

TAKING NOTES

Taking effective notes is an essential part of the learning process. A study by the Cambridge Psychological Society demonstrated that two weeks after a seminar, participants only remembered on average 8.4 percent of what they had heard. Even if you are an auditory learner, note-taking is necessary if you want to recall information accurately, so find a note taking method or combine a few that work for you!

Why Take Notes?

- Note taking promotes active listening.
- It provides you with an accurate record of information.
- It makes you restructure information (interpreting, condensing, and organizing).
- It provides repetition of information.
- We forget 60% of what we hear after only 9 hours, so if you don't write it down, you lose the information.

Good Notes...

- Are organized.
- Distinguish main points from details.
- Include examples.
- Indicate lecture patterns.
- Allow for self-testing.
- Stand the test of time.
- Use abbreviations.
- Include the course name, date, class notes, and a summary.

Tips for Taking Notes:

- Use a binder of loose-leaf paper rather than a spiral-bound notebook.
 - Using loose-leaf paper will allow you to rearrange your notes and replace them when they are rewritten or reorganized. Using a binder will allow you to keep your class handouts and print-offs together with your notes and to have a well-organized notebook. You can also use tabs so that you have all of your classes in one notebook and are never without something to study.
- Take notes on only one side of the paper.
 - Using only one side of the paper allows you to spread out your notes and see them all at once.
- Date, number, and title your notes.
 - This will help you find information more quickly later when you need it. Use your title to summarize the main topic of the lecture.
- Focus on facts, ideas, and specific examples rather than writing every word.
 - Ideas are especially important in literature, philosophy, and history classes, so be sure to record more than just facts.

- Listen carefully from the beginning of class to the end.
 - Instead of closing your notebook early and getting ready to leave, listen carefully to information given towards the end of class; summary statements may be of particular value in highlighting main points.
- Set goals when you have trouble taking notes.
 - Divide your page into five sections and try to fill each part every ten minutes (or work out your own formula).
- Relax.
 - If you have a hard time understanding your instructor, relax and focus even more carefully on the content of the lecture.
- Review your notes during your next free period.
 - Read your notes, fill in any gaps in the information, rewrite any illegible words, and write questions where you didn't understand something. If you are using the Cornell method, write a brief summary of what was covered in the class. Make note of your ideas and reflections; keep them separate from the speaker's.
- Organize.
 - Try using graphic organizers such as mapping or charts or use a note taking system such as the Cornell method.

The 5 Rs of Taking Notes:

- Record: During the lecture, write all meaningful information legibly.
- Reduce: After the lecture, write a summary of the ideas and facts using key words as cue words.
- Recite: Recite all the information in your own words without looking at your notes or the text.
- Reflect: Think about your own opinions and ideas. Record questions and original ideas.
- Review: Before reading new material, take 10 minutes to review your older notes. Skim over the main ideas and details.

For more information on note-taking and to develop a personalized plan, visit an [academic coach](#). All appointments are available in-person at the Student Success Center, located in the Library, or online. Adapted from Sally Lipsky, *A Training Guide for College Tutors and Peer Educators* (Boston: Pearson, 2011), 84-86.