

# Personal Choices

## Finding Low and Mid Tech Tools That Work for You

The purpose of this packet is to help you find which low and mid tech tools best match your interests, needs, tasks and abilities. You can work through as many categories as you want, do them all at once, take your time and conduct longer trials, and even change your mind later on. The idea is that you have the ability to find the tools you want to use *yourself*.

Your teacher(s) may spend some time showing you the tools and how to use some of them, or they might simply give you this packet and the tools and have you starting working on your own. Either way, take your time and don't be afraid to experiment with things you might not have tried before.

Each section will introduce the tools, explain what differences different tools might make, tell you what tools to find and try, or help you understand the differences you might see when using them. In some cases, you might actually like a tool that takes you a little longer to use or reject a tool that makes the work easier but is not something you want to carry around. **The final decision is yours.**

Just remember, if you are having problems deciding if one tool is "working" for you, if you're not sure you are using a tool correctly or if you can't decide if one tool is better than another, get the opinion from your teachers, parents or friends as they watch you using the tool – and then still make up your own mind!

As you complete each section, be sure to record your impressions and decisions on the back page of this packet. These decisions might change with time or task, but this is a good start.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Grade: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

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*Tools You Need for Personal Choices*  
(Available through Onion Mountain Technology, Inc.)

Color filter kit (Demo or Short Form)	Light pen
Reading Helper Set	Ring pen
Lamp with colored light bulb, full spectrum bulb	Pencil grips, specialized pencils
Neon highlighter set	Magic rub erasers
Highlighter tapes	Pocket magnifier
Portabook	Bar magnifier
Page-up	Hemi-Sync Remembrance CD
Note-taking paper	Page Flags
Raised line paper set	Colored Dots
Colored, lined papers	Page Markers
Giant calculator	Arrow Tags
Talking calculator	Post-it Notes
Fraction calculator	Hefty Tabs
Math grids	Digital Recorder
Remedy or Dr. Grip pen	Time Timer
Evo pen	Transparency Files

# Eye Movement

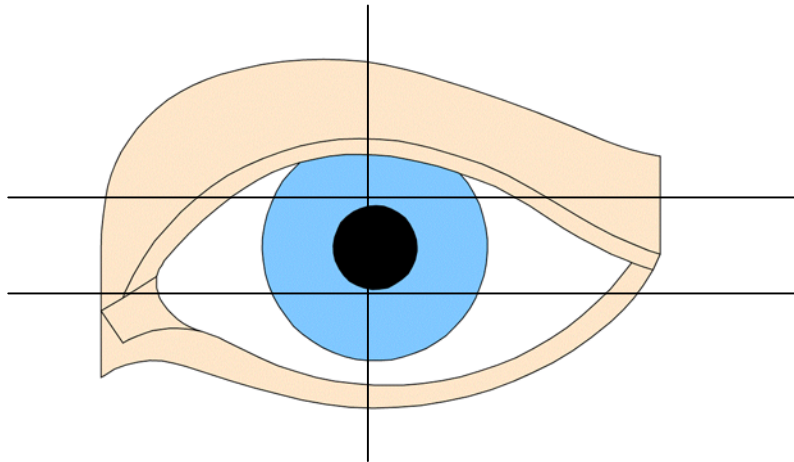
This category will help you determine how you tend to learn and remember most easily – through your eyes, your ears, or by doing something with your hands or body. Remember that we all learn and remember through all of our senses, but most of us seem to have a “sense” that was hard wired before we were born and from which we can learn and recall most easily. **You will need a friend to do this section. Have him or her read the instructions below and mark the eye depending on the movement of *your* eyes as you think about the answer to each question.**

## *Instructions for Questioner:*

- Have the person sit facing you and instruct them to look at you as you ask each question.
- Ask them a RECALL question – something that they have to go into their memory to find an answer – for example “What did you eat for breakfast today?” or “What color shirt did you wear yesterday?”
- Watch the person’s eyes as they try to remember the answer. Look for the FIRST movement of the eye. There are six basic movements Up Left, Up Right, Straight Left, Straight Right, Down Left and Down Right.
- Mark the eye below as you saw the person’s eye move from your perspective.
- If the person’s eyes don’t move or you are unsure of the movement, keep asking questions until you see a pattern of movement.
- When you have that pattern, tell the person to look at the explanation at the back of this packet.

## *For the Person Answering Questions:*

- Remember to answer questions truthfully.
- When the person asking questions says he sees a pattern, look at the eye below and find which way you looked first most of the time.
- Turn to the end of the packet and see what kind of learner this suggests you are.
- Then check for tools and strategies+ to help you learn based on this primary learning style.



Be sure to check out what each area means on page 14 near the end of this packet. The direction that your eye travels first most of the time helps you understand how your brain was set up to learn and remember most easily. We’ve included some tools which fit each of these learning styles to help you as you work in the other areas.

# Color

Color can make a big difference when you are trying to read, copy, or write. Sometimes it is easy to change colors when you're writing by trying different pen inks or papers. Other times, it seems more difficult – like when you are reading out of a book. However, there are a number of different tools we can use to change color. The most important one for reading and copying is the use of color filters. (They come in half sheets like on the right, full sheets for bigger books and copying from full size papers, and small filters called Reading Helpers that look like book marks.) Your teacher will help you learn how to choose a color that is best for you for reading and copying. With the right color, you may find that you read more smoothly (fluently) or that you don't make as many mistakes.



When you start trying to find the filter that might work best, just find a book with pages of text that have a white background and compare the filters one at a time. When you have several



colors that seem to make the words and letters easiest to see and read, find a friend or teacher and read about 10 lines of text with and then without the filters. See which one they think helps you the most. (Most of the time you'll all see the difference.)

Remember that only about 4 to 5 people in 10 actually see a benefit from using color filters.

Remember that you can use color on the computer in many word processing and word prediction programs (*Word*, *Write Out Loud*, *CoWriter 4000*, and *IntelliTalk II*). The greatest advantage of using color on the computer is that you can change both the background color *and the colors of the letters*. For some students, changing BOTH colors makes a very big difference. (Font colors print; background colors only show on the screen.) Don't be afraid to experiment with as many colors as you can – and don't rule out any combination before you actually see them on screen.

**Note how much difference font and background color can make when writing or editing a document!**

Do you have a problem with any of the following? If you checked any of these, you should do color trials with the filters and/or on the computer:

- Copying from a book or paper on your desk
- Copying accurately
- Copying fast enough
- Getting eye fatigue if you read too long
- Wanting to turn the lights off while reading
- Blurry letters
- Problems seeing the spaces between words or lines
- Letters or line that seem to be moving
- Words or letters that look different each time you see them
- Rubbing your eyes all the time
- Standing your book up to read or putting it under the desk to cut down on brightness

After you choose color filters and do trials which each of those filters which seem to make it easier to read or copy, check the one that works best for you below.

**NRSI / See It Right Colors**

- Pale Rose
- Pink
- Rose
- Red Orange
- Yellow
- Gray
- Gold
- Pale Blue
- Turquoise
- Aquamarine
- Purple
- Light Blue
- Peach
- Blue
- Light Peach
- Medium Blue
- Dark Blue

- Lime Green
- Dark Pink
- True Red
- Dark Turquoise
- Dark Gray
- Medium Dark Blue
- Dark Green

**Irlen Colors**

- Irlen Turquoise
- Irlen Yellow
- Irlen Green
- Irlen Rose
- Irlen Peach
- Irlen Blue-Gray
- Irlen Purple
- Irlen Gray
- Irlen Goldenrod

Some people actually do better with or prefer to use the small, bookmark-like Reading Helper filters. They are “less obvious” and they also help with tracking. If you used one of these colors, try the corresponding Reading Helper and check which one(s) worked best for you:

- Yellow
- Blue
- Green
- Red
- Hot Pink
- Purple
- Orange

**Wide Filter Strips**

- Yellow
- Blue

*Remember: Filters should be replaced when they become scratched.  
Scratched filters make your eyes try to focus too hard and can cause fatigue.*

# Lighting

The kind of light you use for reading and writing can also make a difference. There are basically 6 kinds of light that you can use, and you should experiment with all of them. Some lighting might be better for reading, others for writing. Some people find that they actually need two kinds of light (outside light and a lamp, for example) or different kinds of lights when they are more tired (usually more light). Use the following chart to make notes on what happened when you used each of these kind of lights.

Kind of Lighting	Your Observations
Fluorescent	
Full spectrum light bulbs	
Regular light bulbs	
Color light bulbs	
No lights	
Sunlight	

# Highlighting

When you are reading and trying to mark important information, highlighters often work best. (Remember there are also highlighter tapes that you can use when you can't mark up a book permanently.) The idea of highlighting is to make the information "stand out." You'll find that certain colors really will make information pop off the page for you, and there is no way to find the best color unless you compare them all on the same page. To determine what colors work best, get a full set (6 colors) of the neon highlighters and try highlighting one or two words in each color on one page. Look at the page and decide which color draws your eye to it most easily.



Use a different color highlighter on each line in the box on the right. Which color makes the words "pop out" at you?

Declaration of Independence

1492 - 1658

Photosynthesis

Boyle's Law

The setting of the story determines mood.

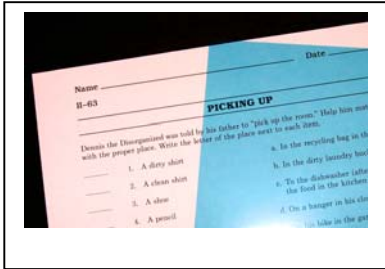
Spanish Inquisition

# Copying

Copying is a vital skill, especially for subjects like math (near point copying) or when copying from the board (far point copying). We've discovered a few things about copying that may make it more successful for you and which should be part of your tool trials. First, answer the following questions to determine if you have a problem with copying.

Do you have a problem with any of the following? If you do, try some of the ideas that follow.

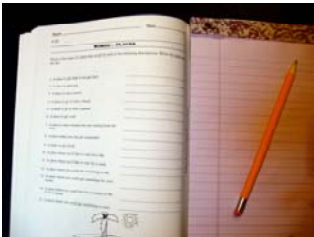
- Copying from a book or paper on your desk
- Copying accurately
- Copying fast enough
- Copying from the board



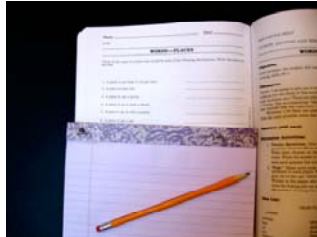
If **color** worked for you, then you should try color for copying. Place the filter over the text you are copying from (near point) or discuss having the teacher use different colors for notes on the board (especially important for teachers who use a variety of dry erase markers on whiteboards).

Your Filter Color Choice: \_\_\_\_\_

The **position** of the material to copy from can also be important. There are 3 basic positions: to the left of the paper you are copying to, to the right of it, or in line with it.



copy to left of paper

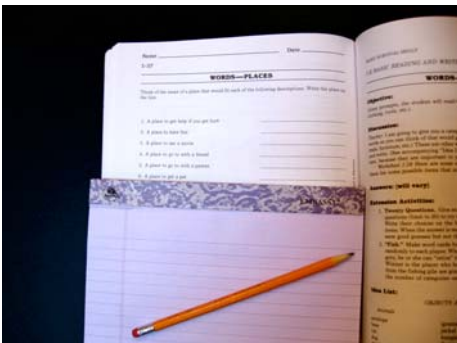


copy above paper

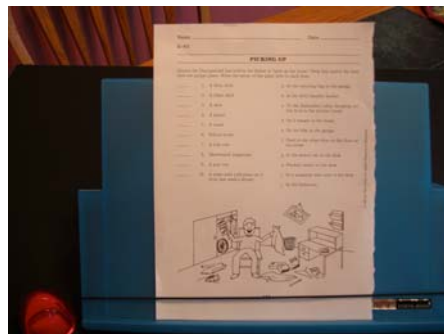


copy to right of paper

The **orientation** of the copy can also be important. Can you copy more easily when the book is laying flat on the desk, or does it work better when the copy is standing up?



book & paper flat on desk



copy in upright position (Page Up or Portabook)

# Paper

The paper you use to write on can also make a significant difference in a number of areas. The factor that seems to make the greatest difference for many students is the kind and size of the lines. In addition, many students and adults are also finding that the color of the paper can really make a difference, especially for longer tasks such as note-taking.

## 1. Lines

- Unlined paper
- Narrow ruled
- College ruled
- Wide ruled
- Note-taking Paper (blue lines with blue shading)
- Raised Line Paper – type: \_\_\_\_\_
- Margin lines needed

## 2. Color

- White
- Yellow
- Pink
- Blue
- Green
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

# Doing Math Computations

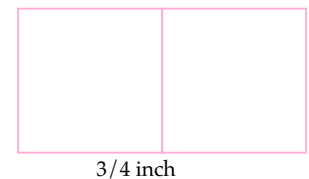
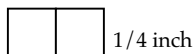
We've got two questions to start with -- Do you need a calculator? Do need help with keeping your math calculations written neatly on the paper?

## 1. I need a calculator that

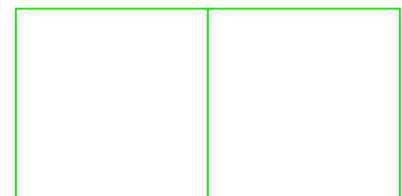
- Has bigger keys (Giant Calculator)
- Has a bigger screen read out (Giant Calculator)
- Says the numbers as I enter them (talking calculator)
- Says the answers (talking calculator)
- Helps with fractions (TI-15)
- Has a print out
- Is on the computer

## 2. I need help with lining up my numbers when I write on paper

- I need grid paper
- I tested the size of grids below by writing numbers in the boxes and matching the typical size of my numbers to one of the grids.
- Colored grids (  blue,  green,  yellow,  pink) would be better than black.
- I would do better with a signature guide to help me line up numbers.



1 inch



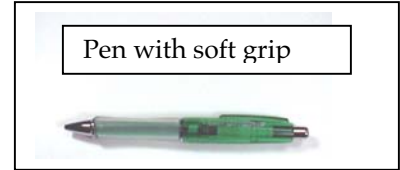


# Pens / Pencils / Erasers

With literally hundreds of pens available today, the choice of a writing “instrument” can be very personal. However, we have been able to list some of the ways that pens are different from one another so that you can cut your trials down. In the end, though, the kind of pen or pencil you use is the one that “feels right” in your hand and that allows you to write without fatigue for as long as possible. Here are some of the considerations you should remember when trying to choose a pen. Check the ones that are most important to you and then your teacher will try to find you the pen(s) that best fit your needs for the test of how it feels in your hand.

## 1. Size

- I like short pens and pencils
- The length doesn't really matter.
- I like thinner pencils and pens about the same width.
- I like thick pens and pencils.



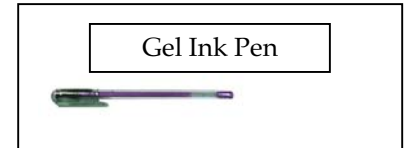
## 2. Grip

- I like a “plain” pen.
- I like a padded or gel grip.
- I like a shaped (ergonomic) grip.
- I like something really different – I don't like holding pens in the “regular” way.
  - a. Evo Pen
  - b. Ring Pen
  - c. Other



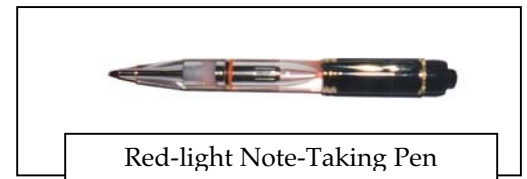
## 3. Ink and Tip Width

- The ink color I like best is \_\_\_\_\_.
- I like regular tips.
- I like fine or extra fine tips.
- I like gel inks.
- I like thick points or thin markers for writing.



## 4. Light (pens which throw a light onto the surface of the paper).

- No light for me.
- White light (Nite Writer)
- Colored Light (Red Light Note-taking Pen or Multi-Color Light Pen)



## 5. Pencils

- I use standard pencils with erasers
- I prefer thicker pencils
- I like mechanical pencils
- I use a pencil grip \_\_\_\_\_

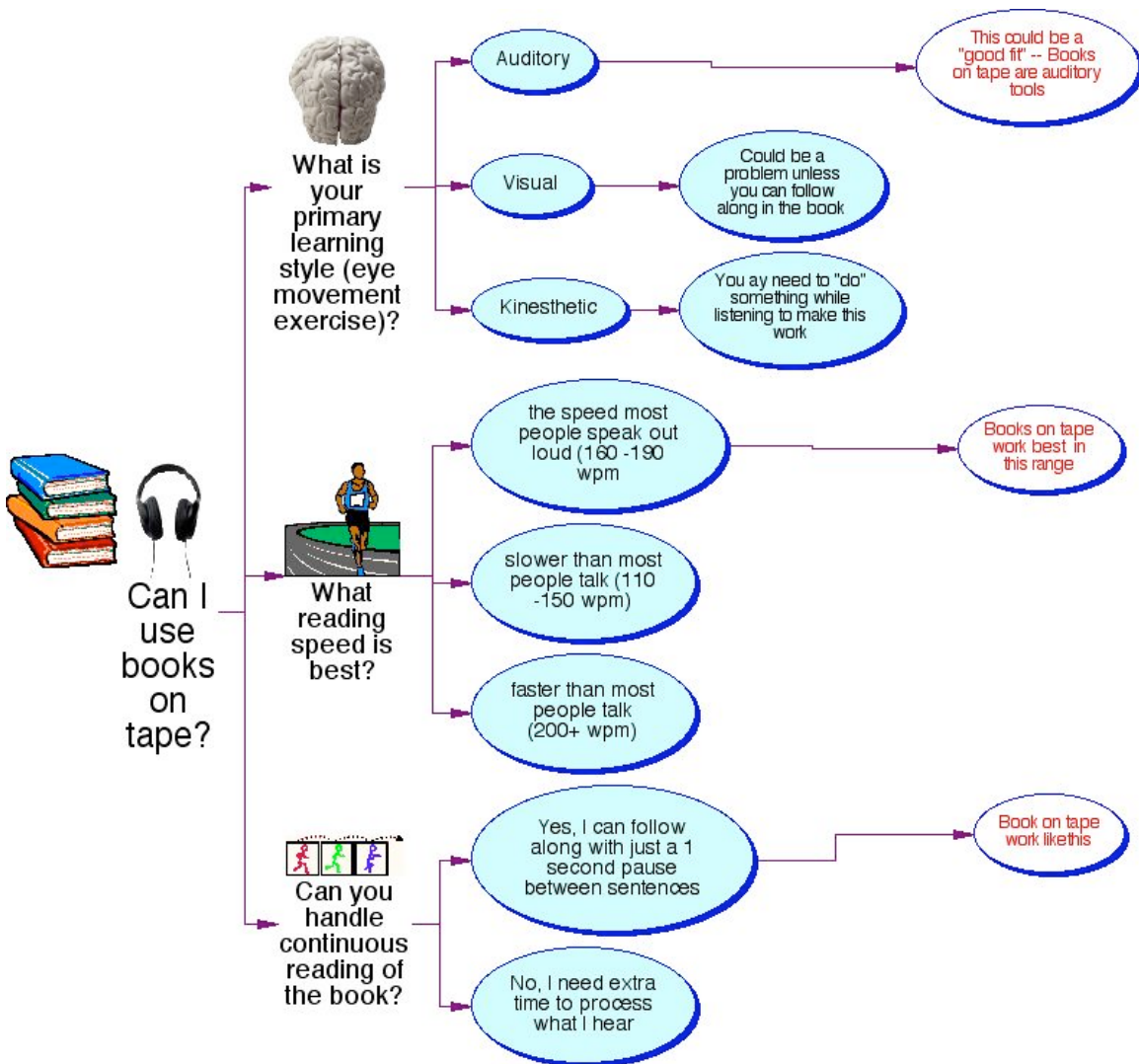


## 6. Erasers

- I like pencils / pens with erasers at the end.
- I like separate erasers.
- I rub erasers too hard sometimes and it ruins the papers.
- I tend to cross out rather than erase.
- I need an electric eraser.

# Using Books on Tape

Is reading either slow and/or difficult for you? If someone else ends up reading to you, you might want to try the mid tech reading solution – Books on Tape. Before you try this kind of technology, though, it's important that you recognize just what you need to make this a successful technology. Try the flow chart below to see if this will work for you. There are three basic questions. Find the answer that comes closest to your answer for each and then see if a red text bubble is attached to that answer. The more red text bubbles you have, the greater chance of success you'll have with books on tape.

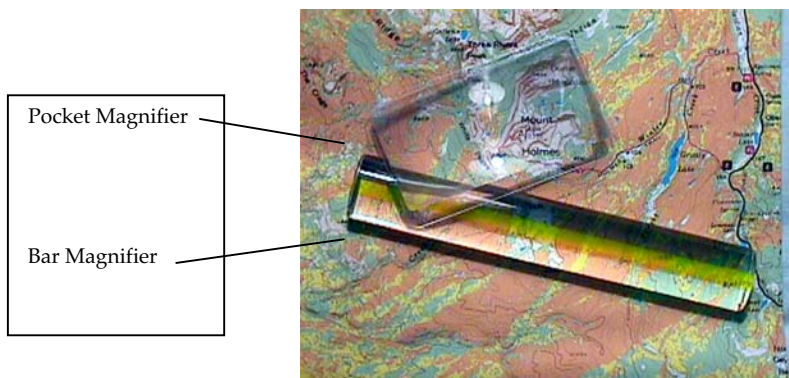


If you ended up at the red text bubbles (one, two, or all three of them), audio books might work well for you. If you had ended up with just one or no red text bubbles, audio books might be more difficult for you. Here are the variables you should check yourself for as you listen to a selection. Check those statements which best match your experience with a tape recorded book. They should help you decide if this technology will really work for you.

- I understand and remember best when just listening.
- I need to look at the words in the book as they are read.
- The voice on the tape really bothers me.
- The books are read too slow.
- The books are read too fast.
- The speed seems just right.
- Sometimes I wish I could stop, back up and listen to a section again.
- I daydream and suddenly find I am lost in the text.
- I have problems remembering what I've heard.
- I remember the first few sentences, but pretty soon there's just too much information.
- I have trouble finding my place in a tape if I have to stop listening in the middle of a chapter.

## Working with Maps

Maps can be very confusing with all their lines, colors, and labels. Finding information on a map or following a route from one place to another can also be a frustrating task. We have a few tools that we use to help you find locations on maps – magnifiers. Most of these small hand held magnifiers only increase the size of the original picture or word 1.5 to 2 times – enough to help you do an organized search (top to bottom, left to right) across even the most complicated map. Try the Bar Magnifier (especially for following routes) and the Pocket Magnifier (especially for finding places).



## Music in the Background

If you did the Eye Movement Activity already and found that you are an auditory learner (especially an auditory sound learner), you may already know that you actually learn and remember best with music playing in the background. However, even other kinds of learners can benefit from some specialized music designed to help them concentrate and attend to a task. This Hemi-Sync music plays through stereo speakers, and your brain receives both the music and another set of sounds which help you concentrate and work more efficiently. The only way to find out if background music will help you is to try it.

Check the statements below that describe your work with different music *while you are working on another task*:

- It bothered me and I couldn't concentrate.
- I didn't really see a difference.
  
- I did best with just my music.
- I needed the music really loud.
- I needed the music pretty soft.
  
- I did best with the Hemi-Sync music.
- The Hemi-Sync tape or CD I used stressed:
  - concentration     attention     relaxation

## Marking the Place

Finding information in a large book or in your notebook can be frustrating and time consuming. There are a number of low tech tools which can help you quickly and easily find a certain place, color code information, or bookmark your reading progress. Some people prefer things that stick to the page; others like removable bookmarks. Some people use different colors to mark different kinds of information. Other people need a marker they can write on or one that is sturdy enough to last through weeks or months of use.

Which ones work best for you?

- Page flags – stick out of the book, removable adhesive, multiple bright colors, plastic so they last longer than paper
- Page markers – stick out of the book, removable adhesive, multiple bright colors, several inches long (enough room to write on), paper
- Page arrows – can stick out of the book or point to something on the page, removable adhesive, multiple bright colors, plastic so they last longer than paper
- Colored dots – places on the page, removable adhesive, bright colors, plastic so they last longer than paper
- Post-It Notes – stick out of the book or mark something on the page, removable adhesive, multiple bright colors, variety of sizes, some have lines, designed to be written on, paper
- Hefty Tabs – stick out of the book, plastic, heavy duty plastic (won't fold or rip), can be written on, multiple colors
- Bookmark Dictionary – sticks out of book but has a small keyboard so you can type in words you don't know and get the definition.

# Organizing

Organizing is a vital task that too many students just assume will happen no matter what they do. The truth is that real organization requires a great deal of planning and discipline. First you have to recognize the areas in which you might have organizational problems. Put a check next to each statement that applies to you and then explore some tools that might be helpful for those problems:

## 1. Group One – Time Organization

- I sometimes forget what day it is.
- If I didn't have a written schedule, I wouldn't remember the schedule each day.
- I have problems writing down my homework because there is never enough time.
- I have problems writing down my homework because of my poor handwriting.
- I don't know what's due when.
- I forget to look at my assignment book at home tonight.

### If this area is a problem, try:

- A larger format (size) assignment book
- A digital recorder for assignments
- A Palm-type device with alarms
- An audible or visual timer (Time Timer)
- A computer program with day / week / month presentations
- A watch with day and date as well as alarms

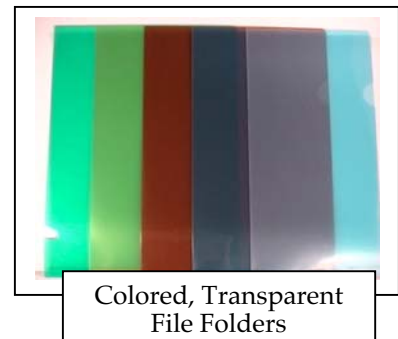


## 2. Group Two – Space Organization

- I can never find my homework in my notebook or book bag
- My locker is a disaster
- I can never find my books, pens, or school supplies
- My math papers are a mess; even I have problems finding the answer .

### If this is a problem, try:

- Pocket folders
- File folders
- Color folders
- Transparent folders
- Accordion folders
- Small zippered cases
- Zippered notebooks
- Math Grids for math computation



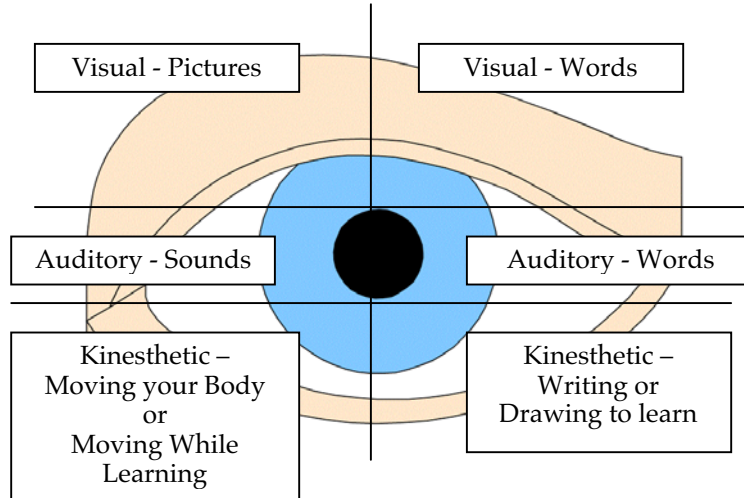
## 3. Group Three – Priority Organization

- I don't know which papers to keep.
- I don't know which work to do first – especially with limited time.

### If this is a problem, try:

- Using bins or boxes at home and /or school to store papers not immediately needed.
- Marking what has to be done first or what is most important with Post-It Page Markers, color coding dots, or a certain color highlighters.

# Eye Movement Answers



Think about the tools you try in terms of the way your brain learns best. Visual people use their eyes to learn and recall – auditory people use their ears – kinesthetic people use their hands or bodies.

## Visual - Pictures Tool Examples

- Anything with pictures
- Calendars with pictures or icons instead of just words
- Studying from maps, webs, or charts

## Visual – Words Tool Examples

- Anything with words
- Organizers with To Do lists

## Auditory – Sounds Tool Examples

- Background Music for studying
- Devices with audible “alarms”

## Auditory – Words Tool Examples

- Any tool that “talks”
- Talking spell checkers and dictionaries
- Talking word processors
- Books on tape

## Kinesthetic – Movement Tool Examples

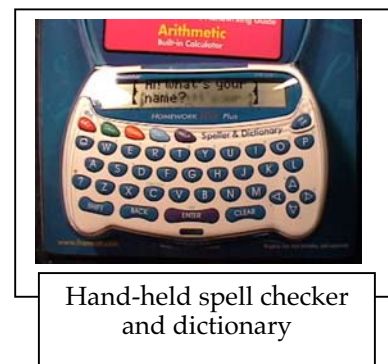
- Any hands-on activity
- Mouse entry on a computer
- Any portable tool
  - o AlphaSmart
  - o Palm Device
  - o Hand-held spell checkers
  - o Hand-held calculators

## Kinesthetic – Writing / Drawing Tool Examples

- Any writing or drawing tool
- Anything with a keyboard
- Personal note-taking in all learning situations – lectures, reading textbooks, copying information, etc.



Hemi-Sync CD is music for studying

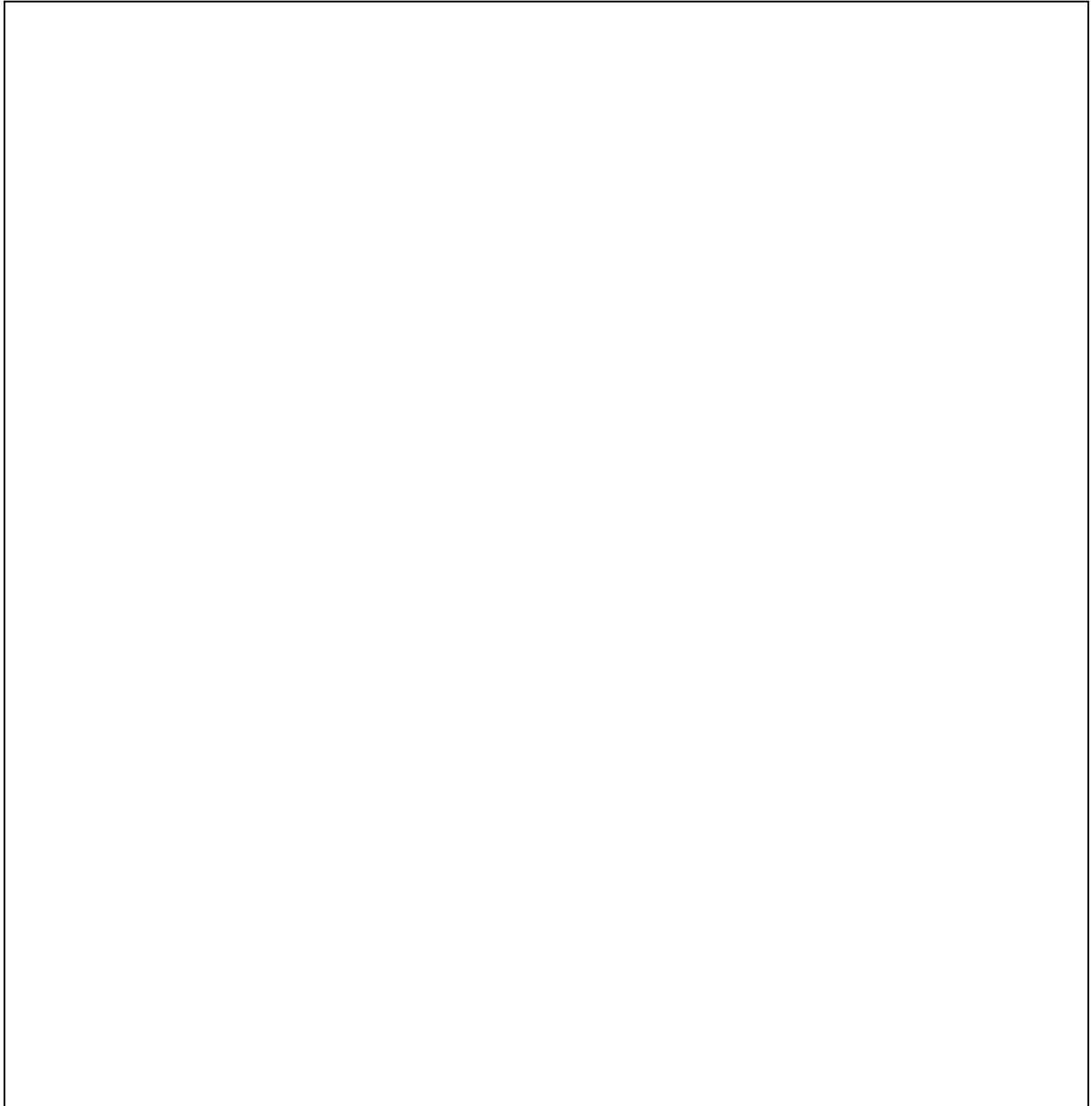


Hand-held spell checker and dictionary

As you finish a section and decide which tool works best for you, return to this back page and put that information in the following grid so that you can easily refer to it later. Remember that your choices might change with time and with different tasks. This is just a starting point.

<i>Section</i>	<i>Your Choices and Discoveries</i>
<i>Eye Movement</i>	
<i>Color</i>	
<i>Lighting</i>	
<i>Highlighting</i>	
<i>Copying</i>	
<i>Paper</i>	
<i>Doing Math Computations</i>	
<i>Pens, Pencils, and Erasers</i>	
<i>Using Books on Tape</i>	
<i>Working with Maps</i>	
<i>Music in the Background</i>	
<i>Marking the Place</i>	
<i>Organizing</i>	

*My Notes:*



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