

Note Taking

Before class

- Do the assigned reading. That builds background and context, which makes it easier to understand the lecture, especially if you have learned some of the important terms and summarized the salient concepts and theories

During class

- Sit near or in the front. Sit forward and listen intently.
- Arrive early enough to read through the previous lecture's notes -- priming the brain to think about this stuff
- Have a notebook that is easy to write in, and write as legibly as possible
- Turn your blank pages into Cornell note-taking pages -- draw a line down the left side, about two inches into the page, and a line at the bottom, leaving a 1 to 1.5 inch space. Take your notes as normal in the remaining open block of paper.
- Date your notes at the top of each page
- There are various systems for taking notes. The three most common are
 - **Informal outline:** I prefer this because it shows the hierarchy of the information you take down. Standard Alphanumerical outline works well, or simply bullet pointing with indents
 - **Block method:** This keeps related information in one block of text, with a heading at the top. Notes are written continuously in a block under the heading with dashes between ideas, concepts, and facts.
 - **Modified block method:** This keeps related information under one heading but lists items under the heading rather than writing them out across the page
- Write notes as if you had to pay for every word -- telegram style (e.g., "Arrv 12:15" not "I will be arriving at 12:15")
- Be a discerning listener. Write down what seems most important. This takes practice
- Take down what the professor writes on the board.
- Take down what the professor says will be on the test
- Listen for emphasis when the professor is speaking
- Have your textbook open; when the professor highlights something important, make a note of that in the textbook
- Be systematic. If you develop symbols, use them consistently. E.g.,
 - ? = I don't understand that and need to figure it out
 - // double line in the left margin if you want to emphasize something
- Leave a gap in your notes if you know you missed something. Put a symbol there to tell yourself you need to get that information (ask a classmate after class). You want to put the info into the gap where it fits in the lecture
 - If the professor has PowerPoint slides and gives students access to them, print them out before class. Use the headings on the slides to organize the notes in your notebook. Number the slides before class so you can transfer the slide numbers to the corresponding notes you write.
 - If any of the challenging situations come up and you feel you simply don't have enough information in your notes to be useful for studying, there are several strategies:
 - Form or join a study group. You are probably not the only person struggling, and between you, you can fill gaps.

- Meet with the professor. Let her/him know that you are having trouble keeping up with the lecture and ask for their advice for how to study for the class. if you couch it in terms of your own struggles and not their lecture style, they will be more receptive.

After class

As soon after class as possible, and certainly before you go to bed that night, go over those notes.

- Mark the things you don't understand and make a point of figuring them out (study group, tutor, professor . . .)
- Look up missing information and try to fill gaps

And here is the Cornell part of Cornell Note taking. Once your notes are complete and you feel you understand what is in them:

- Write a summary in the space at the bottom of the page. Summarize the page or the lecture, depending on how much material there is.
- Write questions in the left margin for which the important information, concepts, theories, etc., to the right are the answers .
- Use these notes to study the material. Three times a week, go back over earlier notes and practice answering the questions in the margin: ALWAYS ANSWER THEM OUT LOUD AND IN YOUR OWN WORDS
- When you feel you have mastered something, cross out that question. As you get closer to the exam, you limit the amount of material you have to study because you have already studied it.
- Study in groups. Test each other with these questions. Practice answering them in different ways. Use the knowledge you are developing to teach each other.