

## Note-Taking Strategies

You can think four times faster than a lecturer can speak. To compensate for the rate of presentation, you have to listen actively. Taking notes can enhance listening and add immeasurably to your comprehension and recall of the material. Try the following tips this semester.

### Before Class

- Briefly review the previous lecture while waiting for the next one to begin. This will refresh your memory and reconnect to the material.
- Skim relevant reading assignments to acquaint yourself with main ideas, new technical terms, etc.
- Enhance your physical and mental alertness: eat a snack before class, sit in the front and/or center of the room, focus your attention on the speaker, and store your phone far out of reach.
- Choose notebooks that will enhance your note-taking. Use a separate notebook with full-sized pages for each course.

### During Class

- Close the laptop and take out the pen and paper. Because you have to write more slowly, you will pay attention more closely in order to prioritize the information you hear and decide what is important.
- Write, write, write! Every fifteen minutes of lecture should generate about a page of notes.
- Pay attention to the speaker for verbal, postural, and visual clues to what's important. Phrases like "It's especially important to note that...", "There are three primary reasons why...", and "To sum up..." should signal to you that it's time to start writing.
- Label important points and organizational clues (e.g., main points, examples, evidence).
- Resist emotional reactions, like boredom or anxiety. If you feel anxious or bored, take a few deep breaths and make observations that keep your attention external and local: notice and evaluate the font on the speaker's PowerPoint, count how many times your professor uses a new key term, or press down harder with your pen to remind yourself that you are here, writing.

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- Practice good body language. Make eye contact and sit up straight. This will keep you alert, as well as signal to the speaker that you care about the material.
- Save your own reflection or disagreement for later. You will have time to do that while studying. Use class time capture what the speaker believes.
- Ask questions if you don't understand. If you're uncomfortable speaking up in class, make notes of questions and take them to your professor's office hours.
- Listen carefully to information given toward the end of class. Summary statements may be of particular value in highlighting main points.

**After Class**

- Clear up any questions raised by the lecture by asking either the teacher or classmates.
- Fill in missing points or misunderstood terms from text or other sources.
- Edit your notes by titling each lecture, labeling main points and adding anything else you can remember.
- Periodically review your notes throughout the semester, not just before the exam.