

# 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.

Kang H. Park and Peter M. Kerr, "Determinants of Academic Performance: A Multinomial Logit Approach," *The Journal of Economic Education* 21 (1990): 106.

## 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, heartbeat, 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.”

Françoise Boch and Annie Piolat, “Note Taking and Learning: A Summary of Research,” *The WAC Journal* 16 (2005): 105.

## 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.

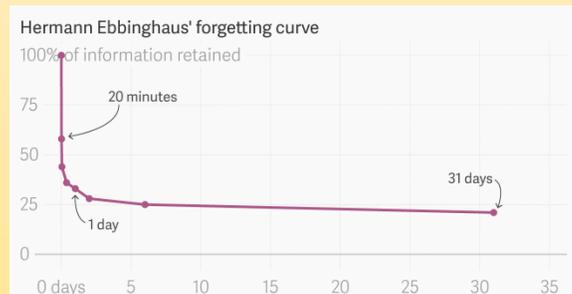
Spaced Practice

- 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.

### The Ebbinghaus “Forgetting Curve”



#### 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.

## Resources

Boch, Françoise, and Annie Piolat, “Note Taking and Learning: A Summary of Research.” *The WAC Journal* 16 (2005): 101-113.

Brown, Peter C., et al. *Make It Stick: The Science of Successful Learning*. Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 2014.

Gore, Paul A., et al. *Connections: Empowering College and Career Success*. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2016.

Park, Kang H., and Peter M. Kerr, “Determinants of Academic Performance: A Multinomial Logit Approach,” *The Journal of Economic Education* 21 (1990): 101-111.

Staley, Steve, and Constance Staley. *FOCUS on College and Career Success*. Boston: Cengage Learning, 2018.