

Taking Class Notes

Why take notes?

1. Just because you UNDERSTAND everything that's being said in class, you will not necessarily REMEMBER everything. You're taking several different classes each day!
2. Just the very act of writing down of important points helps you to remember them.
3. Your notes provide a resource for remembering, and for assigning relative importance to information covered.

How to set up for best notetaking:

1. Write date at top
2. Write in a different color ink than your reading notes, to distinguish between reading notes and class notes.
3. Write class notes next to same topic of reading notes. You are actually filling in your reading notes. In a notebook, that would mean reading notes on right hand page, class notes facing them on the left-hand page.

When taking notes:

1. Never use a sentence when you can use a phrase. Never use a phrase when you can use a single word or abbreviation.
2. Be consistent with abbreviations
3. Use outline form, Cornell method, or a numbering system
4. Don't squeeze information onto the page. Leave space. Indent to distinguish major points from minor ones.

What to include in your class notes?

1. Listen for emphasis: louder voice, amount of time spent on a single topic, repetition, number of examples used.
2. Anything written on the board.
3. Formulas, definitions, specific facts.

Advice:

1. Do not record lectures or discussions, planning to re-listen and take notes later. You don't have time.
2. Review your notes as soon as possible after class – Add anything that will help you make sense of the notes later. Highlight, underline, or star what's most important. Make notes on your notes!
3. Do not rewrite your notes – instead, spend that time testing yourself on what you learned.
4. Think about how these notes fit into the "big picture" of what you are studying in class.
5. The secret to developing class note-taking skill is practice. You'll get better at selecting important material and in discarding unimportant material.

How to Study

Choose your study place

1. Not your bed! Turn your computer OFF!
2. Choose a place free from distractions where you can spread out all information needed for one subject.

Study actively

1. Work for 45 minutes to one hour.
2. Work chronologically; keep a log of questions for your teacher.
3. Study for recall. Check yourself for understanding. Can you summarize information about an item without looking at your notes?
4. Use 3x5 cards for tricky items.

Take breaks

1. Take a brief 10 minute BREAK after EACH 45 minutes of study. Get up, move around, get a drink.
2. Take a huge BREAK after three 45-minute sessions of study.
WHY? You need to allow time for the information you've worked so hard to review to "sink in." Your brain is working while you are exercising and eating.
3. Remember, breaks are necessary time, not wasted time. Sitting at a desk for 5 hours is well-meaning but terribly inefficient.

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