

Note Taking Techniques

Take Better Notes! Note Taking Effective Notes

General Tips

1. **Attend lectures faithfully.**
2. **Keep notes for each course in one place**, in a separate section or notebook.
3. **Take notes on one side of the page only.**
4. **Use a three-ring binder** and loose-leaf notebook paper so pages can be removed and spread out when you review.
5. **Label, number, and date all notes** so they can stay in sequence.
6. **Write legibly.** Legible handwriting will let you concentrate on ideas and facts rather than on deciphering your notes.
7. **Make your notes complete** and clear enough so they will have meaning for you weeks and months later.
8. **Develop your own system of enumeration and indentation.** Don't indent so far that you are crowded into a small area at the right hand of the paper.
9. **Develop abbreviations of common words and recurring items.**
10. **Sit near the front of the room** during classes and lectures. It will be easier to hear the speaker and see the board.

During the lecture

1. **Do not doodle.** It interferes with concentration, and inhibits note-taking.
2. **Join in class activities and discussions.**
3. **Copy the material that the lecturer writes on the board.**
4. **Leave blanks for words, phrases, or ideas** you think you have missed. Ask the instructor or a fellow student to help you to fill in the gaps.
5. **Leave plenty of space** in your notes to add notes later and for review.
6. **Write key words** or phrases in the margin of your notes.
7. **Use pictures** and diagrams to make relationships visual.
8. **Use complete sentences** when material is important such as technical definitions.
9. **Use a symbol** (such as an asterisk, or underline) to mark ideas that the lecturer emphasizes.
10. **Separate your own thoughts from the lecturer's.** Jot down questions, your own examples, ideas and references, but make sure you label these as yours, not your lecturers.
11. **Always record the lecturer's examples.** They often clarify abstract ideas.
12. **Be alert for clues.** Often an instructor will say "You'll see this later," or "This is important." Note these important statements and put an asterisk in the margin.
13. **Listen for introductory, concluding and transition words and phrases** to help you structure your notes.

After the Lecture: Review

1. **Record additional ideas of your own immediately after the lecture.**
2. **Review within 24 hours** of the lecture (80% of material is forgotten after 24 hours) and improve the organization if necessary.
3. **Fill in any additional key words** in the left-hand column for easier review.
4. **Edit notes** and make sure that they are legible.
5. **Use 3x5 cards** as flashcards to study from.
6. **Conduct short weekly review periods** (20 minutes a week).
7. **Create "mind map" summaries** to help you see the relationships at a glance.
8. **Conduct pre-class reviews** to link info from each lecture to the preceding lecture.

SHORTHAND HINTS

Leave out the periods in standard abbreviations:

impt = important ex = example
 mgr = manager dept = department
 ie = in other words NYC = New York City

Use only the first syllable of a word:

pol = politics lit = literature
 lib = liberal def = definition

Use the first syllable and the first letter of the second:

subj = subject prog = program
 ind = individual cent = century

Eliminate final letters (use just enough of the beginning of a word to form a recognizable unit)

assoc = associate, associated
 chem = chemistry biol = biological
 rep = reputation intro = introduction

Omit vowels from the middle of words (retain only enough consonants to provide a recognizable skeleton of the word)

bkgd = background rdy = ready
 grp = group abt = about
 pts = points shld = should

Use "G" to represent "ING" endings:

ckg = checking mtg = meeting

Write words as they sound phonetically:

bcuz = because nv = envy
 thru = through tho = though

Use symbols for commonly recurring words:

& or + = and re = regarding
 w/o = without ea = each
 ' = minutes @ = at
 vs = versus, against

Short words should generally be spelled out to avoid confusion.

in, but, for, to, etc.
 (exception: leave out "a" and "the")

Using Index Cards to Take Notes for a Report or Term Paper

Make a set of bibliography cards

- Use one card for each source. Label it "A," "B," "C," etc. Include the author, title, date, call number, and where you found the source.
- Use these cards to make your bibliography

Sample bibliography card:

523.1 Library BRI	(A) School
Brisette, James A. A Guide to the Universe, Anytown (MA): Anytown Publishing Co., 1997, 66pp.	

Make a set of note cards

- Write only one quote, fact or idea on each card. Use quotation marks if you copy anything directly from the source. List the page number(s) of the resource. Label the card to match the bibliography card.
- Fill out the cards carefully. Make sure all dates, names etc., are correct.
- Write a heading or the main topic of the note. Sort the cards by heading or topic.

Sample note card:

Planets P.2 There are 9 planets that revolve around the sun: Mercury, Venus, Earth, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn, Uranus, Neptune, and Pluto.	(A)
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You can also use index cards to organize your notes and study for a test.