

# TAKING GOOD LECTURE NOTES

College teachers expect you can take accurate, complete lecture notes. They also expect you to understand and learn what you have written in your notes.

You'll need a 3-ring binder, 3-hole punch, writing paper, and pen. Good notes can:

- Keep you focused on what you are hearing
- Create a written record of what you are expected to learn
- Begin the remembering and learning process
- Form the beginning of study guides

Note taking is a 3-step process:

## 1. Before Class

Skim the assigned or related textbook material: chapter title, objectives, bold headings, vocabulary words, graphics and illustrations, summary, outline and review questions. Also skim related course objectives, outlines, and the syllabus.

Skimming gives you an overview of what may be covered in the lecture and helps create an organizational structure in your mind. Skimming makes it easier to keep up with the lecturer because you have already familiarized yourself with the topics to be covered as well as any specialized terminology that relates to those topics.

Review previous lecture notes. Most instructors begin each class where they left off at the end of the previous lecture. Most also ask if there are any questions from previous lecture or reading material. Prepare ahead by writing down any questions you wish to ask in class.

Reviewing gets you warmed up for class, reinforces what you have already learned and reminds you of what still needs to be understood and learned before the next test.

## 2. During Class

Attend every class. Sit where you can see and hear. Stay alert. Watch and listen actively for main ideas.

Write down key words, information that is stressed and repeated, references to textbook pages, change of topics, etc.

Date and number each notebook page and all handouts you receive in class.

Mark your notes if you miss something or if you need to ask the teacher about anything you do not understand.

As the instructor changes topics, do not try to finish what you are writing; instead, leave space in your notes and start the new topic. Consider using a tape recorder with a counter as a backup and writing down the counter number so you can easily listen to what you missed and fill in any gaps.

Listen for clues to what is important such as "This may be on an exam," or "You should know this." Mark these in your notes; you'll probably see this again!

If you use abbreviations, be sure to define them somewhere in your notes.

Don't worry if these notes are messy. Don't take the time during a lecture to erase or write more neatly than you can quickly; you'll be rewriting them soon.

### 3. After Class

Rewrite your notes within 24 hours or you will forget everything you learned in class and will have to spend study time to relearn it.

Follow these steps of the modified Cornell Note-Taking System:

- Draw a line 3" from the left margin of the paper.
- Write key words, concepts, processes, and questions from your notes or the text to the left of the line.
- Define words and concepts, explain processes and answer questions to the right of the line, using your own words.
- As you finish writing each page, cover the right hand side and test yourself.
- Check off what you know. Mark what you need to spend more time learning. Speak with your instructor or make an appointment in the Academic Center for Excellence (ACE) for suggestions on how to learn and remember complex material.
- Make up note cards to quiz yourself. Practice reciting the answers out loud, without looking at the cards.
- Reread your notes before the next lecture.

Your notes will look like this after rewriting using the modified Cornell Note-Taking System:

Date, page #		
TOPIC		
Vocabulary words Key terms Important people	Define	Draw
Concepts Processes	Explain	Concept map Diagram
?s from text ?s from class My questions	Answer	Diagram Draw