Tutor Program Tip - Taking Lecture Notes

*Good lecture notes are important because:*  
It 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 professor and course is different, so it is good to know how to refine note taking, depending on the course.

*Notes are only helpful when 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, giving you time to take proper notes, and follow along with the professor.

*Sitting in the front of the class has some 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 he/she goes through it. At the same time, make major notes in your notebook that you must accompany with details and examples.

Cornell University developed a ten-step system to improve your 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)

*Use three-ring binders with loose-leaf notebook paper.*  
This allows you to add handouts and outside material. Keep all material in chronological order and always date your notes and handouts. Make sure to use appropriate paper for the appropriate discipline (lined paper, graph paper, blank paper, etc).
**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 down your lecture notes. This allows you to utilize the left section for key terms, page numbers to refer to, charts, areas the puzzle you, or portions that your professor mentions will be on an exam. Law-ruled paper with a large left margin is available at the University Bookstore.

**Take notes on the right side of your paper in any format that you prefer.**
This may include by labeling with numerals or letters. You may indent or even write short paragraphs.

**Concentrate on writing only main ideas and significant details during lectures.**
If you write down everything the professors says you will get frustrated, and your 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 value to another.

**Skip lines between main ideas or areas where you miss something or get lost temporarily.**
This allows you to fill in the correct information later on.

**Review your notes as soon as possible after class.**
The most effectively review, rewrite and clarify concepts for reading ease, outline, elaborate, write questions in the margins that you may have. Organize and identify key concepts from your notes and lastly, fill in any incomplete areas

**As you review your notes:**
Underline, highlight, or box in all the main ideas.

**After reviewing your notes once:**
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. Mark spots where you need to refer to the textbook and mark spots where you need to see your professor for clarification.

**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, make up flash cards

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

**Summary**
Learning is a process. Review and clarify your 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.