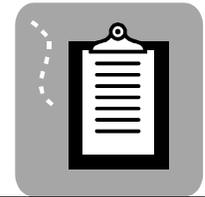


# Lecture Success: Tips for Note Taking

Academic Success Center  
Iowa State University



## 1. Before the lecture – Prepare to take notes

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

## 2. During the Lecture – listening habits

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

## 3. During the Lecture – Writing tips

- ◆ Use a two column format
  - 1/3 – 2/3 design
  - Write on only one side of the paper
- ◆ Write in “formatted prose.”
  - Use Roman numerals OR capital letters to indicate main points
  - indent to indicate supporting details beneath main points
  - leave plenty of “white space” especially when lecturer changes points

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- ◆ 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.