



Tips for Note Taking

During Lectures

When to Take Notes

- ❖ Listen and look for the following clues from the instructor:
 1. Writing on the blackboard or overhead projector
 2. Repetition
 3. Dictation: typically, when the instructor delivers information slowly and at a low vocal register, you should take notes.
 4. Multiple examples for the same topic
 5. Word signals and organizing structures (ie: “firstly”/ “secondly” or “There are two points of view on...” or “The fourth reason is ...”)

How to Take Notes

- ❖ Although you will probably develop your own note-taking style after a while, here are a few hints:
 1. Be as succinct as possible. Try to condense the instructor’s language into key words or phrases. If you use abbreviations and symbols, be consistent.
 2. Try to translate the instructor’s language into your own. It will be easier to process information if it is in your own words.
 3. Sometimes outlining or numbering helps you organize the information. Also, indentions can help you distinguish the important material from the less important.
 4. If you miss something, try to write the key words, skip a few spaces, and get the information from the instructor later.
 5. Date your notes.

When Reading Texts

Helpful Exercises

- ❖ For each paragraph of a text, summarize what is being said and then write what the function of the paragraph is in relation to the entire piece. Examples of what the function of a paragraph might be are “Provides evidence for the author’s first main reason” or “Uses an analogy to clarify the idea in the previous paragraph.”
- ❖ Practice translating difficult texts into your own words. Start with your favorite song. Print out the lyrics, analyze them, and then translate them into your own words. Once you master the lyrics, move on to difficult journal articles or confusing paragraphs from a novel you have struggled with in the past.

Bean, John. Engaging Ideas: The Professor’s Guide to Integrating Writing, Critical Thinking, and Active Learning in the Classroom. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 2001.

“Taking Lecture Notes Handout.” Academic Skills Center. 2004. Dartmouth College Online. 31 July 2007. <<http://www.dartmouth.edu/~acskills/success/notes.html>>.

Piolat, Annie, and Françoise Boch. “Note Taking and Learning: A Summary of Research.” Apprendre en notant et apprendre à noter. Paris: Dunod, 2004.

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