**Note-Taking Preview Exercise**

We learn by making connections to what we already know from our personal experience.  It is helpful for students to start with what they know so that they can relate to the material and can connect to it.   For example, to introduce the topic of note taking, get students in groups and ask them to brainstorm what they know about the topic.  Each group shares one idea until the ideas are exhausted.  Then students are ready for new information about note taking.  The preview exercise helps them to connect knowledge to what they know already and enhances memory.  It sets the stage and gets students motivated for learning.

Here are some guidelines for effective groups:

* Give clear directions for the group before students start moving into the groups.
* Set a definite time limit for the group. Most discussion groups should be around 5-7 minutes. Remember the task expands to fit the time available.
* Establish a quota of what is to be accomplished. Challenge the group to come up with 10 ideas in 5-7 minutes.
* Get students into groups quickly and have a method for getting students into groups. There are many ways to get students into groups.
  + Each row is a group
  + Count off as in sports teams
  + Have group assignments for the week, month or semester.
* To get all students involved, make sure every group member has a role to play. Here are some examples of roles:
  + Reporter: Reports best ideas of group.
  + Leader: Keeps the group on task
  + Note Taker: Takes notes
  + Time Keeper: Makes sure the group finishes on time
  + Writer: Writes the best ideas on the board

One problem with groups sharing discussion is that the first group reports on all the best ideas and then the rest have less to say. Use the rapid fire technique for reporting from each of the groups. When groups share information, each group shares one idea and the next group rapidly shares an idea until all ideas are exhausted. In this way, the discussion moves quickly and each group has equal opportunity to share.