



Taking Notes

We place a heavy load on our working memory when we take notes while listening to lectures.

Learning a few extra strategies can help reduce that burden.

Using your mind & body:

- Arrive to class a few minutes early and take a moment to take a few deep breaths and be mindful of the room, the students, the instructor, and the subject. Turn off all distractions and do your best to set your mind on the subject matter you have been studying.
 - Quickly review notes
 - Quickly look at upcoming reading assignments to anticipate what the lecture may be about today.
 - Think about the relationships between the lectures and the assignments.
- Sit up front. It will help you to avoid distractions, to hear well, and to see well.
- Come prepared and set up to be ready by class start. Notebook out, pens & pencils out, etc.

Using your ears:

- Listen with intention. Concentrate.
- Learn while listening by allowing yourself to become part of the story, as if you were listening to a friend.
- Listen for pauses, vocal emphasis, and deep breaths. These can be clues to important information.

Using your eyes:

- Notice what the instructor writes on the board or other visual presentations. These are clues to what is important to understand.
- Observe fellow students who are notetaking. Get together and compare notes and share strategies.

Using your hands:

- Write down the instructor's key notes, major points, & important information. Be as specific as possible.
- Do NOT try to write down every word of a lecture! If you get lost, write down cue words to come back to later.
- Jot down connections you make – those relationships between what you know and what you are learning.
- Write main ideas in your own words.
- Try alternate forms of note taking to find what works best for you.
- Write legibly. If you cannot read your notes, they are useless.

Using your creativity:

- If available, get an electronic or paper copy of the presentation or document before the class. You can take notes directly into the file.

- **Use color when writing notes or reviewing notes.** Designating specific colors for particular types of information provides additional structure to the notes. For example, use **yellow** to highlight important terms, **blue** for main concepts, and **green** for supporting details.
- Use sticky notes and/or **flags** while taking or reviewing notes. For example, place a sticky flag on the notes to indicate key concepts, terms, or information needing clarification for later review.
- Consolidate your notes into some logical system. For instance, all notes about the heart in one section and all notes about the lungs in another section. Get as creative and as detailed as you need to be.
- Create your own internal library by categorizing and filing information you are learning under previously learned information. (like Sherlock's mind palace)
- Create your own abbreviations.

Why Take Notes?

- Notes help you to stay focused in class.
- Notes trigger memory of lectures and reading.
- Notes are study tools for test preparation, and resources for assignments.
- Taking notes is kinesthetic and acts like an engraving tool on our memory.

Additional Resources:

5 Note Taking Methods: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AffuwyJZTQQ>

Crash Course on Note Taking: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E7CwqNHn_Ns