

Note-Taking Strategies

How to Get Your Class Notes into Shape

Getting the most out of high school and college means studying hard and using your time in class wisely. An effective note-taking strategy can help you do both. Here are the basics.

Stay Organized

It may seem obvious, but your class notes can only help you if you can find them. When you're taking notes be sure to:

- Keep all your notes in one place.
- Date and number pages; keeping them in order makes it easier to understand them later.

Before Class

Review the materials assigned for that class period thoroughly. Bring a list of any questions you may have.

During Class

One approach that has been proven effective is called the Cornell Note-Taking System. Here are some of its methods.

Start by using the main section of your page to take down your notes during class. Be sure to leave space on the left side of the page and the bottom. Things to keep in mind:

- Get the speaker's main points. Don't write down every word you hear.
- Leave blanks in your notes to add explanations later.
- Organize as you write. Pay attention to cues such as repetition and emphasis.
- Indicate main and supporting points as you go.
- Jot down key vocabulary, important facts and formulas.
- Ask questions. If you're confused, it's better to ask while the material is fresh in your mind.

After Class

As soon as class ends, review your notes and fill in any blanks. Underline, highlight and use symbols to sort through the information. If you don't understand something, get help from your teacher or classmates.

After you've reviewed all your notes from class, in the left-hand area of the page write down key words and questions your teacher might ask on a test.

At the bottom of each page, write a summary of the notes. This helps you digest what you've learned. It also improves your memory of the material for the long term and for tests down the road.

For Review

Once you've done all of the above, you'll find you've created your own personalized study guide. Cover the main section of the page and use the key words and questions in the left margin as a quiz.

Stick to It

Review your notes the day you take them and all your notes once a week. That way, you won't need to study as much when it's test time. You've been doing the work all along.

Try out the Cornell system, but if it doesn't work for you, experiment with other methods. Ask your classmates how they take notes or ask a teacher for advice. Taking good notes requires practice, like any other skill. And the more you work at

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it now, the more prepared you'll be to take notes in college.

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