

Learning Assistance Study Tips

Note-taking

A good note-taker uses a systematic approach to take and review notes. This can add to understanding and remembering the content of lectures.

Before the class: Get ready to learn.

Familiarity increases your ability to pick out key points.

1. Develop a mind-set geared toward listening.
2. Test yourself over the previous lecture while waiting for the next one to begin.
3. Skim relevant reading assignments to acquaint yourself with main ideas, new technical terms, etc.
4. Do what you can to improve physical and mental alertness: fatigue, hunger, time of day, where you sit in the classroom. All of these affect motivation.
5. INTEND TO LISTEN.

During the class: Stay tuned in

1. Listen for the structure as well as information in the lecture.
2. Look for speakers visual and postural clues, which indicate what is important.
3. Ask questions or write them down for further clarification when you disagree or are unsure.
4. Leave large empty spaces in your notes for information you have missed.
5. If the instructor talks too fast, focus your attention on key points. Choose what you think is important and DON'T PANIC or tune out.
6. Stay to the end instead of closing your notebook early and getting ready to leave, listen carefully to information given toward the end of the class; summary statements may highlight the main points.
7. Sit in front of the classroom if you have difficulty concentrating. Maintain eye contact with the instructor when possible.
8. Have a useful system of taking notes. (See the Skills Development instructor if you need information on various systems.)

After the class: Review and fill-in

1. Clear up any questions raised by the lecture by asking the teacher or classmates.
2. Fill in missing points or misunderstood terms from text, classmates, or other sources.
3. Edit your notes, labeling main points, adding recall clues and questions to be answered within 24 hours of class.
4. Highlight key points in the notes with different colors of ink.
5. Note your ideas and reflections, keeping them separate from those of the speaker in margins, on a separate sheet.
6. Form study sessions once or twice a week or sign up for a study group through Tutorial Services to review omissions, clear up misinterpretations, and get other students opinions and interpretations.

Periodically

1. Review your notes: glance at your recall clues and see how much you can remember **before** rereading the notes.
2. Make up and answer possible test questions.

There are other effective study techniques you can use.

See the Skills Development Instructor in the Learning Assistance Center, or enroll in *Learn 71: Study Techniques* class.

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More Note-Taking Tips

As you get involved with the complexities of note taking, you may tend to forget the simple things that can make life a lot easier. These tips are little hints that we all know but forget sometimes. They can be summarized by four directors.

Familiarity increases your ability to pick out key points.

1. **BE ALERT** — so you are aware of and prepared for the lecture content and situation.
2. **BE ORDERLY** — so you can process the lecture now and for review later.
3. **BE SYSTEMATIC** — so you can establish a habit pattern and won't miss anything important.
4. **BE UP TO DATE** — so that your well designed note taking system gets done.

Below is a list of tips which may help you to be alert, orderly, systematic, and up-to-date.

1. Attend lectures regularly. Once you miss one, it will be easier to miss more.
2. Use a standard 8 ½" x 11" loose-leaf notebook, for continual organization and review.
3. Keep the notes for one class separate from other classes. Best yet, keep each class in a separate binder.
4. Write on one side of the paper for easier organization. It's possible to overlook material written on the back of a sheet.
5. Leave your notebook at home and carry with you only enough pages to keep track of the lecture. This way you won't lose your entire set of notes should you misplace them.
6. Don't doodle because it distracts. Keep eye contact when not writing.
7. Make notes as complete as needed and as clear as possible so they can be used meaningfully later.
8. Leave blanks where information is missed or misunderstood. Fill in gaps after lecture or as soon after as possible with the aid of the instructor or classmates.
9. Use symbols such as asterisks for emphasis.
10. Mark or separate assignments given in class in a space apart from the lecture notes.
11. Separate your thoughts from those of the lecture; record your own items after the lecture.
12. Record examples where helpful.
13. Listen especially at the end of the lecture. If the instructor has not paced his lecture well, he may cram half of the content into the last 5-10 minutes.
14. Get into the five-minute technique and review your notes right after class. At this time you can change, organize, add, delete, summarize, or clarify misunderstandings.
15. Recopying by itself is a debatable advantage but the five-minute technique is not.
16. Have study sessions once a week or sign up for study groups through Tutorial services to learn omissions, clear up misinterpretations and get other students opinions about interpretations.

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