



Oregon State University
Center for Teaching
and Learning

Onwards to Better: Considerations for Fall 2021 Teaching

During remote learning, students conducted all their learning activities via a computer and instructors often provided notes, slides, and lecture recordings. As we return to classrooms, what should stay? In this series we address major questions instructors face and provide evidence-informed answers (see full references here <https://beav.es/3Vc>)



SHOULD TECHNOLOGY (Laptops/Tablets) BE ALLOWED IN CLASS?

WHAT SOME FACULTY MAY THINK:

Students will surf the internet or use social media.

WHAT SOME STUDENTS MAY THINK:

I can type notes faster on a computer.

What the Evidence Suggests ---

Pros

- More material can be captured (oral lecture/slides) as most type faster than write.
- Laptops allow students to collaborate with their classmates inside and outside the classroom.
- Students can record notes via software.

Cons

- Less deep processing or understanding due to verbatim typing.
- Not optimal for classes where instructors talk quickly, or figures, diagrams, equations are used.
- Laptops can be distracting if used for non-class related activities as it divides attention.

BOTTOM LINE: In contrast to early work (Mueller & Oppenheimer, 2014), the most recent meta-analysis of research by Urry, et al. (2021) shows NEITHER laptop or handwritten notes are better BUT it depends on the class (level, discipline) and instructor (vocal speed, amount on slides, class structure). Clearly, laptops can be distracting if not used for note taking.

In General: The effectiveness of your pedagogical choices on learning depend on a number of factors (e.g., the educator and student characteristics, discipline, course level, lecture, & slide quality). **Be intentional, transparent, and compassionate in pedagogical decision making. It always pays to be CCOMFE (Compassionate, Clear, Organized, Multi-faceted, Flexible, and Engaging).**



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