1. Before the lecture – Prepare to take notes

♦ Read assigned material and complete assignments.
♦ Bring the best equipment:
  o 8 ½ x 11 loose leaf paper
  o 3-ring binder
  o Pen/Pencil
♦ Sit in a distraction-free location:
  o As close as possible to front and center of classroom
  o Away from windows/doors
  o Apart from “talkers,” noise makers, sleepers
  o Resist temptation of sitting with chatty friends
♦ Do a 3-minute, pre-class warm-up:
  o Look over notes from the last class
  o Scan assigned reading from text
  o Have questions in mind

2. During the Lecture – listening habits

♦ Listen to understand:
  o Get ideas
  o Assess their importance
  o Connect them to other information
  o If you disagree, note your disagreement and let it go
♦ Focus on content NOT delivery:
  o Ignore personal quirks of lecturer
  o Try to understand lecturer’s purpose
♦ Observe and listen for cues:
  o Introductory remarks
  o Summarizing or transitional statements such as:
    ▪ “the most important consideration…”
    ▪ “in summary…”
    ▪ “the following three factors…”
    ▪ “all in all…”
  o Repetition
  o Notice lecturer’s voice changes, facial expressions, and body language – indicate interest level and importance, enthusiasm, excitement vs. fundamental delivery
  o Watch lecturer’s eye movements – looking at notes for extra important information
  o Watch the board/screen – copy down as much information as possible

3. During the Lecture – Writing tips

♦ Use a two column format
  o 1/3 – 2/3 design
  o Write on only one side of the paper
♦ Write in “formatted prose.”
  o Use Roman numerals OR capital letters to indicate main points
  o Indent to indicate supporting details beneath main points
  o Leave plenty of “white space” especially when lecturer changes points
Use common abbreviations and develop your own. Be consistent. For example:

- w/ with
- w/o without
- + and
- ± more or less
- = equals
- ≠ does not equal
- < less than
- > greater than
- ↑ increase(s)
- ↓ decrease(s)
- .: therefore
- e.g. or ex example
- vs. versus, against
- # number, pounds
- @ approximately
- etc. and so on
- avg. average

Use a “lost” signal—“huh???”

Use key words, pictures, and diagrams.

Create a graphic interface with stars, arrows, brackets, underlines.

Be flexible – adapt your note taking style to the lecturer and subject matter:
- Switch to paragraphs
- Use note cards
- Use maps/diagrams/charts
- Use a tape recorder only as BACK-UP

Use TV note-taking for practice.

Avoid tape recorders – they tempt you to mentally relax.

When the instructor talks too fast:
- Leave large spaces for filling in what you miss
- Make choices about what to write – watch/listen for main points and fill in details later.
- Exchange photocopies of notes with classmates you trust.
- See the instructor after class
- Ask the instructor to slow down and/or repeat information

4. After the Lecture – Edit, Question, Review

Go over notes AS SOON AS POSSIBLE after lecture, within 24 hours at most.
- Clarify
- Delete/Add
- Fix words that are illegible
- Write out abbreviated words that might be unclear later
- Add organization with graphic symbols (arrows, brackets, etc.)
- Type out notes and print for easy reading

Create cues and questions:
- Use 1/3 column
- Focus on main concepts and some key details.
- Supplement with material from text.
- Highlight answers.