

Note Taking Tips

1. GO TO CLASS PREPARED.

- Use a three-ring binder instead of a spiral or bound book. Pages can be easily removed for reviewing. Handouts can be inserted into your notes for cross-referencing. You can insert your own out-of-class notes in the correct order.
- Bring highlighters to class. Instructors will frequently make comments like, "This is an important concept." Or, "Make sure you understand this." These are direct clues that this will more than likely be on an exam. Highlighting these notes will help remind you later that this is definitely something you need to know.
- Read assigned material and previous class notes before class. Make notations about material or concepts you don't understand. Look up vocabulary words that are unfamiliar to you. You will have a better understanding about what the instructor is lecturing about and that will allow you to better decipher the more important points of the lecture.

2. IMPROVE YOUR LISTENING SKILLS.

- Start by entering the classroom with a positive attitude. Going to class thinking, "This is the last place I want to be today" only sets the stage for inattentive listening. Approaching lectures with a positive attitude allows one to be open-minded and enables you to get the most out of the information presented.
- Make a conscious effort to pay attention. Concentrate on concentrating.
- Adapt to whatever direction a lecture takes. When a lecture takes an unexpected detour, say a student asks a question you aren't particularly interested in, students have a tendency to "zone out." Before you know it, the lecture got back on track five minutes ago, and you missed crucial information that should have been noted.

3. DEVELOP A NOTETAKING METHOD THAT WORKS FOR YOU.

- Start each new lecture on a new page, and date and number each page. The sequence of material is important.
- Write on one side of the paper only. You can set them out side-by-side for easier reviewing when studying for an exam.
- Leave blank spaces. This allows you to add comments or note questions later.
- Make your notes as brief as possible.
- Develop a system of abbreviations and symbols you can use wherever possible.
- Note all unfamiliar vocabulary or concepts you don't understand. This reminds you to look them up later.

4. PAY CLOSE ATTENTION TO CONTENT.

Knowing what and how much to write down is sometimes difficult. Rely on some of the following tips for what to include in your notes.

- Details, facts, or explanations that expand or explain the main points that are mentioned. Don't forget examples.

- Definitions, word for word.
- A list of things that are discussed.
- Material written on the chalkboard or on a transparency, including drawings or charts.
- Information that is repeated or spelled out.

5. REVIEW AND EDIT YOUR NOTES.

- It is extremely important to review your notes within 24 hours.
- Edit for words and phrases that are illegible or don't make sense. Write out abbreviated words that might be unclear later.
- Edit with a different colored pen to distinguish between what you wrote in class and what you filled in later.
- Fill in key words and questions in the left-hand column.
- Note anything you don't understand by underlining or highlighting to remind you to ask the instructor.
- Compare your notes with the textbook reading and fill in important details in the blank spaces you left.
- Consider rewriting or typing up your notes.