

General Hints for Taking Notes

1. When taking notes, always listen first. Don't start writing until you have an idea on what the teacher is talking about.
2. Always label and date your notes for future convenience.
3. Do not try to take down everything the speaker says, or your notes will be too cumbersome for efficient review. Listen for and write supporting main ideas and details under each one.
4. Leave some space between each supporting main idea and the next one. This will help you when you are ready to write the "recall" or "memory key" column question.
5. Use numbering only if the teacher gives numbered cues, as: 'I will give you three reasons why the experiment failed. They are...'
6. Taping lectures is a waste of future time, because you must listen to the entire lecture again when reviewing. (Of course, taping is appropriate in special cases, such as for hard-of-hearing students or so absent students can make up a missed lecture.)
7. Material written on the chalkboard is generally considered important and should be copied.
8. Develop your own convenient set of abbreviations. Certain key terms appear over and over in any subject. Abbreviate them after spelling them out the first time. Eliminate vowels ("imprvmt" for *improvement*). Use symbols (".'" for *therefore*; "&" or "+" for *and*; "w" for *with*; "=" for *equals* or *same as* etc.).
9. Practice your listening skills. As you listen with a questioning mind, you will not be likely to daydream and therefore miss key points.
10. Do **NOT** attempt to add 'memory keys' to the LEFT column during the *class* or while the teacher is lecturing. You risk missing the teacher's next main points.

Good notetaking requires practice. Eventually everyone adapts techniques to their own style and needs. Just like handwriting, one person's notes will always differ somewhat from another's.

How to Take Class Notes

What can I do to keep from being bored during lectures and keep focused on what's being said?

- A. Be active.
1. Sit toward the front of the class.
 2. Sit away from friends who may distract you.
 3. Sit up.
 4. Make an effort to concentrate as completely as possible and understand what is being said.
 5. Listen first before writing.
 6. Reflect and think about what is being said.
 7. Respond to what is being said.
 8. Always be thinking of questions: How does this relate to other points in the lecture, in the book?
 9. When you don't understand something, stop the teacher and ask.

What format should I use to take notes?

- B. Cornell Notetaking format.
1. Use lined paper and mark a wide left margin.
 2. At the top of the page note the date, class, and topic of the lecture in pen.
 3. During the lecture, write in the right column.
 4. After the lecture, develop questions in left-hand column.

How can I take down all that's being said?

- C. Use shortcuts and clues.
1. Write notes in your own words. Develop a shorthand or abbreviation system.
 2. Write in phrases.
 3. Write quickly but legibly--your notes do not have to be immaculate.
 4. Take down new vocabulary and definitions.
 5. Try to write down the outline the teacher is using, looking for organization.
 - a. A lecture is like a paper; it has an introduction, body, and conclusion.
 - b. Write down the main points and their supporting evidence.
 6. Leave plenty of space and go back and add details (from your memory, other people's notes, the textbook).
 7. Sometimes there is no organization. Take down what you can and sort it out later with a friend, the teacher, or your textbook.
 8. Be selective.
 - a. Too many notes destroy the value of notetaking.
 - b. If you find you are not writing fast enough, it really means that you are writing too much.

LECTURE NOTES:

SOME TIPS

be an active listener	think about what is being said think about how what is being said relates to other points in the lecture, ideas from discussion/reading/ other subjects ask questions
be aware of lecturer/speaker organization	listen for the speaker to forecast organization of the lecture (e.g., phrases like "Today I want to talk about," or "By the end of this lecture, you should be convinced that") look for lecture outlines on the board or handouts use arrows/lines/circles/numbers to connect related ideas
use the speaker's style to identify important points	become familiar with the speaker's style listen for important points that might be emphasized when the speaker: pauses or slows down repeats a point modulates the volume of her/his voice uses introductory phrases (e.g., "The four main points are" or "Note the relationship") writes on the board gestures or uses visual aids
keep up with the speaker Student Guide example:	write only the important ideas such as names, places, dates, events, examples, terms, definitions, causes, effects, evaluations, cross references: make it brief but clear Speaker says: "Hippocrates, a Greek who is considered to be the Father of Medicine, was born on the island of Cos in 460 B.C."

	<p>Notes say: "Hippocrates (Gr.) Father of Med. b.Cos 460 B.C."</p> <p><i>use abbreviations for familiar words</i></p>
example:	<p>Speaker says: "George Washington was not, in a sense, America's first president."</p> <p>Notes say: "G. Wash. not Am's 1st Pres.?"</p> <p><i>paraphrase to preserve content but simplify structure</i></p>
example:	<p>Speaker says: "Hawthorne is being studied afresh and found to have something to say that is relevant to our condition."</p> <p>Notes say: "New studies of Hawth. relevant."</p> <p><i>write a skeleton of names, dates and relationships and fill in the additional information later for accuracy</i></p>
example:	<p>Speaker says: "Mark Twain fell in love with Olivia Langdon. They married in 1870 and moved to Hartford, Connecticut."</p> <p>Notes before review say: "Twain - Olivia Langdon m. 870 to Hart Conn."</p> <p>Notes after review say: "Twain - Olivia Langdon marry 1870, move to Hartford, Conn."</p> <p><i>write quickly but legibly; rewrite or type to make legible and usable if needed</i></p>
be alert to the speaker's stance	<p>some lecturers attempt to persuade as well as inform listeners; when applicable, note ideas/references/ opinions that provide insight into the speaker's point of view</p>
review notes shortly after a lecture	<p>develop study questions and identify main ideas</p> <p>fill in details for clarity</p> <p>look up and add the definitions of new words/terminology</p>

identify information that is unclear and/or questions that need to be answered; write and mark questions in the text of notes or at the end where they will be easily found; get answers to the questions from other students and/or the speaker

add symbols to highlight important ideas and key words

delete irrelevant information

review the overall organization of the material; add symbols to make the organization clear or rewrite for clarity as needed

write a summary of the significant ideas

General Hints for Reviewing Notes

Many students do not review their notes on a timely basis. Often notes are for weeks or months before a review takes place, with review occurring just before major test. Actually, the best time to review notes is the few hours right after taking them. You still have the ideas in your mind and you can make any additions or corrections necessary. Here are suggestions on how to edit and review your notes.

1. Look over the notes: identify main ideas. Highlight important information in your notes. This will help you later when you go back to review again. For example, underline anything your teacher repeated in the lecture or wrote on the chalkboard.
2. Fill in any gaps and clarify any unclear words or ideas: add details that may have been skipped during the lecture, and delete unnecessary information. Emphasize important ideas by underlining or highlighting (use *stars*, *different colors*, etc.).
3. Complete the LEFT ‘recall’ or ‘memory key’ column. Either:
 - (a) write important words or phrases, or
 - (b) draw simple stick-figure pictures (icons) or symbols, or
 - (c) turn the idea into a **question**.
4. The purpose of the ‘recall’ or ‘memory key’ column is to reduce your notes to specific questions about the material. To be able to form questions, you have to know the material. By **thinking** about the material, you are beginning to move the information into your long-term memory. Later, the ‘**recall**’ column questions serve as a self-testing device.
5. An easy way to make ‘**recall**’ questions is to turn chapter headings into questions. Start with words like **what**, **why**, **how** and **describe**.
6. Add a summary. The summary helps you tie the entire lecture together. Make the summary,
 - (a) contain all of the main ideas of the lecture or materials;
 - (b) clear and easy to understand;
 - (c) written in your own words. Do **NOT** include details in the summary.
7. Should you re-copy your notes? Some students claim it helps them learn information. Study-skills specialists recommend against taking the time to re-copy notes; instead they advocate taking complete notes the first time, revising them within 24-hours, and reciting **ALoud**, using ‘**recall**’ questions as a self-test.