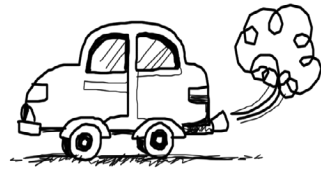


## How doodling can improve focus:

### It's more than a habit



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FEATURES EDITOR



#### Why people doodle

It seems like every teacher, parent or concerned adult in power is always warning students to "Pay attention!" The problem is that in a world filled with stimulants, attention is being spread thinner and thinner. As over-involved, tired college kids going from lecture to lecture, we have to be intentional about filtering the information we receive.

A lot of people find themselves doodling while they listen in class. It is the body's way of keeping busy when your brain has to stay focused. Making thoughts tangible in ink can often be the only thing keeping students from totally checking out.

#### The big misconception

Professors have every right to desire their students' full attention. But what if someone has their head buried in a notebook, drawing away? Many would be quick to call that a distraction, but that pen-to-paper contact could be what's keeping the mind from roaming.

Doodling has developed a negative connotation in the classroom, so much so that professors sometimes ask students to put materials away or keep their eyes on the front of the classroom.

#### Scientifically proven



So how can we trust that students are really paying attention? Ask psychologist Jackie Andrade, who tested that very question. She had 40 people listen to a stale, two-and-a-half minute voicemail, half of them taking notes and half not. Results showed that the 20 who doodled picked up 29 percent more information than those who did not. There is a reason so many of you do it! This is proof that it is more than a silly habit.

#### The presidents doodled?

Paying continuous attention can be exhausting on the brain, and doodling is its last-ditch effort at being present. There are some other exhausted people who would agree with this. According to Srinilay Pillay, MD, a contributor to Harvard Health, 22 of the 46 US presidents doodled! From American flags to horses to football players, their distressed minds longed to manifest themselves on paper and make room for their responsibilities. Now that is reassuring!

#### A generation of doers

This generation is one of unsettled multitaskers. We are always looking for the next thing to accomplish before we've even finished the last. We are inherently wired to do and do and then do some more. There is just no patience for completing tasks one at a time. Perhaps doodling is a subconscious form of this restless need for activity. So do not be afraid to do it! It is both natural and beneficial!

doodle

#### Doodle here



#### Let them doodle

Doodling is a crucial outlet for so many students and creators. If you are an educator, think twice before calling out that student in the back who is drawing. Their eyes may not be with you, but their brain certainly is. And for that, you can thank their doodles.

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