

# Note Taking Skills: 20 Quick Tips

Academic Success Center  
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1. Read your book chapter or slides before class. Note taking comes easier when you advanced context of the material.
2. Develop the intention to learn while you are in lecture. You've made the effort and taken the time to attend. Now make the most of your time by learning information as you receive it. The more information you understand, the less you'll have to memorize.
3. Start by entering the classroom with a positive attitude. Going to class thinking, "there is no reason for me to be here" only sets the stage for inactive listening. Approaching lectures with a positive mentality allows one to be open-minded and enables you to get the most out of the information presented.
4. Take a minute before class to strategize what will likely be discussed based on the syllabus, what has been presented in the course so far, your notes from the last lecture, and a quick glance at the readings assigned (using **THIEVES**) for the current class.
5. Start each lecture on a new page and be sure to date and number each page. The sequence of material is important.
6. Think about your own understanding of the concepts before you start making notes. Don't take notes just to be taking notes! Your notes should be of value to you when you look over them at a later date.
7. Take selective notes. Don't try to copy information word for word.
8. Notes should consist of key words or very short sentences. If a speaker gets sidetracked it is often possible to go back and add further information.
9. Use an outline format and/or a numbering system. Indention also helps you distinguish major from minor points.
10. Don't worry about missing a point, you can always fill in this information after the lecture.
11. Note anything you don't understand by underlining or highlighting to remind you to ask the instructor or look up later.
12. Listen for clues. When the speaker takes a deep breath, changes their intonation, puts down the marker, big things are coming.
13. Lecture notes should be as specific and concrete as possible but also precise about the lecturer's key ideas. It makes them easier to understand, remember, and apply in the future.
14. Connect the relationship between information presented in lecture and information presented in the readings, in the written work, and in the problems assigned.
15. Keep a record of questions relating to the material as they go along. This makes it easy to follow up with professors, or to offer a question at the end of the lecture. Keeping a list of questions will also give you easy reference points when you need to re-engage with your notes for a paper or project
16. Don't keep notes on oddly shaped pieces of paper. Keep notes in order and in one place.
17. Shortly after making your notes, go back and rework (not redo) your notes by adding extra points and spelling out unclear items. Remember, we forget rapidly. Allow time for this vital step just as you do for the class itself.
18. Review your notes regularly. This is the only way to achieve lasting memory.
19. Having a friend in class can be extremely helpful! If you have to miss class, are unable to take notes, and/or have gaps in your notes you will have someone to help you. Exchange phone numbers with a classmate so that you have a backup source if you need it.
20. Remember, as you take notes consistently you will develop skill in selecting important material and in discarding unimportant material. The secret to developing this skill is practice.