**How to Take Good Notes**

Students who take notes in class outperform students who don’t take notes. Studies have shown that students who don’t take notes in class can forget almost half of what the teacher said within 15 minutes, and more than 80% of the material after two weeks. Someone who writes something down and never looks at it again will still remember more than someone who never took notes. Taking notes in class will help you learn in three ways:

* It helps your focus on the main ideas and important details of what is being said.
* It cements the main ideas and important details in your brain as you write.
* It gives you notes that you can review and study for a test.

Taking good notes doesn’t come naturally, it takes practice! It may be difficult at first, but the longer you do it the easier it will be to take good notes.

**Note-taking Techniques**

**Before Class**

* Read the assigned text. You will be more prepared for class if you have already read the textbook.
* Get to class on time and be ready to start taking notes immediately.
* Start each day of class with a new page and a title so you can easily see what the notes are on.

**What to Write**

* Focus on the main points of the lecture, don’t try to write it all down.
* Summarize the important parts of the lecture.
* Write what is on the board.
* Write down definitions.
* Write down lists or numbered points.
* Write down sequences or cause-and-effect.
* Write down new concepts and terms, not information you already know.
* If your teacher repeats something, *it is important*.
* Listen for “buzz” words that will clue you in that what the teacher is about to say is important.
* Listen for a change in your teacher’s voice. If your teacher’s voice slows down to emphasize a word or phrase, *it is important*.

**Tips and Tricks**

* Listen 80% of the time and write 20% of the time.
* Use abbreviations and symbols whenever possible.
* Don’t crowd your notes. Paper is cheap, so there is no need to conserve it.
* If you are confused, don’t be afraid to ask the teacher to repeat or explain what they said. Some of your fellow students probably have the same question you have, they are just too scared to ask for help!
* Highlight important parts of notes after class. Review notes regularly until the quiz or test.
* If you are having trouble keeping up with the teacher, it may be possible you are writing down too much.
* If you can’t write everything down, jot down the term or important point, then leave space so you can fill it in later using the textbook or asking the teacher after class.

**The Cornell Method**

One of the more popular ways to take notes is called the Cornell Method. It consists of dividing your paper into sections and using each section for different information so you stay more organized. Below is an example of how to use the Cornell Method.

Summary

This is the area where you summarize the key points on this page. Think, “If I was explaining what I learned to someone who had never heard of it before, what would I say?” This section is not as important as the other three areas, but it can be useful.

Main

Ideas

Key Points

Equations

Definitions

“Important Stuff”

It often works well to place these to the left of the main section in your notes so you can quickly find the information in your notes.

Make sure you understand the concepts and ideas written in this column.

Make this column a bit wider than the margin you already have in your ruled notebook

Notes

Title Date