

## Success Tip: Taking Lecture Notes

### **Good lecture notes are important.**

Taking proper notes promotes active listening and helps you to stay focused during lectures. Reviewing notes on a daily basis aids in memorization and reinforces new concepts. Most people only remember 20% of what they are told, so it is necessary to take appropriate notes for studying. Each instructor and course is different, so it is good to know how to refine note-taking depending on the course.

### **Notes are only helpful if they are understandable and legible.**

Previewing reading assignments prior to attending class helps to prepare for note-taking because you will know what new terms and concepts will be introduced. This leaves you less confused, gives you time to take proper notes, and allows you to follow along with the professor as they lecture.

### **Sitting in the front of the class has perks.**

It is easier to see the board and to keep the professor in view. You will also be less likely to fall asleep!

### **Some professors may lecture directly from the textbook.**

You may find it easiest to make quick notations in the margins of the text as they go through the lecture. At the same time, make major notes in your notebook to add in details and examples. For professors who do NOT lecture directly from the textbook, attending class is the best and only way to get thorough, helpful notes that will be beneficial for you as you prepare for quizzes and exams.

*Cornell University developed a ten-step system to improve note-taking skills. Follow the suggestions below to improve note-taking skills and the ability to recall main ideas and significant details for exam preparation.*

## **Ten Steps to Taking Notes and Retaining Lecture Material AKA: the Cornell Method**

### **1. Use a three-ring binder with loose-leaf notebook paper.**

This allows for adding in handouts and outside material. Keep all material in chronological order and always date notes and handouts. Make sure to use appropriate paper for the appropriate discipline (lined paper, graph paper, blank paper, etc.).

**2. Draw a vertical line 2.5 inches from the left edge of the page.**

You will have the remaining six inches of paper to write lecture notes. This allows the left section to be utilized for key terms, page numbers to refer to, charts, areas the puzzle you, or items that the professor mentions will be on an exam. Law-ruled paper with a large left margin is available at the University Bookstore.

**3. Take notes on the right side of your paper in any format that you prefer.**

This may include labeling with numerals or letters. You may indent or even write short paragraphs.

**4. Concentrate on writing only main ideas and significant details during lectures.**

If you write down everything the professors say, you will get frustrated, and the notes will also be messy and unreadable. Focus on key phrases, page numbers that are pointed out, main ideas with significant supporting facts, vocabulary, anything the professor writes on the board, and lists or examples discussed. If you are in a math-based course (Chemistry, Physics, Engineering, etc.) include sample problems and describe what happens in each step. If you do not do this, you will not remember how the sample progressed from one step to the next.

**5. Skip lines between main ideas or areas where you miss something or get lost temporarily.**

This allows you to neatly fill in the correct information later on.

**6. Review the notes as soon as possible after class.**

Review, rewrite, and clarify concepts for reading ease. Outline, elaborate, and write questions you may have in the margins. Organize and identify key concepts from the notes and, lastly, fill in any incomplete areas

**7. While reviewing notes:** Underline, highlight, or box in all the main ideas.

**8. After reviewing the notes the first time:**

Use the 2.5 margin to write down key phrases that summarize what you have learned. Developing test questions will aid in studying for exams. Note where you need to refer to the textbook and mark concepts that need further clarification. Check with the professor in class or during office hours.

**9. Cover up the 6-inch side of your notes.**

See whether you can recall the important parts of the lecture with only key phrases as clues. If necessary, create flash cards.

**10. Continue this procedure until you can easily recall the important parts of the lecture.**

Learning is a process. Review and clarify notes frequently. It is difficult to hear a lecture and expect to understand a concept immediately. You need to work with material regularly in order to be a successful learner.