

EFFECTIVE NOTE-TAKING STRATEGIES

A lecture can contain quite a bit of information and taking notes can help you to retain that information and identify significant points. Note-taking can enhance your learning in the classes that you attend.



GENERAL TIPS

Don't worry about your writing style when taking notes. Only you need to understand it; the important thing is getting it down.

If you type faster than you write, use your laptop to take notes. Just make sure it's okay with your professor, and stay on task; don't give in to social media distractions.

Don't try to write down everything your professor says; take notes that summarize key components of lectures. Create abbreviations for frequently used words to reduce time spent writing.

Listen to lectures while you write. Notes should be brief and plainly written so that they do not distract you from understanding concepts.

If notes or other materials are available online, print them out and bring a copy to class to add extra comments that might be discussed in lecture.

After class is finished, review your notes and highlight the most significant points. Be sure to fill in any missing information.

If you're a visual learner, you may want to try reinforcing ideas using diagrams or concept maps.

If you find your notes incomplete or confusing, ask a friend or your professor for clarification of difficult concepts.

Be patient. Taking good notes takes practice. The more you use your notes for studying, the better you will understand how to take notes that benefit your particular way of learning.

THE CORNELL METHOD

Divide your page into two columns, with the right column being a little more than twice as large as the one on the left. Leave two inches blank space at the bottom of the page.

Write key words or “cues” in the left column; use the right column to take notes during class.

Use the bottom two inches of the page to summarize the lecture in your own words.

As soon after class as possible, use the left column to formulate questions based on your notes. Writing questions helps to clarify meanings, reveal relationships, establish continuity and strengthen memory. It also help set the perfect stage for exam studying later.

Place a sheet of paper over the information in the right column and try to recall the information by using the cues and questions in the left column. Do this on a weekly basis to retain the information.

Try reciting your answers out loud as another way to remember the information.

Reflect on the material by asking yourself questions. “What’s the significance of these facts? What principle are they based on? How can I apply them? How do they fit in with what I already know? What’s beyond them?” Try to come up with applications of the information.

Example of the Cornell Method:

Key words or “Cues”

Lecture Notes

Summary

Remember that taking notes effectively depends on the learning style of the individual. Some people need notes in order to learn class material; others learn more efficiently when they spend their energy listening to the lecture. The most important thing, as with any study skill, is to experiment with different styles and find what works best for you.

Experiment, and Be Creative!

For more information on study skills, please visit nool.uoit.ca

CONTACT THE STUDENT LEARNING CENTRE

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