How To Take Lecture Notes

Seattle Central Community College
Student Academic Assistance
TRiO
Room 1102B1
Tel. (206) 587-3852
www.seattlecentral.org/academic-assistance

HOURS
Daily 8:00 – 4:30

COUNSELING HOURS
Daily 8:00 – 4:00
Evening Counseling
Tuesdays 4:00 – 6:00

This Student Support Services Project is 100% federally funded
ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Booklets
Managing Your Time... Study... Work... Play
Using the parts of the Text
How To Take Tests
Different Kinds of Tests
How to Take Lecture Notes
How To Write a Term Paper
SQ4R: How to Read Faster and Remember More
How To Give An Oral Report
How To Read a Math Textbook

Live Workshops
Take Great Notes
Write a Great Essay
Managing Stress
Improve Your Memory
Building Self-Esteem
Managing Your Time

...and more!

Visit our website for a current schedule of our workshops
www.seattlecentral.org/academic-assistance
How to Take Lecture Notes

Why Take Notes?

- **For Organization**
  Organized information is easier to read, remember and understand.

- **For Exams**
  Your notes will provide study materials for exams. Most instructors will hint at, if not flatly emphasize, what will be asked in quizzes and exams.

- **For Maintaining Attention**
  You cannot fall asleep if you are actively involved. This writing process forces you to listen and also serves as a memorizing aid.

Preparation For Note-taking

1. Use a standard 8-1/2 x 11” three-ring binder. Draw a vertical line, top to bottom, 1-1/2” on the left side of the paper. Use this side for keywords and the right side for lecture notes.

2. Name and date each lecture.

3. Use only one side of a page-- use the blank side for comments, questions, notes and for summarizing the lecture.

4. Read the assignment before class.

5. Review your notes from the previous class.

6. Sit where you can hear the professor and see the chalkboard.

7. Use symbols such as asterisk or underling to highlight ideas the professor emphasizes.

8. Copy down charts, maps, diagrams.
The Note-taking Process

LISTEN

Many instructors attempt to present a few major points and several minor points in a lecture. The rest is explanatory material and samples. Try to see the main points and do not get lost in a barrage of minor points which do not seem related to each other. The relationship is there if you will listen for it. Be alert to cues about what the professor thinks is important. Try to listen to everything that you hear; yet, at the same time, sort out the main statements from those that are secondary, supportive, or ‘asides’. Clues for listening for important statements:

“the following five steps…”

“the four major causes…”

Endings like “consequently” or “therefore”

SELECT

Do not attempt to copy everything! If a statement is made that you understand clearly, write it down in your own words. Do not try to take down everything that the professor says. It is impossible and unnecessary because not everything is of equal importance. Spend more time listening and attempt to take down the main points. If you are writing as fast as you can, you cannot be as discriminating a listener. There may be some times, however, when it is more important to write than to think.

WRITE

Make your original notes legible enough for your own reading, but use abbreviations of your own invention when possible. The effort required to recopy notes can be better spent in rereading them and thinking about them. Although neatness is a virtue in some respect, it does not necessarily increase your learning.

SUMMARIZE

Write a short summary paragraph on the back of your class notes when you are reviewing a summary of the whole lecture. This will reinforce your understanding. To understand and know the material now will cut down on study time before exams.

Online Sources

Taking Lecture and Class Notes
www.dartmouth.edu/~acskills/success/notes.html

Taking Lecture Notes
www.uga.edu/dae/resources/pdf_academichandouts/taking_lecture_notes.pdf

Lecture Note Taking
www.csbsju.edu/academicadvising/help/lec-note.htm

Learning from Lectures
www.lib.uoguelph.ca/assistance/learning_services/fastfacts/learning_from_lectures.cfm

Note-Taking and In-Class Skills
www.ucc.vt.edu/stdysk/notetake.html

Math and Science Lecture Styles

Take Better Notes
http://gwired.gwu.edu/counsel/asc/Youveecidedtoimproveyourstudyhabits/TakeBetterNotes/

Basic Study Techniques
http://scs.tamu.edu/selfhelp/elibrary/basic_study_techniques.asp

Note-Taking Skills
www.arc.sbc.edu/notes.html
Note-Taking Styles

Use the style or combination of forms that works best for you. Keep in mind that notes should be brief, readable and consistent.

1. Paragraph form
   A paragraph is written for each topic. This method is not very practical because it requires a great deal of writing.

2. Sentence form
   The amount of writing is cut down. The sentences are numbered and are short statements of what is heard.

3. Standard outline form
   This form uses numerals, letters, numbers, and indentations.
   Example:
   
   I. Main Topic
   A. Sub-Topic
      1. Supporting Idea
      2. Supporting Idea

4. Cornell Method
   The Cornell Method of taking classroom notes requires you to divide your paper in two sections. On the left side, record single words or ideas that are important. On the right side take your notes as you usually do.

Whatever form you use, remember that the main purpose of your notes is to serve you. They are not intended to meet certain standards or to be neat and formal for someone else.

Two examples are found on the next page.

The Cons

- You have to remember to keep the battery charged if you don't have access to an outlet in the classroom.
- Laptops can be difficult to use in some classrooms, especially those with small desks.
- If your computer breaks down and you haven't printed out or backed up your notes elsewhere, you may have lost them for good.
- Laptops can be heavy and difficult to carry every day, all day.
- If you take notes from your textbooks by hand, you have to print lecture notes to integrate them with your text notes.
- If you have problems concentrating in class, a laptop is a very tempting source of distractions. Accessing sites meant for fun when you're supposed to be focused on academics disrupts your learning and the learning of others around you.

How to Study Using Your Notes

- Set aside a few minutes each day to review your notes, rewrite any especially messy parts, fill in gaps, and put your notes in your binder.
- In some cases, it may be helpful to meet with a friend once a week and discuss your notes. Your friend might be able to help you fill in some gaps in your notes, and you may likewise be able to help him/her.
- If you take notes from the textbook after the lecture, use the back of each page of lecture notes for corresponding textbook notes. You'll be less likely to spend valuable time taking textbook notes on a topic already covered in lecture, and you'll have a compact set of integrated notes ready to review for the midterm or final.
- At the end of each week, write a summary of the week's lecture and textbook notes. This integrated summary can become the basis for your review for midterms and exams.

(assuming you've used your laptop for textbook notes as well).

- You have fewer pieces of paper to maintain and organize.

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EXAMPLE : Outline Form w/shorthand
Date: 00/00/00

I. Central Fact of Human Existence
   A. Our motives & goals often frstrtd
   B. This frstrtn produces anxty
   C. We develop defenses angst such anxty

II. General Sources of Frstrtn
   A. Envrnmntl inadqcies
      1. Achvmnt of goal blocked by envrnmntl barriers
   B. Personal inadqcies
      1. Achvmnt of goal prvntd by discrpncy b/w level of aspirtn & level of permnce
      2. EX: Lacking necry abilities to achv vocatn ambitions

EXAMPLE : Cornell Method

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ch. 3</th>
<th>Topic: Student Academic Assistance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Room 1102B1</td>
<td>Program Services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1. Counseling 3. Campus Visits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Tutoring 4. Cultural Events</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>About the program</td>
<td>Federally funded Professional Counselors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Who is eligible:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1st Generation college students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Disabled Students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Students on Financial Assistance</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Hints for Shorthand
The trick to shorthand writing is to learn to abbreviate words. Words can be shortened by:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Omitting vowels</th>
<th>Abbreviating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Brought = brgt</td>
<td>Government = govt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lesson = lssn</td>
<td>Yesterday = yest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Happiness = hppness</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Substituting symbols and numbers for words
- With = w/
- Without = w/o
- And = “+” or “&”
- At = @
- Less than = <
- More than = >
- Therefore = \
- Before = b/f
- Because = b/c
- Between = b/w
- For = 4
- You = u

Whatever code you devise for yourself, remember that it takes practice. Don’t be discouraged if you have difficulty the first few times. Practice taking notes while a friend or partner reads out loud to you.

Laptops: Pros and Cons
If you’ve thought about using a laptop to take notes in your courses, consider these points when making your decision.

The Pros
- You can easily connect to your professor’s website or other SCCC resources instantly.
- Typed notes are easier to read than handwritten notes.
- It’s easier to integrate notes from lecture with notes from the textbook.