

Getting it Write

WHY DO I EVEN TAKE NOTES ANYWAYS? CAN'T I JUST READ THE BOOK?

Taking notes during lecture aids in comprehension and retention of course materials. Lecture notes can also help to clarify and expand on concepts from the text, as well as help you to understand what the professor deems most important from course readings. Using lecture notes in combination with textbook material is an effective way to review for tests.

Before the Lecture: Read or skim the text before class.

Many students struggle with trying to write down every word the speaker says because they don't know how to identify important information within the lecture. The most important thing you can do as a student is to read or skim the text ahead of time. Doing so will enable you to recognize the main ideas, identify new terms or concepts, and pinpoint difficult or unclear materials.

During the Lecture: Organize your notes.

There is no one "right" way to take notes, although the following guidelines can help you develop your own method:

- ❖ Begin each lecture on a new page, making sure to date all pages.
- ❖ Don't worry about trying to create an 'outline' format – instead use indentations or leave blank spaces to add information later during reading the text or review.
- ❖ Be sure to record any references to pages or illustrations in the text by the professor.
- ❖ Utilize margins for any questions, comments or notes to highlight important or confusing materials.

After the Lecture: Review your notes.

Reviewing notes initially within two days following lecture and weekly thereafter greatly reduces the amount of forgotten material, thus reducing information you have to relearn prior to a test! You are also able to add to your notes to clear up missing or confusing information by consulting the text, professor or fellow students.

- ❖ Reflect on course information by summarizing your notes in your own words, creating flashcards, outlines, charts or diagrams.
- ❖ Rehearse your notes by quizzing yourself on the material while covering the answer(s).



If you spend time reviewing your notes within a few hours of taking them, you will retain **50%** of the material.

Waiting longer than 24 hours before reviewing your notes, results in you retaining only **20%** of the material.

(Howe, 1970 in Longman and Atkinson, 1999)

Note-Taking DOs

- Familiarize yourself with the lecture topic prior to attending the lecture.
- Do listen for terminology.
- Do write down any examples discussed.
- Do be alert for repetition – it helps to understand what the lecturer feels is important.
- Do leave blank space to add to notes later from the text, peers, or professor.

Note-Taking DO NOTs

- Do not tune out if the lecturer is speaking too fast – some notes are better than none and you can always fill in additional information later.
- Do not doodle – it breaks concentration!
- Do not sit near friends – they tend to be a distraction.
- Do not look for facts only – concepts are important too.