

Tips for Effective Note-taking

1. **Outline** your notes as much as possible and underline the subject and main headings.
2. **Take complete notes.** Take 5 to 7 pages of notes in a one-hour lecture.
3. **Label your notes** at the top of the page with your professor's name, the course and date. This will help you tune in and remind you about where you are and what you are out to accomplish. Furthermore, if you have to remove a set of notes from your notebook it will be easier to put them back in the right place if they are labeled.
4. **Make your notes legible.** Notes taken in ink on one side of the paper are easier to read and last longer than notes in pencil, or ink on both sides of the page.
5. **Be an aggressive note-taker.** Regard note-taking as hard work. Sit close to the professor. Before class begins, put all extra materials aside, get out paper and pen and be ready to write when the professor begins to speak.
6. **Start taking notes when the professor starts talking.** Do not sit back during a lecture and wait for something to strike you.
7. **Ignore distractions.** Concentrate on getting as many notes as possible during the class.
8. **Isolate the specialized vocabulary** for each course as early as possible and learn it so that you and the professor will be talking the same language. Circle difficult words, draw a line from them out to the margin and label them with a "V" for vocabulary. This is a quick note to yourself that you must find out more about these words.
9. **Learn to differentiate fact from opinion** in lectures. Label your professor's opinions as such. Separate your ideas from the material presented by your professor by placing them in brackets [like this].
10. **Develop your own set of symbols** to identify or emphasize various items in your notes. For example, a circled "A" in the margin can identify an assignment mentioned by the professor during the lecture, and main ideas can be underlined.
11. **Always take notes on discussion.** In a discussion, it is your responsibility to discover what points are being made and to record them so that you will not forget them.
12. **Get in the habit of always attending lectures.** You will be less tempted to cut classes if you think of each class as a chapter in a book you are reading. If you cut class, you miss a chapter.

Adapted from Nancy V. Wood. *College Reading and Study Skills*, 2nd ed. NY: Holt, Rinehart & Winston. 1982. pp. 31-35.