

# Notetaking in college

Do you:

- Use a form or strategy for taking notes?
- Capture the main ideas of the lecture?
- Have shortcuts to streamline your notetaking?

When taking notes in a college classroom, you should:

- Capture the **main points** of a lecture, including **relevant examples**.
- **Be organized** in some coherent manner for later study.
- **Leave room** to include additional information learned after lecture.
- Use a **personalized shorthand notation** that makes sense to you.

When taking notes in a college classroom, you should **not**:

- Record every word the instructor says. (Remember that the average lecturer speaks approximately 125-140 words per minute, and the average note-taker writes at a rate of about 25 words per minute.)
- Simply write down what is on the board or powerpoint.

## TAKING NOTES IN CLASS: A BRIEF SUMMARY

### 1. BEFORE THE LECTURE BEGINS:

- Make some preparation for the lecture so that you will be more likely to predict the organization of the lecture.
  - CHECK THE COURSE OUTLINE to see if the lecturer has listed the topic or key ideas in the upcoming lecture. If so, convert this information into questions to be answered in the lecture.
  - BEFORE THE LECTURE, complete outside reading or reference assignments.
  - REVIEW THE TEXT ASSIGNMENT and any reading notes taken.
  - REVIEW NOTES from the previous lecture.
- Sit as near to the front of the room as possible to eliminate distractions.
- Have a proper attitude. Listening well is a matter of paying close attention. Be prepared to be open-minded to what the lecturer may say even though you may disagree with it.

## 2. DURING THE LECTURE:

- Have your lecture paper and pencil or pen ready.
- Write down the title of the lecture, the name of the course and the date.
- Watch the speaker carefully.
- Listen carefully to the introduction (if there is one). By knowing what will be covered in class, you will be better prepared to anticipate what notes you will need to take.
- Be brief in your note taking. Summarize your notes in your own words, not just the instructor's. Remember: your goal is to *understand* what she is saying, not to try to record exactly everything she says.
- Try to recognize main ideas by signal words that indicate something important is to follow. Examples: "First, Second, Next, Then, Thus, Another important...", etc. Use the instructor's outline if one is given.
- Jot down details or examples that support the main ideas. Give special attention to details not covered in the textbook.
- If there is a summary at the end of the lecture, pay close attention to it. You can use it to check the organization of your notes. If your notes seem disorganized, copy down the main points covered in the summary. It will help in revising your notes later.
- Ask questions about points you did not understand.
- Don't be in a rush. Be attentive, listen and take notes right up to the point at which the instructor dismisses you. If you are gathering together your personal belongings when you should be listening, you're bound to miss an important point--perhaps an announcement about the next exam!

## 3. AFTER THE LECTURE:

- Revise your notes as quickly as possible, preferably immediately after the lecture since at that time you will still remember a good deal of the lecture.
- During the first review period after the lecture, coordinate reading and lecture notes.
- Review your lecture notes **AT LEAST ONCE A WEEK**. Also, review the lecture notes before the next lecture.