

# Note Taking Skills

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## Evaluate your Present Note Taking System

Ask yourself:

- Did I use complete sentences? (They are generally a waste of time)
- Are my notes clear and organized?
- Did I capture main points and sub points?
- Did I streamline using abbreviations and shortcuts?

## Five Important Reasons to Take Notes

1. Reading over your notes triggers basic mental processes that help you remember information from the lecture.
2. It is easier to concentrate in class if you are taking notes.
3. Your notes are good study guides to help you prepare for tests.
4. Your notes often offer hints about what information the instructor thinks is most important (i.e., what will show up on the next test).
5. Your lecture notes often contain information that cannot be found elsewhere (i.e., in your text book).

## Guidelines for Note-Taking

- Concentrate on the lecture or on the reading material. Take notes throughout the lecture; do not let your note-taking progress doodles.
- Take notes selectively. Do NOT try to write down every word. Remember that the average lecture speaks approximately 125-140 words per minute, and the average note-taker writes a rate of about 25 words per minute.
- Translate ideas into your own words.
- Organize notes into some sort of logical form.
- Be brief. Write only the major points and important information.
- Do not be concerned with spelling and grammar.
- Always date your notes for easy reference later.

## Tips for Finding Major Points in Lectures

The speaker is usually making an important point if he/she:

- Pauses before or after an idea.
- Uses repetition to emphasize a point.
- Uses introductory phrases to precede important ideas.
- Write ideas on the board.

## Ways to Reduce and Streamline Notes

- Eliminate:
  - Small connecting words such as: is, are, was, were, a, an, the, would, this, of.
  - Unnecessary pronouns such as: they, these, his, that, them.
  - DO NOT eliminate these three words: and, in, on.

- Use symbols to abbreviate, such as:

+, &	=	and, plus
=	=	equals
-	=	minus
#	=	number
x	=	times

>	=	larger than
<	=	smaller than
w/	=	with
w/o	=	without
w/in	=	within

For example: "The diameter of the Earth is four times greater than the diameter of the Moon"

Becomes: "Earth=4x>diameter of Moon."

- Substitute numerals with symbols
  - For example: One becomes 1  
Third become 3<sup>rd</sup>
- Abbreviate
  - Drop the last several letters of a word.  
Example: substitute "appropriate" with "approp."
  - Drop some of the internal vowels of a word.  
Example: substitute "large" with "lrg."
  - Use abbreviations you are familiar with, such as ones you use for text messaging.  
Example: w/ = with  
b/c = because