Driving School of Knowledge

Three summers ago, my dad forced my older sister and I to watch college courses by the Great Courses. Sure, they were taught by renowned professors who often doubled as physicists, philosophers, and mathematicians. But they were *boring*. Not only did they lack in interactivity—no instructor could transcend the glass barrier of the 24-inch flat-screen CRT TV to physically reach out to us, of course—but they were also college-level and given in a lecture-hall format.

One of these courses was "How to Become a SuperStar Student" by Professor Geison, who had been awarded the National Teacher of the Year in 2008. An exciting title for the professor of a lecture that would excite me so little. I can't remember a single thing from that series, save from that one video.

We happened to be watching that lecture on our newer 40-inch LCD TV. We sat in the living room, my sisters, dad, and me. Professor Geison described in detail the Cornell note-taking method.

At the time, I was taking notes on this system to take notes with simple bullet points. I hadn't considered the possibility nor the need to change my current, working system of notes. The Cornell system is a two-pass system, requiring more thought and effort and time. Meanwhile, I meticulously copied a diagram of this method onto my notes. A drawing and scribbles amongst bullet points.

Afterwards, my dad encouraged me to use it but I stubbornly refused. The Cornell method was essentially an organized combination of note-taking, highlighting, and summarizing; I already had working systems of note-taking, highlighting, and summarizing. I didn't need another method.

My grades were top-notch prior to that summer. But a new time crunch situation entered my life with the introduction of high school and its sports. Like the Great Courses, my teachers coaxed me into trying different methods to study, such as with "q-notes" in chemistry. All around me, teachers urged and urged to urged us to change what we did to study to avoid habits such as cramming and take to heart new methods of "good studying," such as these note-taking strategies. I realized that teachers tried to bring us out of the "comfort zones" and into dangerous, foreign land. I realized that many of my peers were stressed by these changes and didn't follow the studying recommendations. I realized that not putting the time into actuating these suggestions allowed for ease on my part.

What I didn't realize was my naiveté.

Why would teachers have bad intentions? They come here to teach, and are rewarded by the school for educating and by the students whom are grateful for passing. Better education is in the best interests for everyone for all parties. So I realized that these study strategies are only meant to help.

Moreover, I realized that I had been using the fundamental Harvard style of note-taking, the name given to a simple hierarchical bullet point method. It was a named method just as much as the Cornell method. It dissolved the presentiment that established systems were overcomplicated and unnecessary. People use what works.

The idea of using multiple systems to study goes along with the idea of flexibility. A car's transmission properly adjusts the gear ratio from the engine to the wheel to maximize fuel efficiency and minimize engine exertion. To switch gears, one lets go of the accelerator briefly to allow the flywheel to free-fall as it connects to the correct gear. In a manual transmission, the driver directs the flywheel to gear. In the more complex automatic transmission, however, there is fluid that automatically changes gear when the torque is too high or low: this mechanism only works because of the flexibility of the fluid.

In many ways, our mind is like a car's transmission. High school minds minds gallop ever faster, requiring a higher gear of higher-order thinking such as the Cornell method. But no less necessary is the reliable but less efficient Harvard system—the low gears. The transitions the teachers offer are the slight decelerations from the release of the accelerator; the free-fall of the flywheel is the leap of faith from one system to another. And while we people are not born flexible as automatic engines, we train ourselves to switch back and forth between these different modes as necessary in as smooth a manner as possible.

This is the reason we go to school or look for educational models. Teachers give us the motivation to move past gear one. To be flexible. Dynamic. Ready to graduate from local roads of undergraduate knowledge and race on the highways of higher learning.

Sharia. "Ultimate Guide to Taking Notes in Class [Infographic]." *DailyInfographic*. Daily Infographic, 28 Aug. 2016. Web. 1 Dec. 2016. <http://www.dailyinfographic.com/ultimate-guide-to-taking-notes-in-class>.