

General Tips for Taking Notes

1. Most importantly, ATTEND CLASS. If you must miss class, be sure to get a copy of a classmate's notes or the professor's notes.
2. Complete all reading assignments before class. This "warms up" your mind to receive new information.
3. It is impossible to write down everything a professor says. Instead, write down the important points. Don't use complete sentences; use abbreviations and shortened forms of words.
4. Raise questions when appropriate. Write questions in the margin of your notes in order to discuss them with the professor or tutor later.
5. Leave a few spaces blank as you move from one point to the next, so that you can fill in additional points as necessary.
6. Pay close attention to transitional words, phrases, and sentences, which signal the end of one idea and the beginning of another.
7. Be orderly and systematic so you can process the lecture now and review later. Establish a note-taking format that works for you.
8. Write on one side of the paper for easier organization. It is possible to overlook material written on the back of a sheet.
9. Take notes in a spiral notebook. Have one for each class. After class, type notes, punch holes in them and place in a 3-ring binder. This way, you can reshuffle notes for review.
10. As soon as possible after class, re-copy or type your notes. Add more information, number, underline, etc. to make the notes more complete. This is an excellent way to transfer information from short-term memory into long-term memory.
11. Highlight main points, sub-points, etc. in different colors. For example, when using the Outline note-taking method, use a yellow highlighter for main points (Roman Numerals), blue for sub-points (A, B, C) and pink for details (1. 2. 3.).
12. Review all notes once a week, then more frequently as you get closer to test time.

Adapted from: California Polytechnic State University, <http://www.calpoly.edu>.