

Note Taking for Lectures

Lectures are a highly condensed method of passing on information, and taking quality notes is an essential skill. Use these tips to improve your note taking abilities, and remember – it takes practice!

Why Take Notes?

- Provides a written record for review
- Helps you pay attention
- Requires condensing and rephrasing, which aids understanding

Before Going to Class:

- Review notes from previous class
- Review any reading assignments or homework
- Look at the syllabus to see what is to be discussed; be aware of the topic to be covered
- Anticipate what is to come and evaluate how well you will be able to understand the material

General Tips:

- Sit near the front of the classroom to avoid distractions
- Have plenty of paper and use an ink pen for easier readability
- Consider using multiple colors of ink to color-code notes

While Taking Notes:

- Don't write down every single word!
 - Try to get the main idea and key points
 - Include important illustrations, graphs, equations, and definitions
 - Paraphrase and use shorthand to improve efficiency (leave out small words, abbreviate, etc.)
- Use a system to flag very important information – such as a star, or use a highlighter
- Leave room for later additions
- Use a system of note taking that works well for you (*see back for ideas*)
- Ask questions if they come up, or write it down and ask later

After Class:

- Review your notes!!!
 - Add details or fill in missing information
 - Organize your notes, and re-write them in a more coherent or logical way
- Compare notes with a classmate
- Find answers to any lingering questions
- Write a brief summary of the main ideas covered in class
- Use a system to organize your notes – include the date at the top of each page to avoid confusion, and keep your notes organized so they are ready for review in the future

Remember... Good notes are the best study guide you can have for your class. Keep your notes organized, rewrite them as needed, and don't be afraid to try a new note taking method to see if it works for you!

Note-Taking Methods

The Cornell Method: Draw a line down the left side of your paper. In the left column, record key words, main ideas, or general topics. In the right column, record your notes about each key word.

This method makes it very easy to review your notes later, as you can simply skim through the keywords in the left column to quickly find a certain topic. Remember to **review** after class and add any missing notes.

Lecture Topic		Date
Keyword	Notes about this keyword, including definitions, main ideas, etc.	
Keyword	Notes about this keyword	

The Outlining Method:

- Use bullet points or a numbering system
 - Indentations are used to group related information
 - These details apply to the main point above
- Pros:
 - Easy to review
 - Visually shows how information is related
- Cons:
 - Can be difficult to reorganize during class

The Charting Method:

Information is written into a table or chart. This method works well for information that is easily categorized, such as scientific information.

How?	Advantages	Disadvantages	When to use it?
Set up your paper in columns and label appropriate headings	Helps pull out the most useful information	Can be a hard system to learn to use	If you'll be tested on facts and relationships
The headings could be categories covered in the lecture	Reduces the amount of writing necessary	You need to know the content that will be covered during class	If content is heavy and presented quickly – such as a history course with dates, people, events
Insert information (words, phrases, etc.) into the appropriate category	Provides easy review for memorizing facts and studying relationships		

The Sentence Method

1. This is the most straightforward note taking method.
2. Information is written in the order it is presented.
3. Each sentence is numbered so you can refer back to previous sentences (example: see #2).
4. This is a good method to use if you are unaware of the content that will be presented in class.
5. A disadvantage for this method is that it can be time consuming; however, you can still use shorthand.
6. After class, review your notes; consider rewriting them using one of the other methods above.