

Hagan Scholarship Foundation Taking Class Notes and How to Study

Source: Hotchkiss School, edited by HSF

Why Take Notes?

1. Even if you understand everything said in class, you will not necessarily remember it all. You are taking multiple classes each day.
2. The act of writing down important points helps you retain them.
3. Your notes provide a resource for review and for identifying what information is most important.

How to Set Up for Best Note-Taking

4. Write the date at the top of each page.
5. Write class notes in a different ink color than your reading notes to distinguish between the two. **Recommended: blue ink for reading notes, red ink for class notes.**
6. Write class notes next to the same topic in your reading notes. In a notebook, reading notes go on the right-hand page and class notes face them on the left-hand page. You are essentially filling in and enriching your reading notes.

When Taking Notes

7. Never use a sentence when you can use a phrase. Never use a phrase when you can use a single word or abbreviation.
8. Be consistent with abbreviations.
9. Use outline form, the Cornell method, or a numbering system.
10. Do not squeeze information onto the page. Leave space. Indent to distinguish major points from minor ones.

What to Include in Your Class Notes

11. Listen for emphasis: a louder voice, extra time spent on a topic, repetition, or multiple examples.
12. Anything written on the board.
13. Formulas, definitions, and specific facts.

Advice

14. Do not record lectures or discussions planning to re-listen and take notes later. You do not have time.
15. Review your notes as soon as possible after class. Add anything that will help you make sense of them later. Highlight, underline, or star what is most important.
16. Do not rewrite your notes — instead, spend that time testing yourself on what you learned.
17. Think about how these notes fit into the bigger picture of what you are studying.
18. Note-taking skill improves with practice. You will get better at identifying what matters and discarding what does not.

How to Study

Choose Your Study Place

19. Not your bed. Turn your computer off or put it away.
20. Choose a place free from distractions where you can spread out everything needed for one subject.

Study Actively

21. Work in focused sessions of 45 minutes to one hour.
22. Work chronologically and keep a running list of questions for your teacher.
23. Study for recall. Can you summarize a topic without looking at your notes? If not, review it again.
24. Use 3×5 index cards for difficult or tricky items.

Take Breaks

25. Take a 10-minute break after each 45-minute study session. Get up, move around, get a drink.
26. After three 45-minute sessions, take a longer break.
27. Breaks are necessary, not wasted time. Your brain continues processing information while you rest and move. Sitting at a desk for five hours straight is well-meaning but **inefficient**.