

HINTS FOR GOOD NOTE TAKING

Ten Basic Steps:

1. Don't write down everything that you read or hear. Be alert and attentive to the main points. Concentrate on the "meat" of the subject and forget the trimmings.
2. Notes should consist of key words, or very short sentences. As a speaker gets side-tracked you can go back and add further information.
3. Take accurate notes. You should usually use your own words, but try not to change the meaning. If you quote directly from the author, quote correctly.
4. Think a minute about your material before you start making notes. Don't take notes just to be taking notes! Take notes that will be of real value to you when you look over them later.
5. Have a uniform system of punctuation and abbreviation that will make sense to you. Use a skeleton outline, and show importance by indenting. Leave lots of white space for later additions.
6. Omit descriptions and full explanations. Keep your notes short and to the point. Condense your material so you can grasp it rapidly.
7. Don't worry about missing a point. Leave space and try to pick up the material you miss at a later date, either through reading, questioning, or common sense.
8. Don't keep notes on oddly shaped pieces of paper. Keep notes in order and in one place.
9. Shortly after making your notes, go back and rework (not recopy!) your notes by adding extra points, spelling out unclear items, etc.. Remember, we forget quickly. Budget time for this vital step just as you do for the class itself.
10. Review your notes periodically. This is the only way to achieve lasting memory.

Taking Useful Notes:*

1. Use dashes for words when the speaker goes too fast. Leave space so that you can fill in details later.
2. Use symbols to call attention to important words: underline, CAPS, circle, box, *, !, ?, or > .
3. When the instructor says, "this is important" get it exactly and * (mark it). Get a reference to the text or other source if you can.
4. Don't erase a mistake and don't black it out completely. Draw a single line through it. This saves time and you may discover later that you want the mistake.

5. Abbreviate – Shortcuts, such as abbreviations, are alternatives to writing everything longhand. Abbreviate only if you will be able to understand your own symbols when you go back to study your notes. Be constantly on the lookout for new and useful abbreviations and symbols to shorten your writing time. This will also increase your listening time.

Commonly Used Symbols and Abbreviations:

&	and
No. or #	number
=	equal to, is the same as
b/4	before
ref.	reference
w/	with
>	greater than
<	less than
i.e.,	that is
vs.	versus, as opposed to
e.g.,	for example
etc.	et cetera
Q.	question
b/c	because
w/o	without

*From "How to Succeed in College" by Gerow & Lyng and "Study Skills: A Student's Guide for Survival" by Carman & Adams, Jr.

Note Taking Styles:

Outline Style	Outlines work particularly well when the material being presented is well organized and when the information moves from main ideas to support detail. In an outline style of note taking, each point being recorded is separately numbered or lettered.
Phrase Style	When the manner in which the lecture is presented approaches a situation much like storytelling, jotting down phrases may be the best technique for note taking.
Vocabulary Style	Many courses (particularly at the introductory level) deal exclusively with the development of new vocabulary. As you take notes, one of your main objectives is to list the new vocabulary items and to spell them correctly. Although you may just list the words and definitions in your notes, these terms will have to be integrated with textbook notes and other materials. You need to have

	these definitions handy so you can formulate questions about concepts involving these words.
Drawing, Graph, and Problem Style	In many of your classes, your notes will be essentially non-verbal. Some obvious examples include diagrams, mathematical formulas/problems, drawings, and all sorts of charts and graphs. These pictorial representations are most important because they condense and summarize information that is difficult to write out.

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