



TAKING NOTES

Taking notes is an essential skill because....

1. Lectures and textbooks often cover different information.
2. Writing down important information helps you to remember it.
3. Reviewing your notes is an essential part of studying for exams.
4. Taking notes helps in identifying -- and then clarifying -- difficult or confusing points.

Be prepared to take notes.

1. Complete any reading assignments in your textbook, and do any assigned problems or exercises.
2. Organize all of your notes in order in a loose-leaf notebook.
3. Bring the stuff you'll need -- paper, pens, textbook, etc.
4. Review your notes and any questions you have from the last class or the textbook. Try to get your questions answered from the lecture; if not, be prepared to ask the instructor at the end of class.
5. Sit front and center. This will help you to keep alert, see the board and the instructor clearly, and participate.
6. Be willing to ask questions and to contribute to class discussions.

What to include in your notes: watch and listen for clues.

Be alert for important information and relationships between ideas or facts. When you hear one of these clues, write down what the speaker says next.

1. **Words or phrases that show emphasis:** "*A major reason for...*", "*Note that...*", "*Don't forget...*" "*The principal effect*", etc.
2. **Words and phrases that show connections between facts or ideas.**
 - lists or enumerations: *There are three results of...*
 - contrasting ideas: *On the one hand... On the other hand...*
 - introductory statements: *Today, I'm going to talk about...*
 - rhetorical questions which the lecturer is about to answer: *So, how do Gothic cathedrals and Romanesque cathedrals differ?*
 - transitions to the next point: *Next..., Another reason for..., Now, let's consider...*
 - examples: *for example,... such as...*
 - conclusion or summary statements: *Finally,... As I have shown,...., In summary....*



What to include, *continued*:

3. **Repeated information** is probably important -- include it in your notes.
4. **Copy information from the board or overhead projector** into your notes.
5. **Write definitions in your notes** exactly as the instructor presented them.
6. **Nonverbal clues** show your instructor's attitude toward the material:
 - Watch your instructor's eyes to see if she reads directly from her notes.
 - Evidence of an increase in the instructor's interest or energy level: taking a step toward the class, changing the pitch or volume of her voice, slowing down her speech, or looking directly at students.

Techniques for Effective Note-taking

1. **Date your notes, write class and page number on each page.** Put your name and phone number in your notebook in case you lose it.
2. **Try using the column system for notetaking:** draw a vertical line on the page about 1-1/2" from the left edge of the paper. Take notes on the right side of the page and leave the left side blank. Later, use the left side to write down key words and phrases and symbols that will help you find important parts of your notes.
3. **Use shortcuts to speed up your notetaking:**
 - **Omit unnecessary words** like a, the, is, are. Just include the key words that carry the ideas. Don't try to write in complete sentences. (The exception is definitions where the exact wording may be important.)
 - **Use abbreviations** (short forms of words) so you can write more information in less time. Try to be consistent with abbreviations so you can understand them later! Omitting most vowels is one good way to shorten words: *bkpg* for bookkeeping, *resch* for research.
4. Put information in your own words as much as possible. Paraphrasing helps you to make sense of the material as you listen.
5. **Use graphic symbols to emphasize key points:** In the left margin, put a * or ! next to important ideas. Draw diagrams or arrows to show cause/effect, ---> increase or decrease .
6. **If you don't understand, write ? in the margin; leave space** to fill it in later.
7. **Include examples** the instructor used to illustrate or clarify concepts.
8. **Leave LOTS OF WHITE SPACE in your notes by indenting lists or examples and skipping lines between parts of the lecture.** This makes notes easier to read and helps you to find information when you study.



After the class: Use your notes.

1. **Review your notes within 24 hours after the class.** Short-term memory deteriorates rapidly. Without review, you can forget 80% of what you heard by the next day!
2. **Edit your notes while you review** to make them clearer and easier to read. Fix illegible words, write out abbreviations that might not be clear a few weeks later; use graphic symbols to mark anything you don't understand or that you think is important; make sure you've dated and numbered each page. If you use the column system, add key words or phrases in the left margin. If you wish, you can use a highlighter to mark important points, but don't overdo it.
3. **Review all your notes on a regular basis.** Look for connections to things you already know or are interested in; try to clarify what you don't understand; try to predict test material. Think about the big picture, how information from different parts of the course fits together.
4. **If you used the column system of notetaking,** cover the right side of page. Using the key words in left column as cues, try to "recite" as much as you can remember of your notes.
5. **Typing or recopying notes** helps some students to remember the information, while for others, this may be a waste of time. Auditory learners may learn best by **reading their notes out loud**, or even reading into a tape recorder.
6. **Compare your notes with other students'** or talk to the instructor to catch points you missed.

NOTE-TAKING CHECKLIST

Use this checklist to evaluate your notes from a recent class.

Did you...

- Date your notes?
- Write the class & page number on each page?
- Use abbreviations and omit unnecessary words to save time?
- Use symbols (*, !, ->, etc.) to emphasize key points?
- Indicate places where you got lost or points you don't understand?
- Leave white space in your notes?
- Include examples to clarify major concepts?
- Include complete and exact definitions?
- Review and edit your notes as soon as possible after class?

Think about this: In 2 or 3 weeks, will you still be able to understand your notes and retrieve specific information from them?



ABBREVIATIONS WORKSHEET

(ABBREVIATIONS WORKSHEET)

You can save time and take more detailed notes by using abbreviations. There are many standard abbreviations; use your own creativity to come up with others that will help you. Have fun!

Fill in the blanks with abbreviations or symbols that are familiar to you, or make up your own. Some have been given.

and =
through = *thru*
with = *w/*
within =
without =
from =
between = *b/n*
because =
therefore =
important =
example =
assignment = *ass't*
definition =
something = *s/th*
somewhere =
everything =
introduction =
information = *info*
especially =
regular = *reg*

maximum =
minimum =
week = *wk*
month =
yearly =
first = *1st*
money =
time =
subject = *subj*
homework = *HW*
science =
business management = *bus mgt*
psychology =
experiment =
analysis =
discussion = *disc'n*
emphasize = *emph*
material =
association = *ass'n*
perspective =

Think of some words or phrases you are likely to hear in a class (or at work). Write them, and then create abbreviations for them: