

TAKING NOTES FROM LECTURES

Thirteen Steps for Taking Good Lecture Notes

1. **Locate.** Consider sitting next to a good student in class. Could be a good source to refresh something the instructor just said and you missed.
2. **Prepare.** Review any handouts and read all assigned textbook chapters **before** the next class. Take notes on the materials read in order to understand better what the instructor has to say in the next class.
3. **Focus.** Concentrate during lectures and push nonrelevant thoughts from your mind. Consider seating in the first row to minimize visual and auditory distractions. This should improve your concentration, especially if you have difficulty paying attention in class.
4. **Be Alert.** During a lecture, look for 'signals' and 'flags' that the instructor uses to indicate important information. For example, the instructor may use an overhead projector, repeat several key terms, facts or data, or write on the chalkboard; the instructor is clearly flagging something important.
5. **Abbreviate.** To help you to write more quickly, consistently use abbreviations you can understand.
6. **Speed-think.** When taking notes, don't spend time trying to digest everything the instructor says. Digest the content of the lecturer after class.
7. **Speed-write.** Writing words without vowels (e.g. vowels = vwls). Get the information down quickly.
8. **Evaluate.** Some instructors want you to analyze, link, and think about the information presented in the lecture. In this case you should adjust your note-taking procedures and be able to assess your instructor's priorities quickly. When asking many questions while lecturing, the instructor expects you to think about the lecture content as it's presented. If you feel uncertain about your instructor's priorities, ask for clarification.
9. **Question.** If something said in lecture is not clear, ask for clarification. Do this selectively and use your discretion about the timing of your questions.
10. **Compare.** If your note-taking skills are weak, compare your notes with a classmate who is doing well in the class and used his/her notes as a model. Add important information that you are lacking; this serves to get a different point of view of the lecture.
11. **Practice.** If you experience difficulties in taking notes during lecture, practice with a friend or classmate. Have your friend or classmate give you a mini lecture using your actual lecture notes and practice taking notes to improve your skills.
12. **Pretend.** Using your class and lecture notes practice giving lectures covering the material you're learning to an imaginary audience. This step will help you comprehend the underlying issues and provide an overview of the course content.
13. **Organize.** While reviewing your notes after lecture, make sure you understand what you wrote and you may have to organize, reorganize, revise, or amplify (by comparing to other sources like a textbook) certain sections that are confusing. You may also have to re-copy sections that were written down sloppily or are difficult to read.