NOTE-TAKING TIPS

Which type of note taker are you?

**Stenographer**
writes down everything the instructor says

**Jotter**
writes down main ideas and key phrases only

**Problems with Stenography**
Writing down everything the instructor says creates a false sense of security, and students often allow themselves to put off learning for another time by thinking, “I have everything down, so I’ll look at it later”. It also invites forgetting information covered in class, which makes studying for a test more time consuming and difficult. In addition, students may not be able to see how information is connected, and this can make studying more difficult as well.

**Problems with Jotting**
Writing down only main ideas and key points is easier on the brain and hands, but using this method may not provide enough information. Students may find themselves spending time filling in missing details that explain the ideas, and while this can be good review, it can become laborious and time consuming.

The key to taking good notes that will be useful when preparing for a test is to balance main ideas and supporting details in a way that accurately reflects class discussion and makes sense to you.

How do you take notes in a way that balances main ideas with supporting details?

---

**Notes Help You**
Pay attention to the class discussion.
Remember important things instructors say.
Give you something to study from for tests.

**Good Notes Include:**
Your name, class title, title of the lecture, and date.
Method of organization that you can understand.
Lots of blank space so you can fill in additional information if needed.
Main ideas, vocabulary words, key points that stand out – underlined, circled, highlighted, etc.
Writing on one side of the paper only – notes appear neat and are easier to read, copy, and scan.

---

Change the way you listen in class. Be sure to actively listen for main ideas and the details that explain them.
CORNELL METHOD

This method of note taking allows students to organize a page of notes so that main ideas and supporting details stand out clearly.

This example of Cornell notes was taken from a student in a study skills class.

When using the Cornell Method of note taking, follow these steps

- Put your name, class name, and date at top of paper
- Title your notes
- Draw a line about 1/3 of the way from the left hand margin
- Use the left column to record main ideas
- Use the right column to record details that support the main ideas

Benefits to using the Cornell Method

- Helps organize your paper so that listening for main ideas and supporting details is easier.
- Creates a good study guide to use during test preparation. Either side of the paper may be covered up in order to quiz from the un-covered side.

OTHER GENERAL TIPS

- Write down everything the instructor puts on the board – anything the instructor writes for you is important!
- Listen to your instructor for clues to important items.
- When giving information that is important, instructors may:
  - Ask a question
  - Write on the board
  - Announce that students should “take this down”
  - Refer to their own notes
- Use abbreviations that make sense to you whenever possible.
- Mark your notes with a question mark or an arrow if you miss something in class. This helps you remember that you need to fill in the missing part.
- Review your notes in the same day you take them. It reduces forgetting!

Something to Think About

The way you take notes may be a reflection of your learning style. Your learning style refers to the primary way in which you take in and remember information. Some students focus on facts and details easily, while other students focus more on ideas and theories.