

Note Taking

If you think that you will remember everything that is said in class just because you understand everything, you are WRONG! You'd better write it down!

Information presented in class often contains the central concepts of the course and the material most likely to be included on exams. Yet, students frequently do not realize the importance of notetaking and listening. The following handouts provide tips on how to recall more information from your lectures through active listening and purposeful notetaking. In addition, lecture notes can be a critical tool for preparing for exams. Suggestions are provided for how to use your notes regularly to review.

LEARNING BY LISTENING

Students get an important amount of their learning through listening. In university, it will be a major source of information. That is why students should know that listening is a skill that must be developed.

The following suggestions, will help you develop a more effective listening habit, both in class and out in life.

- 1 **Motivate yourself.** Imagine yourself understanding and remembering everything said during the session, for as long as you need it. How would your future sessions and exams look like?
- 2 **All is up to you!** Tell yourself, "every day in my student life will come only once. If I don't succeed in making the most out of every word and every session, I will be the only one to blame when it will be too late."
- 3 **Look for the main idea or ideas of the lecture.** When you understand what the speaker is trying to tell you (the point), it is easy to know which fact is important and which is marginal in his/her presentation.

- 4 **You must master your thoughts.** It is easy to think about other things while listening. Think of your mind as an animal: if you don't train it, it will get out of control then it will be the master and you, the pet. Practice the habit of attention and don't give up, until it becomes a second nature.
- 5 **Take notes while listening.** Even if you think you understand all what the speaker says, jot it down. You won't remember it later unless you do.

TAKING LECTURE NOTES

1. Why should you take notes?

- a. It makes you think about what you heard.
- b. Notes provide a summary of what is important in the text.
- c. It is hard to forget notes you have written, in your own words.

2. How to know what is important?

Usually teachers do the following.

- a. Write important material written on the board.
- b. Repeat important concepts or facts.
- c. Emphasize through:
 - tone of voice and gesture,
 - how long they spend explaining a point, or how many different examples he/she provides.
- d. Say words that reveal the importance of the facts; e.g. "There are **two opinions** on . . . " "The **third** reason is . . . " " In **conclusion** . . . "
- e. Summaries given at the end of class.
- f. Reviews given at the beginning of class.

3. Is there a one right method to take notes?

Every learner should develop his/her own method of taking notes, but you can find the following suggestions helpful:

- a. Make it as brief as possible.
 - A phrase is better than a sentence; and a word is better than a phrase.

- Be selective; don't write everything. Learn to distinguish between the important and the trivial.
 - Develop your own system of abbreviations and symbols, and be consistent.
- b. Putting notes in your own words is a good way to process the ideas and remember them. However, definitions and specific facts should be noted exactly.
- c. If you miss a statement, write key words, skip a few spaces, and get the information later.
- d. Date your notes. Perhaps number the pages.

How?

Learning to make notes effectively will help you to improve your study and work habits and to remember important information. Often, students are deceived into thinking that because they **understand** everything that is said in class they will therefore remember it. This is quite wrong! Write it down!

Here are two of the most famous and efficient notetaking methods. Choose the most convenient for you. And whichever you select to apply, make sure you **review your notes regularly**. This is the only way to achieve lasting memory.

The Cornell Note Taking System

Name
Date
Class
Period

Cornell Notes

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Main Idea • Key Question (after notes are completed) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Key words & ideas • Important dates/people/places • Repeated/Stressed Info • Ideas/brainstorming written on board / overhead projector • Info from textbook/stories • Diagrams & Pictures • Formulas
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Summary of your notes in your own words

1. **Record.** During the lecture, record in the main column as many meaningful information and ideas as you can.
2. **Reduce.** Very soon after, summarize those information and ideas into keywords in the keyword column (the smaller one to the left).
3. **Recite.** Now hide the main area, look at each keyword and try to say as much as you can remember about it. You don't need to recall the exact words. Now, uncover your notes and verify what you have said and see how well you did. Summarize in the bottom column.
4. **Reflect.** Take some time to think about all those facts, information and ideas. Do you have opinions? Do you identify relationships? Do you spot unclear parts? ...
5. **Review.** If you spend 10 minutes a week (or so) to review your notes, you will retain most of what you learned, and be able to use it whenever you need it.

(4 cm)	(10 cm)
Topic:	Class: Date:
Essential Question:	
Main Ideas/Keywords	Notes
	Summary and answers to essential question:

The Mapping System

Mapping is about focus, comprehension and then translating the content of the lecture into a map that summarizes its ideas or facts and the relationships linking them. It is most useful with difficult, loaded or unpredictable lectures. Two kinds of maps may might fit different contexts and needs. Mind mapping and concept mapping. The present handouts choose to focus on mind mapping.

It is a highly effective way not only of recording ideas, but also of expressing them and even reflecting on them. You put the central idea in the center of the page in any form you like (title, an image, etc.) and you radiate the remaining ideas from that center using arrows, linking lines, symbols, images, colors, words, according to what organizes best the information to be mapped.

Here's a simple example.



Primary School Version of How to Mind Map - Source: BrainTraining4Kids.com

Adapted from www.studygs.net