

Study Skills Taking Notes

Writing things down is a lifelong habit which we expect our students to cultivate at an early age. We may forget 90% of what we read, but some experts say, we **remember** about 50% of what we write down. Taking good lecture notes helps the student understand the tutors' presentations, and aids in studying for exams. Filling out chapter guides and outlines provided by tutors, also helps student sharpen this skill.

Here are some basic helps to taking notes, followed by rules for listening and taking notes:

Good note taking requires effective listening, as well as active concentration and evaluation of what is being said. **You should, of course, always be ready to take notes during class.** Do not, however, try to write down everything that your tutor says. Listen for the meaning of his/her statements and record only the bare essentials needed to reconstruct the lecture. Take down the ideas and facts which form the step-by-step development of each topic, and then, as soon as possible after class, sit down and systematically review, clarify and expand your notes.

Your note-taking skills should improve rapidly if you will follow the rules of listening skills given below:

Rule #1: Be prepared. Before class, read your textbook assignment and review your lecture notes from your previous assignment.

Rule #2: Concentrate on the lecture – not on the lecturer. Concentrate on what he/she says, not on the way he/she says it.

Rule #3: Listen with an open mind. If you disagree with something he/she says, discuss it, but maintain an open-minded attitude, and don't let your opposition to others' opinions cause you to turn off the message before the point is fully developed.

Rule #4: Keep physically alert. Minimize visual or hearing difficulties by sitting near the lecturer instead of at the back of the classroom and maintain a comfortably alert position instead of a sprawled-out slouch, or chatting with others.

Rule #5: Keep mentally alert. Keep attentive in class by predicting likely test questions, comparing lecture and textbook content, entering into class discussion, etc.

Rules to improve your Note Taking Skills:

Rule #1: Date and identify each set of notes and keep the notes from different courses separate from one another – binders for each course is recommended.

Rule #2: Write legibly and on one side of the page only so that you won't have trouble deciphering your notes later on.

Rule #3: Whenever possible, try to take your notes in outline form, using your own system of enumeration and indentation to distinguish major and minor points.

Rule #4: Use your own words; one exception: definitions of technical terms which should be recorded exactly as given.

Rule #5: Copy most diagrams, drawings and other illustrations that your tutor puts on the white board, overhead projector, power point, etc.

Rule #6: Where appropriate, record your tutor's examples as they often clarify otherwise abstract ideas.

Rule #7: Make certain that you record correctly all names, dates, places, formulas, equations, rules, etc.

Rule #8: Keep alert for verbal transitions such as "the following five steps," or "four major causes" and for summations such as "consequently" or "therefore."

Rule #9: Use underlining or symbols, such as an asterisk or star, to identify points that your tutor emphasizes.

Rule #10: Separate your own thought from those of your tutor. Writing down your own ideas, examples and questions is an excellent way to keep alert during a lecture. For obvious reasons, however, you should bracket or otherwise label these as yours, not his.

Rule #11: Leave sufficient space to permit clarifying and expanding your notes later on. Ask a fellow student or your instructor to help you fill in the gaps if you think you missed one or more important points.

Rule #12: Don't be a clock watcher. Tutors cannot always pace themselves accurately and may cram half the lecture content into the last 15 minutes. You should, therefore, pay as close attention to the end of his/her lecture as you did to the beginning.

Rule #13: Review and edit your notes as soon as possible after class each day, but you need not recopy them. Use your page margins to fill in abbreviations, add omitted points, and correct errors.

Rule #14: As you read your notes, underline important points that you will want to give special attention to when you study the material later for an exam.

Listening and note taking, like any other skill, will improve rapidly with practice. The important thing is to learn as much as you can in class because this will help you to better understand and complete your outside assignments. Your tutor has undoubtedly labored long and hard to select, organize, and clarify the salient points of the course, so taking good notes during his lecture will probably save you many hours of hard work later on. Remember, your tutor will probably be speaking at about 100 words per minute, while you can be thinking at about 400 words per minute – a differential ratio of 1:4 in your favor! Use this extra time for thinking about what he/she says and take down notes in your own words. Taking sermon notes on Sunday, or from sermon downloads, say from Sermonaudio.com, can be a family interactive way of practicing note taking skills, plus give spiritual benefit and nurture.