

Tips About Note Taking

NOTE TAKING

Why take notes in class?

1. **Organized notes** will help you identify the core of important ideas in the lecture.
 2. **A permanent record will help you to learn and remember later.**
 3. **The lecture may contain information not available anywhere else.** This will be your only chance to learn it.
 4. **Lecture is where you learn what your instructor thinks is important, and he makes up the exams.**
 5. **Class assignments are usually given in the lecture.**
 6. **The underlying organization and purpose of the lecture will become clear through note taking.**
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TAKING NOTES IN CLASS: A BRIEF SUMMARY

1. BEFORE THE LECTURE BEGINS:

- Make some preparation for the lecture so that you will be more likely to predict the organization of the lecture.
 - **CHECK THE COURSE OUTLINE** to see if the lecturer has listed the topic or key ideas in the upcoming lecture. If so, convert this information into questions to be answered in the lecture.
 - **BEFORE THE LECTURE**, complete outside reading or reference assignments.
 - **REVIEW THE TEXT ASSIGNMENT** and any reading notes taken.
 - **REVIEW NOTES** from the previous lecture.
- Sit as near to the front of the room as possible to eliminate distractions.
- Copy everything on the blackboard and transparencies, especially the outline.
- Have a proper attitude. Listening well is a matter of paying close attention. Be prepared to be open-minded to what the lecturer may say even though you may disagree with it.

2. DURING THE LECTURE:

- Have your lecture paper and pencil or pen ready.
- Write down the title of the lecture, the name of the course and the date.
- Watch the speaker carefully.
- Listen carefully to the introduction (if there is one). Hear the lecture. By knowing his outline, you will be better prepared to anticipate what notes you will need to take.
- Be brief in your note taking. Summarize your notes in your own words, not the instructor's. Remember: your goal is to understand what she is saying, not to try to record exactly everything she says.

- Try to recognize main ideas by signal words that indicate something important is to follow. Examples: "First, Second, Next, Then, Thus, Another important..." etc.
 - Jot down details or examples that support the main ideas. Give special attention to details not covered in the textbook.
 - If there is a summary at the end of the lecture, pay close attention to it. You can use it to check the organization of your notes. If your notes seem disorganized, copy down the main points covered in the summary. It will help in revising your notes later.
 - At the end of the lecture, ask questions about points you did not understand.
 - Don't be in a rush. Be attentive, listen and take notes right up to the point at which the instructor dismisses you. If you are gathering together your personal belongings when you should be listening, you're bound to miss an important point--perhaps an announcement about the next exam!
3. **AFTER THE LECTURE:**
- Revise your notes as quickly as possible, preferably immediately after the lecture since at that time you will still remember a good deal of the lecture.
 - During the first review period after the lecture, coordinate reading and lecture notes.
 - Review your lecture notes **AT LEAST ONCE A WEEK**. Also, review the lecture notes before the next lecture.
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TIPS ON TAKING NOTES

1. Collect notes for each course in one place, in a separate notebook or section of a notebook.
 2. Write notes on one side of the page only.
 3. Use a loose-leaf notebook rather than a notebook with a permanent binding. See the pattern of a lecture by spreading out the pages.
 4. Write name and date of the class on the first sheet for each lecture.
 5. Use 8 1/2 x 11 sheets of paper for your notes. This size will allow you to indent and see the structure of your notes.
 6. Do not perform manual activities, which will detract from taking notes. Do not doodle or play with your pen. These activities break eye contact and concentration.
 7. Enter your notes legibly because it saves time. Make them clear.
 8. Use abbreviations.
 9. Box assignments and suggested books so you can identify them quickly.
 10. Mark ideas, which the lecture emphasizes with an arrow or some special symbol.
 11. Pay close attention to transitional words, phrases, and sentence which signal the end of one idea and the beginning of another. Listen for words such as "therefore", "finally", and "furthermore." They usually signal an important idea.
 12. Take down examples and sketches, which the lecturer presents. Indicate examples with "EX."
 13. Review your notes as soon as possible. Read through the notes and improve the organization if necessary.
 14. Listening and note taking are **SKILLS**. The more you practice these techniques, the more skilled you will become. **REALLY TRY TO USE AND IMPROVE THESE SKILLS**. Soon you will be able to record the fastest lecturer to your satisfaction.
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SIGNAL WORDS

Your instructor is not going to send up a rocket when she states an important new idea or gives an example, but she will use signals to telegraph what she is doing. Every good speaker does it, and you should expect to receive these signals. For example, she may introduce an example with "for example" as done here.

Other common signals are:

- "There are three reasons why...." (HERE THEY COME!)
- "First...Second... Third...." (THERE THEY ARE!)
- "And most important..." (A MAIN IDEA!)
- "A major development...." (A MAIN IDEA AGAIN!)

She may signal support material with:

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

He may signal conclusion or summary with:

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

She may signal very loud with:

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

Signals are usually ignored by those of us who do not know how to listen effectively. Expect signals and be alert when you receive them.

References

http://www.byu.edu/stlife/cdc/Learning_Strategies/study_skills/note-tak.htm

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