

## **STUDY SKILLS**

### **NOTE- TAKING**

This packet contains information on the importance of note-taking and guidelines for taking notes from textbooks and classroom lectures. Finally, it provides a 4 Step Note-taking strategy given to us by Lauren Meyer.

# NOTE-TAKING SKILLS



## Five Important Reasons to Take Notes

1. It triggers basic lecturing processes and helps you to remember information.
2. It helps you to concentrate in class.
3. It helps you prepare for tests.
4. Your notes are often a source of valuable clues for what information the instructor thinks most important (i.e., what will show up on the next test).
5. Your notes often contain information that cannot be found elsewhere (i.e., in your textbook).



## Guidelines for Note-Taking

1. Concentrate on the lecture or on the reading material.
2. Take notes consistently.
3. Take notes selectively. Do NOT try to write down every word. Remember that the average lecturer speaks approximately 125-140 words per minute, and the average note-taker writes at a rate of about 25 words per minute.
4. Translate ideas into your own words.
5. Organize notes into some sort of logical form.
6. Be brief. Write down only the major points and important information.
7. Write legibly. Notes are useless if you cannot read them later!
8. Don't be concerned with spelling and grammar.



## Tips for Finding Major Points in Lectures

The speaker is usually making an important point if he or she:

1. Pauses before or after an idea.
2. Uses repetition to emphasize a point.
3. Uses introductory phrases to precede an important idea.
4. Writes an idea on the board.



## Forms of Note-Taking

1. Outlining
  - I. Topic sentence or main idea
    - A. Major points providing information about topic
      1. Subpoint that describes the major point
        - a. Supporting detail for the subpoint
2. Patterning: flowcharts, diagrams
3. Listing, margin notes, highlighting

Borrowed and adapted from the following website: <http://www.arc.sbc.edu/notes.html>



## Ways to Reduce and Streamline Notes

1. Eliminate small connecting words such as: is, are, was, were, a, an, the, would, this, of. Eliminate pronouns such as: they, these, his, that, them. However, be careful NOT to eliminate these three words: and, in, on.
2. Use symbols to abbreviate, such as:

+ , & for and, plus  
= for equals  
- for minus  
# for number  
x for times  
> for greater than, more, larger  
< for less than, smaller, fewer than  
w/ for with  
w/o for without  
w/in for within  
----> for leads to, produces, results in  
<---- for comes from  
/ for per

For example:

"The diameter of the Earth is four times greater than the diameter of the Moon."

Becomes:

"Earth = 4x > diameter of Moon."

3. Substitute numerals with symbols, for instance:

Substitute "one" with 1  
Substitute "third" with 3rd

4. Abbreviate:

Drop the last several letters of a word. For example, substitute "appropriate" with "approp."  
Drop some of the internal vowels of a word. For example, substitute "large" with "lrg."

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## **STUDY GUIDES AND STRATEGIES**

### **Reading texts - Marking & Underlining**

- **Read a section of your text (that you own!)** that you consider "manageable" but make no entries
- **Review the section:**
- **Number important or sequential ideas in the margins**
- **Underline or highlight:**
  - **main subjects**
  - **examples of these main ideas**  
that help you understand them
  - **unfamiliar vocabulary and/or definitions**
- **Jot down paraphrases, questions, and summaries**  
in available space within the text
- **Develop a system to coordinate various sources**  
of information: workbooks, CDs, Web sites, classroom notes, etc.

### **Taking notes from a textbook**

#### **First: read a section of your textbook chapter**

Read just enough to keep an understanding of the material.  
Do not take notes, but rather focus on understanding the material.

It is tempting to take notes as you are reading the first time, but this is not an efficient technique: you are likely to take down too much information and simply copy without understanding

#### **Second: Review the material**

##### **Locate the main ideas, as well as important sub-points**

- Set the book aside
- Paraphrase this information:  
Putting the textbook information in your own words forces you to become actively involved with the material

#### **Third: write the paraphrased ideas as your notes**

- Do not copy information directly from the textbook
- Add only enough detail to understand

#### **Review, and compare your notes with the text, and ask yourself if you truly understand**

*Borrowed and adapted from the following website: <http://www.studygs.net/booknote.html>*

## **STUDY GUIDES AND STRATEGIES**

## Taking notes in classroom lectures

You can develop your own note taking system and study strategy with the five "R's" of note-taking:

**Record \* Reduce \* Recite \* Reflect \* Review**

**Get a good loose-leaf notebook:**

This will enable you to add, delete, and re-sequence pages and materials.

Begin each session's notes with a cover page for later summaries and test preparation.

**A typical notes page:**

<b>Heading</b>  Date Class/subject or title or number (e.g. 3/34)	<b>Heading, continued</b>  Guest speakers' names, including your fellow students' contributions
<b>2. Reduce:</b> <b>After the class</b> <b>Summarize:</b>  <b>key/cue words</b> <b>phrases</b> <b>questions</b>  Link to information from your textbook, Websites or other sources that helps you understand or study the material	<b>1. Record/take notes in class here:</b>  <b>identify</b> the main points <b>capture</b> the main ideas  Use outlines or <a href="#">concept maps</a>  Use words and pictures and graphs or whatever it takes to get the information down quickly. Avoid quoting unless it is very necessary.
<b>3. Place notes in this section when reviewing/studying (see 5 below)</b>	

Borrowed and adapted from the following website <http://www.studygs.net/lcturnote.html>

**3. Recite: [Talk aloud!](#)**

- Review from memory what you have learned

- Using the left hand margin's key words and questions, talk through, or illustrate definitions, concepts, etc.
- Create your own examples

#### **4. Reflect: Think over!**

- How does this relate to what you knew before?
- Note the [essay terms](#) and find the best ones that refer to your studies: Apply, Compare, Diagram, Evaluate, etc...

#### **5. Review the notes you took**

- At your next study session
- Before reading new material
- When studying for tests

Make notes on your "notes page"

#### **Multiple pages of notes for one lecture:**

- summarize each page at its bottom,
- summarize the lecture on a cover or end page

**Adapted from Walter Pauk (1989) and the Cornell Notetaking System (Dartmouth College, Hanover, NH)**

*Borrowed and adapted from the following website: <http://www.studygs.net/lcturnote.html>*

**EducationAtlas.com**

## Improving Your Note-Taking



Learning how to take good notes in class is an important part of study preparation. The information provided and topics covered by your teacher are what you will be studying. If you don't take good notes in class you won't know what to study once class is over.

The following tips can help you take effective notes:

- **Make clear and accurate notes**  
Clearly written, accurate notes help to capture information for later study and review. Often when taking notes in class you'll understand what the teacher is saying so you decide not to take clear and accurate notes only to find out later that you can't remember what the teacher was saying and that your notes aren't clear or accurate enough for you to remember the details of the lecture. Taking accurate and clear notes will (1) ensure that you understand the subject matter being discussed, (2) help to concretize what is being taught in your mind and (3) will provide you the means to go back after class and review the subject matter being taught.
- **Come to class prepared**  
There is nothing that will help you take better notes than coming to class prepared. Before coming to class make sure that (1) you have read all assigned readings and (2) that you have reviewed your notes from the previous class. Coming to class prepared will help you take much better notes. You'll be able to take more detail notes on items you don't fully understand. You'll be able to ask questions that will lead to more accurate and useful note taking. And you'll be better prepared to learn new information not covered in previous class lectures.
- **Compare your notes**  
When class is over compare your notes to those taken by other students. Sometimes other students will pick up on things discussed by the teacher that you missed or didn't find important. Comparing notes will help ensure that your notes are complete and accurate.
- **Minimize distractions**  
If you're serious about your education then you'll want to remove any distractions that keep you from concentrating on class lectures and taking copious notes. Sit close to the front of the room, don't sit next to individuals you're tempted to talk to during class and try to stay away from any other situation that would distract you during class.

*Borrowed and adapted from the following website:* <http://www.educationatlas.com/taking-notes-in-class.html#ixzz1XNfVKwli>

- **Organize your notes**  
We recommend starting each class with a clean sheet of paper. We also recommend that you put the day's date at the top of your notes along with any other relevant information

(i.e. history notes, chemistry notes, etc.) This will help you to keep track of each days notes and increase your ability to go back and review your notes for exams and quizzes.

- Read more: <http://www.educationatlas.com/taking-notes-in-class.html#ixzzlXNfFqolP>
- **Use abbreviations and symbols**  
In some classes it can be difficult to write down everything that the teacher or professor is saying. We recommend using short sentences and phrases and easily remembered abbreviations and symbols in order to make sure you're able to keep up with the lecture. The following are few common abbreviations and symbols that student can use to speed up their note taking: cf (compare), ie (that is), eg (for example), w/ (with), w/o (without), &, + (and), = (equals, is). There are a number of other abbreviations that you can come up with to increase your note-taking speed. You must make sure you remember what each abbreviation is or that you have a key that tells you what each abbreviation means.
- **Write clearly**  
It doesn't matter how many notes you can take if you can't make sense of your notes after the lecture is over. Make sure to write clearly -- especially if you're using abbreviations. It's also useful to leave plenty of blank space in the left margin or in between ideas or new concepts so that you can come back later and add more information.
- **Review your notes**  
Review your notes as soon as you can. Reviewing your notes directly following a lecture will make sure that (1) you understand your notes, (2) you understood the lecture and (3) it will help you to concrete in your mind the concepts and information you learned.
- **Write down questions**  
Quite frequently you're going to find -- especially as you enter college -- that it can be difficult if not impossible at times to understand everything the teacher is talking about. Make sure to write down any questions you have or concepts you didn't completely understand so that you can go back after class and ask the teacher specific questions or use reference resources to better understand difficult concepts.

Effective note taking is one of the keys to effective studying. Most successful students, whether they are in high school or college, are excellent note takers.

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## **4 Step Note-taking Strategy**

### **Scan, Prepare, Take Notes, Reevaluate**



As stated in your expectations, reading and note-taking is an extremely important part of this course. It often times drives classroom discussion and our in class activities. The outlined strategy below will help you to organize your notes and extract the most important information from the text.

### **Step1: Scan**

- Read the title of the section and think about how it could relate to our current studies.
- Look at the pictures and maps & read the captions.
- Read the focus questions, summary and themes, at the beginning of each unit, chapter, and section. Focus on the bigger picture, not the tiny details.

### **Step II: Prepare**

- Write the date and class number.
- Write the section and title.
- Briefly describe what you believe the focus of the section is. Use the focus questions to help you (Ex. The focus of this section is/seems to be.....).

### **Step III: Take Notes**

- Reword the headings and subheadings of each section into questions. (The very first part of the chapter sections may not have a heading, if this is the case, the title of the entire section will work)
- Now write down general and specific information that answers this question you have posed for each section.
- Repeat this process for each section heading/subheading that appears in the chapter section

#### *Keep in mind*

- *Underline, box or highlight headings and sub-headings:*
- *Skip a line between sections*
- *Respect right and left margins*
- *Avoid complete sentences (use symbols and abbreviations)*
- *Use arrows to show connections*
- *Use bullets, indentations, skipped lines and underlines to help make your notes readable.*

### **Step IV: Reevaluate**

Check the focus to see how accurate your prediction was. If it needs to be readjusted, do so now.