

Note-taking Techniques

Note-taking techniques require a degree of listening skills that you transcribe into words on a page. The following techniques detail what to do before, during, and after class.

BEFORE CLASS

1. ***Read your text or notes before class.*** The more familiar you are with a subject, the better you can understand the material in class.
2. ***Be prepared.*** Have a separate notebook for each class. Walk with a pen, pencil, paper and other tools that are needed. Do not wait until the class starts to look for a pen; this could be distracting to both the students in your class and the professor. This could also send a message to the professor about your intention concerning the class.
3. ***Sit front and center.*** Try sitting at the front of the class where you can make eye contact with the professor. You will be able to see all the visual aids available, and be easily noticed when you ask questions.

DURING CLASS

4. ***Be here now.*** Every time your mind wanders, bring it back to the here and now. This allows you to focus your attention and helps discipline your mind. Eventually, you will increase your ability to stay on task.
5. ***Listen for introductory and concluding words and phrases.*** For example, “The following three factors...,” “In conclusion...,” “the most important consideration...,” “In addition to...,” and “On the other hand...,” These words reveal the structure of the lecture. You can use these phrases to organize your notes.
6. ***Watch the board.*** If an instructor takes time to write something down, consider it a signal that the material is important.
7. ***Do not ignore clues.*** Instructors will often tell students that certain information is important and likely to be on an exam.
8. ***Taping lectures.*** A frequent question asked by students is whether they should tape lectures. You must first get permission from your professor before taping a lecture. In most cases, tape recorders hinder rather than help students. There is a strong temptation to relax mentally when you tape a lecture. After all, whatever you miss you can listen to again. The problem is, it takes too much time to listen to a lecture a second time, and you might not understand the lecture the second time around. Remember, tape recorders do not answer questions.

AFTER CLASS

9. ***Review.*** Review your notes within twenty-four hours. This can save you hours of extra studying in the long run.
10. ***Edit notes.*** During your first review, fix words that are illegible. Write out abbreviated words that might be unclear to you later. Go over your notes and make sure that you can read everything. Check to see that your notes are labeled and the pages are numbered.
11. ***Fill in keywords.*** Use the Cornell Model. The Cornell model involves writing your notes on the right hand side of the page and leaving three inches on the left to insert additional information.
12. ***Organize your notes with graphic signals.*** During your immediate review, add arrows, brackets, and other signals that aid in the organization of your notes. Circle related concepts. Fill out diagrams. Illustrate important points.
13. ***Conduct short weekly review periods.*** Once a week, review all your notes again. This will be a second refinement of the information and will assist recall.

Good Luck!

Ellis, David B. (1985) Becoming a Master Student. (p. 118-128)