
Mastering the Art of Taking Good Notes

How well do you take notes?

Take a minute to respond to the following questions about your note-taking strategies.

Yes No Do you use a specific process for taking notes?

Yes No Do you capture the main points and sub-points?

Yes No Do you organize your notes in a logical manner?

Yes No Do your notes make sense when you reread them?

Yes No Do you use complete sentences?

Yes No Do you streamline notes by using abbreviations and shortcuts?

Yes No Do you translate ideas into your own words?

Review your responses. Is it time to develop new note-taking strategies?

Why Take Notes?

It helps you ***to remember*** important information from lectures, readings, and discussions.

It helps you ***to concentrate*** in class.

It helps you ***to prepare*** for tests and quizzes.

It helps you ***to identify*** what the instructor thinks is important and may appear later on a test or quiz.

- The speaker is usually making an important point if he or she:
 - Pauses before or after an idea
 - Uses repetition to emphasize a point
 - Uses introductory phrases to precede an important point
 - Writes an idea on the board

It helps you ***to keep track*** of information that may not be found elsewhere.

Guidelines for Good Note-Taking

Concentrate on the lecture or reading material.

Be consistent when taking notes.

Be selective. Do not try to write down every word. Research suggests that the average speaker uses approximately 125-140 words per minute, while the average note-taker writes at a rate of about 25 words per minute.

Translate ideas into your own words.

Be brief. Write down main ideas, important points, and questions raised by the speaker or in discussion.

Write legibly.

Don't worry about spelling or grammar.

Organize notes into a logical form.

Forms of Note-Taking

Outlining

Flowcharts

Mapping

Diagrams

Margin Notes

Highlighting

Cornell Notes

Reducing and Streamlining Notes

Eliminate small words such as *is, are, was, were, a, an, the, would, this, and of*. Eliminate pronouns such as *they, these, his, that, and them*.

Do not eliminate *and, in, or on*.

Use symbols to abbreviate.

+ for plus

& for and

= for equals

- For minus

for number

X for times

> for greater than, more, or larger

< for less than, smaller, or fewer than

W/ for with

w/o for without

for leads to

for comes from

/ for per

Example:

The diameter of the earth is four times greater than the diameter of the moon.

Earth = 4x> diameter of moon.

Substitute numerals with symbols. For example, use 1 for “one” and 3rd for “third.”

Abbreviate words. For example, drop the last few letters in a word or drop some of the internal vowels. (lrg instead of large)

Practice reducing and streamlining the following sentences. Let's see how you do.

- 1. The third day of September is always difficult for Marie because it reminds her of the loss of her dog.**

- 2. James finally learned how to ride a bicycle without training wheels and prides himself on his ability to bike more than two miles to his aunt's house.**