

Note Taking Tips

Note taking is a skill to be learned

Note taking can only be learned over time. Don't be hard on yourself if you don't have the "perfect" notes immediately. You'll get better at writing them during the semester.

Good note taking is the product of listening

You will get a deeper sense of the discussion if you pay attention to what is being said, and allow yourself to be a part of the conversation. If your class is a lecture, you will still have a better chance of getting the big idea of a lecture than if you tried to write every single point.

You can't write everything

If you try to write everything down, you won't get a chance to listen and actually hear what your professor is saying.

If you miss something, make a note of it

Don't go crazy trying to catch every single word or idea, just make a note that lets you know you did not understand or missed a certain concept. You can ask your professor for clarification after class.

Highlight key terms and important points

Underline, highlight, or put an asterisk next to important points. This will be especially useful when you go back to your notes later to study.

Summarize your notes at the end of class

What was the big idea? Why did your professor elicit discussion for certain topics, or focus on a particular concept. A short summary of your notes will help you be better prepared for skimming through them when studying for an exam or prepping a paper.

Revise your notes as soon as possible

Your notes will only be of use to you if they make sense after class.

Use abbreviations when possible

Abbreviating words when possible will help you be able to work faster. You can use common abbreviations for words such as with (w./) or number (#) , or make your own.

Personalize your technique

Note taking techniques vary by the individual, so be sure to do what works for you.