



Note-Taking

Why take notes?

- Making yourself take notes forces you to listen carefully.
- Reviewing notes helps to identify the most important points and allows you to test your understanding of class material.
- Notes that you have taken are easier to remember than notes someone else has written.

What do you take notes on?

Instructors usually give clues that help you identify what is important. Common clues are:

- Material written on overheads/PowerPoint presentations.
- Repetition
- Emphasis of a point is often seen in the instructor's gestures and tone of voice, the amount of time he/she spends explaining it, and the number of examples.
- Signal words—"There are **two points of view** on this issue ..."; "The **third reason** is ..."; "In **conclusion** ..."
- Make note of examples. They can trigger your mind back to the issue that they illustrate.
- Reviews/summaries given at the beginning or end of class.

How?

Try the Cornell System of Note-Taking

- Draw a vertical line 2 1/2 inches from the left side of the paper. This is the recall column. After each class write questions, key words or phrases in the recall column that help you recall key points. Notes are taken on the right side of the margin.
- Use the following 5 R's of note-taking.
 1. **Record.** During the lecture, record in the main column as many meaningful facts and ideas as are needed. Capture general ideas. Skip lines to show the end of ideas or thoughts. Use abbreviations. Write legibly so that you can read it later.
 2. **Reduce.** As soon after the class as possible, write questions in the recall column that require you to answer using the notes you have written on the right side of your paper.
 3. **Recite.** Cover the note column and ask yourself the question in the recall column and check to see if you know the material.



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4. **Reflect and structure ideas.** Reflective students distill their opinions and thoughts into structures and outlines that are used in the course. Take time to think about what your opinions are and how they fit within the course. This makes the course much more personal and enjoyable.
 5. **Review.** If you spend 10 minutes every week or so in a quick review of your notes you will retain much of what you have learned. It will increase your learning effectiveness and reduce your study time before exams.

Tips:

- Attend all lectures.
- Write it down. What seems easy to remember now is much more difficult to remember several weeks later in an exam.
- When you take notes, try to understand where each concept fits in the larger structure of the class. Always look for outlines and organizational structure of class material. These help you identify the main ideas.
- Don't be afraid to ask questions.
- Take notes in a large notebook or binder and try to keep hand-outs with the notes from that class. Good organization of materials really helps.
- Don't try to write down every word a lecturer says. Instead, capture the thoughts and ideas in your own words. Practice using the same terminology (key words) the instructor uses in your notes.
- Use point form where possible. Write enough to remember and understand the key points and use abbreviations when possible. If you have a large word that you regularly write, make up your own abbreviation for it.
- If you miss a point, leave a space so that you know you missed something. Ask the professor or a friend about what you missed and fill it in after class.
- Develop your own code using symbols. For example, I always put my initials beside something that reflects my thoughts. That way I don't confuse my ideas with what the professor was teaching. Symbols can be used to show importance, when something is missed, important definitions and so on.
- If it is something the professor has written it's probably important. So try and take notes of overheads and PowerPoint presentations.
- Date your notes and number pages. If your notes ever fall out of your binder you will be able to put them back in order.
- Sit at the front of the class. There are fewer distractions at the front.
- Good notes are like gold if you use and review them regularly.

