results were weaker and mixed.

Part B: True or False

Write T for true or F for false.

5. Ruth Alvarez wants students to give up technology entirely. _____

6. Jordan Lee argues that copying lectures word for word, not the keyboard itself, explains the study's results. _____

7. Both passages acknowledge that distraction can be a problem. _____

Part C: Synthesizing Paired Texts

When you synthesize, you combine ideas from more than one source to build your own understanding. Look for where the writers agree, where they disagree, and what kinds of evidence each one uses.

8. State each author's central claim. Then identify one type of evidence each author uses.

9. Although the authors reach different conclusions, they agree on at least one important point. What is it? Support your answer with evidence from both passages.

Part D: Think and Explain

10. Imagine your school is writing a policy on laptop use in class. Write a recommendation that draws on both passages. Which evidence did you find most convincing, and why?
