

Effective Note Taking

Taking effective notes improves both your study and work habits and helps you to remember important information. Often, students think that because they understand everything said in class, they will remember it. **DON'T FALL INTO THIS TRAP!**

As you take lecture notes, you will learn to which material is important and which isn't. The trick to developing this skill is practice. Check your results constantly. Strive to improve. Notes help you retain important facts and data, and they help you develop an accurate means of recording and arranging necessary information.

The notes you take in class are really a hand written textbook. In many instances, your lecture notes are more practical, meaningful and more current than a textbook. If you keep them neat, complete, and well organized they'll serve you splendidly.

Here are some helpful hints:

- Keep notes on lined notebook paper—use the left-hand column for quick overviews. Make sure you have enough paper to last the entire class.
- Date and title the first page of notes before class begins. Number all pages, too.
- Keep notes in order and in one place—a three-ringed or spiral notebook is ideal.
- Don't transcribe everything you hear. Be alert and attentive to the main points, concentrating on the lecture's main points—this is what you write down.
- Use key words or very short sentences keeping notes short and to the point. Omit lengthy descriptions and full explanations.
- If the teacher gets sidetracked, it is often possible to go back and add further information.
- Think about the lecture material, and, as you write, use your own words to reiterate the points.
- Use a uniform system for punctuation and abbreviation that makes sense to you.
- Use a skeleton outline that shows importance by indenting.
- Leave lots of white space for later additions.
- Condense the points so you can grasp the main points rapidly.
- Don't worry about missing a point. Leave space and pick up the material you missed at a later date, either through reading, questioning, common sense, or looking at a classmate's notes.
- Shortly after taking your lecture notes, go back and edit them by filling in points, spelling out unclear items, etc. Remember, we forget rapidly. Budget time for this vital step just as you do for the class itself.
- Review your notes periodically: daily, weekly, and a major review just before a test. This is the only way to truly take advantage of all your hard work.