

Why Students Should Be Allowed to Use Laptops in Class

For hundreds of years, education has been closely connected to writing. Professors had been writing down their lectures, and students had been keeping notes after their teachers. Goose feathers and parchment changed to ballpoint pens and paper, but the essence has remained the same: knowledge passed down from one person to another must be thoroughly recorded.

With the emergence and development of mobile technologies such as laptops and smartphones, using conventional methods is gradually becoming obsolete. Students tend to use laptops in class more often than pens and paper. And although there are still many educational institutions that prohibit or decry using computers in class, there are many arguments in favor of doing so.

First of all, let us face reality: people do not write as much today as they used to several years ago. This is especially true in the case of the youth: teenagers and young adults tend to feel more confident and comfortable typing on their devices rather than with handwriting. Keeping records after a teacher in class requires a student to write extremely fast, which often decreases the readability of the notes taken. Sometimes it can be extremely difficult for a student to understand what he or she hurriedly wrote down in class (Study Breaks). At the same time, typing on a laptop helps write the important information down in a comprehensible and accurate way. Also, handwriting always involves grammatical mistakes, typos, blots, and so on. Obviously, students experience little-to-none of such problems while using computers.

Secondly, technology is something youth nowadays have got so accustomed to that without it, they operate less efficiently. Students are native to such devices as smartphones, laptops, tablets, and other gadgets, and naturally incorporate them in whatever they do, be it leisure time or studying (EdTech). Not allowing students to use tablets in class means to deprive them of something that is almost a part of them and of their daily lives. If young people know how to use technology to their advantage and increase their studying effectiveness with its help, why forbid them from doing it?

The usage of mobile technologies helps make the studying process more intuitive, fluent, and engaging for students. For example, there are teachers who like to illustrate their lectures with photographs, charts, or interactive graphics. If students are using laptops, a teacher can send them supplementary educational materials via email or in social media. Or, students may be able to look up contradictory and/or insufficient information during the course or a lecture, and ask questions immediately. Laptops also allow changing the format of teaching. Some teachers develop experimental ways of lecturing, and these new methods tend to show promising results. For example, in the Allendale School District, laptops are used to help students turn any place they are present in into a classroom. Using laptops, Paul Mulder, the Allendale Public Schools technology director, lectures students while they are at their homes or elsewhere, providing them with all the necessary materials online. Later, he and his students gather in class and discuss the material they learned together (Learning Liftoff). Needless to say, that such formats of studying are more appealing to young people who value their freedom and time, and prove to be extremely effective.

We live in the 21st century, and it is difficult to keep adhering to old ways when each day brings on innovations of different kinds. Education is not an exception to these processes of rapid evolution; conventional methods are quickly becoming obsolete. Students nowadays need to have these innovations seamlessly incorporated into their studying processes. Allowing them to use laptops in class would be a small but substantial change. Modern students are digital natives, and can effectively use technologies to their advantage. They would be able to not just take notes on lectures more effectively, but would also eagerly engage in new forms of studying such as remote studying, using interactive online materials, and so on.