

# Note-Taking

Good studying begins with taking good notes during class. Use the following tips to get the most from your note-taking:

## 1. Take Complete Notes

When taking notes, never copy an instructor's lecture notes/presentation word-for-word. Rather, jot down keywords, names, dates, formulas, and main points your instructor makes that you can go back and define/explain later. Doing this will help you stay focused and avoid missing any important information.

## 2. Use Abbreviations

To take complete notes, you need to write fairly quickly. For this reason, it is important to use abbreviations. The key to abbreviating is using abbreviations that make sense to you. Put an abbreviation key in the margin of your notebook/paper for those that you make up on the spot.

## 3. Make Special Note of 'Emphasized' Information

Make special note of information your instructor writes on the board and/or repeats several times. This is a cue that it is important and will likely be on an exam.

## 4. Neatness Does Not Count

Your notes only need to be legible enough for you to read. Do not worry about scribbling, crossing out words, and writing additional information in the margins. Focus more on writing down as much key information as you can. You can always go back and re-organize your notes later.

## 5. Ask Questions and Make Comments

If a question comes to mind during class, either ask it or jot it down to ask later. Never be embarrassed to ask a question. There is likely at least one other student in the class (and often many more) who will be grateful to you for asking the same question that he or she was too embarrassed to ask.

## 6. Re-Write Your Notes After Class

One of the best ways to study your notes is by re-writing them. Simply re-reading your notes is too passive, especially if they are incomplete or sketchy. Re-write your notes as soon as possible after class to fill in the gaps from your memory while they are still fresh in your mind. Also use this opportunity to define/explain keywords, names, dates, and other concepts that you missed during class, and re-organize your notes in a more logical or coherent fashion. As you re-write, you may also think of a question or something you missed or do not understand. Make note of this and ask it during your next class.

## 7. Do Not Rely Solely on Your Instructor's Lecture Notes

Some instructors provide their own set of lecture notes. Although these are useful, you should not rely on them. If all you do is print them, read them once, and save them, they are useless. Instead, use them to fill in the gaps as you take notes during class and review/re-write your notes after class.