

Taking Good Notes



Nowhere are good note-taking skills more important than in the college classroom. Much of the information that you are responsible for learning comes to you through the lecture, and in some cases, the lecture is the only source for that information.

Countless studies on auditory memory have been conducted over the years. The subjects for these studies have included professionals and college students. The finding that remains consistent in all of the studies is that we soon forget what we have heard if we have not recorded the information and reviewed it from time to time. In fact, without the benefit of review, the greatest amount of memory loss occurs almost immediately . . . roughly 50% within the first 24 hours. Over a period of a month, the loss may be as high as 80%. It isn't advisable to try and get through any course of study with only 20% of the information, so get out your pencils.

Tips for effective note-taking:

Read assigned readings before attending lecture. That way, you have some background and because you do, you can be a better listener. You'll have some ideas of what to expect and what to listen for. If questions come up in your reading, you may find they are clarified in lecture. If they're not, then ask the instructor. Do not be afraid to ask questions. Rather than appearing stupid, the instructor will perceive you as the bright, resourceful, and thoughtful student that you truly are.

Be selective. Don't try to write down everything the lecturer says. Stay alert and listen for major concepts, definitions, and explanations. Use abbreviations and be consistent with them. Listen and watch for teacher cues such as tone and volume of voice, writing on the blackboard, and repetition of information. These are just three of the many cues a particular instructor might use to emphasize what he or she thinks is important.

Teaching styles vary, and no two instructors are exactly alike. Some are given to subtlety, while others may say things like “read my lips”. It takes practice and a little time to adapt to your instructors’ styles. Keep that pencil poised and be an active listener. The classroom is no place for kicking back and relaxing. Folks who take that route usually end up taking the same course over and over again.

Use a three-ring notebook. Three-ring notebooks are more useful than spiral-bound notebooks because course materials such as syllabi and other handouts can be easily inserted in a 3 ringer. When studying or reviewing notes, you can spread them out in front of you. If someone wants to borrow your notes, you don’t have to be without the rest of your notes for the duration, and in the event of something awful happening like, “I left your notes in my brother’s car and he just took off for New Jersey,” you don’t risk the loss of your entire notebook.



Always date your notes. This may seem like a trivial point, but it’s not.

Compare your notes with other students in the class. You’d be surprised to find that something you thought was important was overlooked by someone else and vice versa. This may lead to some great discussions about the class material, and we all know that students who take an interest in and talk about what they’re studying typically ace the tests. It’s true.



Find a note-taking system you can live with.

If you tend to take haphazard notes with the intention of rewriting them at the end of the day, you may find yourself making less progress in completing other important projects like keeping up with your reading, working on that research paper, studying for three upcoming tests, eating, sleeping, and brushing your teeth. Instead of rewriting notes, consider using a note-taking system like the one illustrated on the next page . . .

In this system, the student records lecture notes in the wide right-hand margin. Afterwards, she uses the left-hand margin to consolidate the information in a way that is meaningful to her. The left-hand margin serves a variety of note-taking needs. It's great for listing those words you hastily recorded phonetically while listening to the lecture. For instance, "newmonya" will never pass for "pneumonia" on the health exam. The left margin is also a place to record any information you might have missed during the lecture.

When reviewing your notes after class, you have space to write study questions you need answered. When studying notes for a test, read your questions, cover the notes on the right, and see what you remember from the lecture. The best feature about a system like this one is that it encourages you to review notes and think about them rather than simply recopying them. An ongoing review is what's going to help master the course material.

<p>Stick has mind-power.</p> <p>Power - mana</p> <p>Can gain or lose mana</p> <p>Good people have lots of mana</p> <p>Too much mana = Tabu.</p> <p>Use Tabu to regulate economy</p> <p>Cause & Effect (mixture) (rain)</p> <p>Sympathetic = clay model</p> <p>Contagious = fingernail clippings</p> <p>Good or evil uses.</p>	<p>October 10, (Mon.) - Soc. 102 - Prof. Oxford</p> <p>A. Animism</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Object has supernatural power. Belief object has mind - a power. Animism associated with Polynesia. Power called mana: (not limited to objects) <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Objects accumulate mana. <p>Ex. Good canoe has more mana than poor one.</p> Objects can lose mana. People collect objects with lots of mana. Good person's objects collect mana. People, animals, plants have mana, too. <p>Ex. Expert canoe builder has mana - imparts mana to canoe.</p> Chief has lots of mana - too dangerous to get too close to chief - mana around head. Tabu <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Objects with powerful mana are tabu. Chief can manipulate mana - If certain animal becoming scarce, can place tabu on animal for a while. <p>B. Magic</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Science of primitive man - cause & effect. Make mixture (cause); Then it rains (effect). <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Don't know why it works, but when mixture made, rain comes. Two kinds magic. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Sympathetic - make model or form of person from clay, etc., then stick pins into object to hurt symbolized person. Contagious magic <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Need to possess an article belonging to another person. Ex. Fingernail clippings. By doing harm to these objects, feel that harm can be thus transmitted. All magic not necessarily evil - can be used for both good and evil.
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There are lots of options when it comes to effective note-taking strategies. What works for you in one class, for one lecturer, may not work in another class. It's up to you to adopt and/or adapt a style of note-taking that works well for you. If you'd like more information on note-taking, stop by the Learning Center, Loso Hall 234. We'll be happy to assist you.