

Notetaking Tips

Your notes from class along with your textbook are the two primary sources of information that you will need to learn in order to be successful in your class. Without good notes you will be at a definite disadvantage when it is time to demonstrate the amount and depth of your learning.



1 LABEL YOUR NOTES AND KEEP THEM ORGANIZED

Label the course, date and topic-covered at the top of the page. This will help you find particular topics later in the semester. Keep notes from each class together for ease of access.

2 MAKE YOUR NOTES LEGIBLE

Try to be as neat as possible, remembering that these notes are a critical resource for your success in this class. You will need to study from these notes and not being able to decipher them will not help you later. Underline headings of the different topics covered by the instructor.

3 START TAKING NOTES AS SOON AS THE INSTRUCTOR STARTS TO SPEAK

Taking note of the instructor's introductory remarks will usually help you to anticipate what's ahead and be able to better organize your notes as you take them.

4 BE AGGRESSIVE

Good note taking is hard work. Sit where you can see and hear the instructor and the instructor can see and hear you (the T Zone). This will help you from daydreaming, texting, or doodling.

- ✓ Concentrate on what is being said; do more listening and thinking and less writing.
- ✓ If the lecture is not well organized, put down all main points and reorganize after class.
- ✓ If you miss a point, get it later from another student or the professor.
- ✓ Have a system for taking notes (Outline Form, Cornell Notes, etc.)
- ✓ Write your notes in your own words whenever possible.
- ✓ Leave blanks for missed information and fill it in later.
- ✓ Omit anecdotes and detailed illustrations.
- ✓ Copy important names, dates and formulas carefully.

5 TRY TO IGNORE DISTRACTIONS

Although the person sitting in front of you may be texting and having a good time, try not to let that person distract you. The better and more complete your notes are the less time you will have to spend on them when studying.

6 HIGHLIGHT OR CIRCLE SPECIALIZED VOCABULARY YOU WILL HAVE TO LEARN

In order to talk about a subject, your instructor will use the language of that subject. Circle those subject-specific words that you will need to learn the meaning of.

7 LEARN TO DIFFERENTIATE FACT FROM OPINION IN A LECTURE

Label your professor's opinion as opinion so that you will not confuse it later with related fact. While your professor's is important it is unlikely that his/her opinion will be on the exam rather than the facts or data that he/she is discussing. Add an Abbreviation or Symbol for "opinion" to your Abbreviations & Symbols List (#8). Place your own reactions in [brackets] so as not to confuse them with the professor's opinion.

8 DEVELOP YOUR OWN ABBREVIATIONS AND SYMBOLS

Develop your own abbreviations for words you use constantly (eg = for example; wo = without; w = with; > = greater than; ☺ = Opinion). In addition to these time savers, put an asterisk or ☆ by that material likely to be on a test and a "?" or Q next to something you do not understand.

9 ALWAYS TAKE NOTES ON DISCUSSIONS

Good points always come up during a discussion. So, it is important to capture them as a part of your notes.

10 TRY TO ATTEND EVERY CLASS

Remember, every class missed is an extra chapter or two of information you will have to try to digest and learn on your own. This increases your risk of not interpreting what you are reading consistently with your instructor and not making the necessary connections to fully understand what the instructor expects to you learn.