

Note-Taking

Studies on memory show that, without review, 47% of what a person has just learned is forgotten in the first twenty minutes, and 62% is forgotten after the first day (University of Texas). Therefore, having good lecture notes to review is essential for improving performance.

Basic steps of note-taking:

1. **Go to class prepared:** Do the readings, prepare questions, and have a general knowledge of the topic that will be discussed in class. This will allow for further in-depth understanding of lecture notes.
2. **Improve your listening skills:** Listen for key words and phrases, such as “important,” “main-point,” “key question,” and “main theory.” Develop a note-taking style that works for you. Writing down notes, audio-recording lectures (with professor approval) to replay later, and printing off power-point handouts are all note-taking methods that work for people with different learning styles. Sometimes it is a matter of trying each method before finding one that works best.
3. **Play close attention to content:** It is not necessary to write everything down. However, effective notes should allow a student to remember not only the content of the lecture, but also what connections can be made with that content and what the professor has deemed important. A good way to proceed is to look at the course outline to determine what readings are necessary for that lecture and what the topics of that day will be. Creating a basic outline of the main topics works well, as most professors usually guide their lectures along an outline.
4. **Review and edit your notes:** It is important to go back over lecture notes after class. Clean up any shorthand notes, expand on any thoughts, and organize the key themes or ideas of each lecture to gradually build an understanding of the greater concepts of the course.

On each page be sure to include:

- Course Title
- Abbreviations
- Lecture Title
- Lecturer Name or Initials
- Date
- Page Number
- Any Major Concepts or Subtopics Discussed in that Lecture (which will help you locate topics later on)

Helpful hint:

Having notes organized in an itemized fashion will make it easier to locate them when it comes time for exams.

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Using short-hand:

In order to get the greatest benefit out of a lecture, it is best to develop a shorthand system for note-taking. The following are examples of common forms of shorthand:

| | | | |
|-----------------------|---------------------|--------------------|----------------------|
| e.g. | for example | c. | about/approximately |
| i.e. | that is | thro/thru | through |
| etc. | etcetera: and so on | ref. | reference |
| N.B. | note | imp. | important |
| Q. | question | sit. | situation |
| No. | number | eval. | evaluation |
| probs. | problems | analy. | analysis |
| p./pp. | page/pages | diff/diff.y | difficult/difficulty |
| 1st | first | diff.t | different |
| max. | maximum | w/ | with |

Reviewing lecture notes:

To ensure understanding of the material, either prior to or after the lecture, it is useful to note the following:

- What is the title of the lecture?
- How does this lecture fit into the course outline?
- How does this lecture relate to the other lectures within this course?
- What does this lecture mean to you?
- What information have you gathered about this topic from readings or other sources previously?
- How does the lecture relate to any current events or topics within the discipline you are studying?

Answering these questions before and after each lecture will help to relate the lecture to other things currently being studied. It will also bring a sense of clarity and understanding to the topic. This, in turn, will help with developing questions and study concepts to use for review at a later date.