

Note Taking Skills



⇒ Evaluate Your Present Note-Taking System

Ask yourself:

1. Did I use any form at all? Are my notes clear or confusing?
2. Did I capture main points and all sub points?
3. Did I streamline using abbreviations and shortcuts?

If you answered no to any of these questions, you may need to develop some new note-taking skills!

⇒ Five Important Reasons to Take Notes

1. It triggers basic lecturing processes and helps you to remember information.
2. It helps you to concentrate in class.
3. It helps you prepare for tests.
4. Your notes are often a source of valuable clues for what information the instructor thinks most important (i.e., what will show up on the next test).
5. Your notes often contain information that cannot be found elsewhere (i.e., in your textbook).

⇒ Guidelines for Note-Taking

1. Concentrate on the lecture or on the reading material.
2. Take notes consistently.
3. Take notes selectively. Do NOT try to write down every word. Remember that the average lecturer speaks approximately 125-140 words per minute, and the average note-taker writes at a rate of about 25 words per minute.
4. Translate ideas into your own words.
5. Organize notes into some sort of logical form.
6. Be brief. Write down only the major points and important information.
7. Write legibly. Notes are useless if you cannot read them later!
8. Don't be concerned with spelling and grammar.

⇒ Tips for Finding Major Points in Lectures

The speaker is usually making an important point if he or she:

1. Pauses before or after an idea.
2. Uses repetition to emphasize a point.
3. Uses introductory phrases to precede an important idea.
4. Writes an idea on the board.

⇒ Forms of Note-Taking

1. Outlining
 - I. Topic sentence or main idea
 - A. Major points providing information about topic
 1. Sub point that describes the major point
 - a. Supporting detail for the sub point
2. Patterning: flowcharts, diagrams

3. Listing, margin notes, highlighting

⇒ **Ways to Reduce and Streamline Notes**

1. Eliminate small connecting words such as: is, are, was, were, a, an, the, would, this, of. Eliminate pronouns such as: they, these, his, that, them. However, be careful NOT to eliminate these three words: and, in, on.
2. Use symbols to abbreviate, such as:

+ , & for and, plus
= for equals
- for minus
for number
x for times
> for greater than, more, larger
< for less than, smaller, fewer than
w/ for with
w/o for without
w/in for within
----> for leads to, produces, results in
<---- for comes from
/ for per

For example:

"The diameter of the Earth is four times greater than the diameter of the Moon."

Becomes:

"Earth = 4x > diameter of Moon."

3. Substitute numerals with symbols, for instance:

Substitute "one" with 1

Substitute "third" with 3rd

4. Abbreviate:

Drop the last several letters of a word. For example, substitute "appropriate" with "approp."

Drop some of the internal vowels of a word. For example, substitute "large" with "lrg."