Note-Taking Strategies

Preparation

Homework and Syllabus
- Critically read and take notes on assignments prior to class (it will be easier to follow the lecture and you will strengthen the ideas that you have already learned).
- Review the syllabus to understand the topic of the class session.

Attendance

Physical: Attend each class; arrive early and sit near the front to minimize distractions and increase focus.
Mental: Arrive to class with a positive mindset and prepared to learn.

Attendance and Grades

Class attendance is a significant predictor of students receiving grades of satisfactory or better.


Active Engagement in Class

Practicing “Hard” Skills: The Art of Listening

Sensing: Receiving information through the senses (paying attention to lectures).
Understanding: Cognitive comprehension of the material (processing new information).
Evaluating: Analyzing the information to increase knowledge (analyzing and synthesizing new information).
Responding: Taking action (recording information in a clear, organized fashion).

Listening with Focus: Am I Doing It Right?

Energy: Focused listening requires effort (breathing rate, heartbeart, and body temperature all increase).
Demeanor: Exhibit calm and demonstrate open-mindedness.
Verbal and Non-Verbal Cues: Look for instructor cues to determine key points.
Attentiveness: Ask questions and advance the discussion.
Civility: Show respect for the ideas of your classmates and instructor.

Recording Notes

Step 1: Develop Organizational Strategies
- Labeling: Record the class, topic, and date at the top of the page.
- Structure: Organize the page to make clear distinction between main ideas and details/examples.
- Shorthand: Use shorthand to save time (M.I. = Main Idea; def. = definition; 1, 2, 3 = list details).
- Questions: Compose questions for later clarification.
Step 2: Choose a Note-Taking Method

- **Outline**: Use the Roman numeral system to organize ideas in a hierarchy.
- **Cornell**
  - Divide the page into two columns for main ideas and details.
  - Draw a horizontal line at the top of the page for a “Questions” section, and draw a horizontal line at the bottom of the page for a “Summary” section.
- **Mapping**
  - Draw a circle on the middle of the page and write the lecture topic inside it.
  - Connect this circle with other circles that represent major concepts, ideas, details.

### Note Taking and Academic Achievement

“[S]tudents [say] that note taking helps them remain attentive.”


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Review for Retention

**Step 1: Reorganize and Recall**

**Summarize**: Compose a 100-word summary after class.

**Manipulate**: Reorganize and develop information.

**Collaborate**

- Compare notes with a classmate.
- Quiz each other over the main ideas.

**Step 2: Practice**

**Retrieval Practice**

- Retrieval: Recall facts from memory.
- Repetition: Retrieval must be practiced repeatedly.
- Quizzing: Form questions and answer them.

**Spaced Practice**

- Spacing: After reorganizing notes, wait 3-4 days before reviewing.
- Content and Time: Study smaller amounts of material over shorter time periods.

**Mixed Practice**

- Mixed Practice: Practice two or more subjects or skills consecutively.
- Knowledge Transfer: Apply new information in new situations.

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**Tip 1**

Retrieval practice is more effective than rereading.

**Tip 2**

Spaced practice is more effective than massed practice.

**Tip 3**

Mixed practice is more effective than topical practice.

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**The Ebbinghaus “Forgetting Curve”**

![Ebbinghaus Forgetting Curve](image)

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**Resources**


