

Note-Taking Tips

Effective note taking in class can help you stay engaged during lectures. Taking notes also ensures you will have a good record of the lectures. Assigned readings or PowerPoint Slides are often background information to what your professor presents in class.

Notes can help you write a paper or take a test by giving you details that help explain main ideas and key concepts, tie themes together and compare and contrast information.

When you take notes, you should do the following:

Be Selective

Record the most important points, rather than every single word, unless the professor had indicated that every word matters.

Be Concrete and Specific

Use examples to describe and explain the topic being presented so that when you review your notes you can remember topics more easily.

Use Your Own Words

It is better to write your notes in your own words rather than recording what the teacher says word for word. When you do this, you become more involved in what you are hearing, and it is easier to remember what was presented in class. Formulas, charts and basic facts are the exception.

Write Your Own Questions

In the margin or on a separate piece of paper, write down any questions you have about course material that you want to ask a professor, tutor or classmate.

Use Different Ways of Presenting Information

Use a variety of methods to write down the material you need to know. Some examples of effective methods are outlines, study guides, summary sheets, flashcards, charts, graphs, flowcharts, concept maps, & other visual representations of information, as well as other material that you find helpful.

Develop Some Key Abbreviations

For efficiency, use abbreviations of words (such as "w/o" for without, "b/c" for because). Using abbreviations will save you time as you are taking notes.

Signal Words

Your instructor will use signals to indicate important material. For example, she may introduce an example with "for example." Actively listen for signals.

Common Signals:

- "There are three reasons why...."
- "First...Second... Third...."
- "And most importantly,...."
- "A major development...."

Support Material Signals:

- "On the other hand...."
- "On the contrary...."
- "For example...."
- "Similarly...."
- "In contrast...."
- "Also...."
- "Further...."
- "Furthermore...."
- "As an example...."
- "For instance...."

Conclusion and Summary Signals:

- "Therefore...."
- "In conclusion...."
- "As a result...."
- "Finally...."
- "In summary...."
- "From this we see...."

Don't miss these obvious signals:

- "Now this is important...."
- "Remember that...."
- "The important idea is that...."
- "The basic concept here is...."