

Taking Notes

If you want to take good notes, you first must be a good listener!

Instead of listening to understand the content, some students spend too much time trying to write down every word an instructor speaks, or every word written on a power point. Unfortunately, they are putting themselves at a significant disadvantage because they are not thinking critically about new material as it is being introduced and explained in class.

While students will need to adjust their note-taking system based on an individual instructor's teaching style, the process for taking notes in class should always follow a similar pattern:

1. **Listen:** Give the speaker your full attention, sit near the front of the room to reduce internal and external distractions.
2. **Think:** Be sure you understand the message, ask questions (during or after class) when things are unclear.
3. **Write:** Jot down only as much as you need, knowing that you'll be returning to your notes later to elaborate.

After class is done, you should subscribe to a 24 hour rule regarding your notes. You need to do **something** with the notes within 24 hours of taking them. What you do is up to you, but numerous successful students find that rewriting or retyping their notes is the best way to check their comprehension and retention of the information. They must think critically about the material as they rewrite/retyp and by doing so they deepen their understanding and improve their chances of remembering the information for future class discussions and tests.

There are several reasons why you need to take good notes in class.

1. Perhaps most importantly, taking notes will help you concentrate.
2. Taking notes increases your ability to participate in class discussions.
3. Taking notes improves learning because you are hearing information **and** writing it down.
4. Notes give you something to study outside of class besides the book.
5. Notes help you to keep track of important details and prepare for quizzes and tests.