



ACE Your Notes: Quick Tips for Taking Effective Notes in Class & Note-taking Methods

This side of the worksheet offers quick tips for taking effective notes in class; the reverse offers overviews of several note-taking methods. Reviewing both sides and figuring out what works for you can help you plan to be successful in your college courses. We recommend you also review our worksheet, “ACE Your Reading Assignments: How to Read a Textbook using the Classic SQ4R Method.”

Taking Effective Notes in Class

- Set yourself up for success: have the right materials.
 - A good pen or pencil
 - A notebook or folder devoted to the subject
 - Plenty of paper
 - OR, you can use your tablet, laptop, etc. Just be sure to minimize distractions—facebook, twitter, game, and browser windows should be closed.
- Position yourself in the front and center of the classroom
 - This will allow you to be able to hear the professor and see the chalkboard/powerpoint/etc.
 - This will also help you be more attentive.
- Make sure to date all your notes.
- Title your notes based on the lecture content.
- Number pages to help with organization.
- Use highlighters or a different color ink for important information
- Review and edit your notes within 24 hours.
 - Use your textbook, class materials, study group, or classmates to fill in information you missed
 - Reread your notes after class – if they don’t make sense add in missing information. If you still don’t understand the concept, go see your professor during office hours or seek out a tutor.
- Try different learning styles as you review your notes
 - Read your notes out loud.
 - Rewrite or type your notes.
 - Organize your notes into charts or concept maps.
- Review, review, review!!!

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There are numerous methods you can use to take notes. Try them all to see what works best for you.

The Cornell Method

The Cornell method provides a systematic format for condensing and organizing notes without laborious recopying. After writing the notes in the main space, use the left-hand space to label each idea and detail with a key word or “cue.”

METHOD- Rule your paper with a 2-inch margin on the left leaving a 6-inch area on the right in which to make notes. During class, take down information in the 6-inch area. When the instructor moves to a new point, skip a few lines. After class, complete phrases and sentences as much as possible. For every significant big piece of information, write a cue in the left margin. To review, cover your notes with a card, leaving the cues exposed. Say the cue out loud, then say as much as you can of the material underneath the card. When you have said as much as you can, move the card and see if what you said matches what is written. If you can say it, you know it.

The Outlining Method

Dash or indented outlining is usually best except for some science classes, such as physics or math.

1. The information which is most general begins at the left with each more specific group of facts indented with spaces to the right.
2. The relationship between the different parts is carried out through indenting.
3. No numbers, letters or Roman numerals are required, but may be useful in organization.
4. Leave spaces to add additional information from corresponding reading or later lectures.

Outlining works best when the lecture is very organized and sequenced by major points and details. It is more difficult when the speaker talks very quickly or is unclear. Rewriting and filling in missing information may be necessary.

The Mapping Method

Mapping is a method that emphasizes concept formation and relationships among concepts. Each fact or idea is related to every other fact or idea. Mapping is a graphic representation of the content of a lecture, textbook or plan for a writing assignment. It is a method that maximizes active participation, organizes knowledge and emphasizes critical thinking.

This format helps you to organize a lecture visually so that relationships can be seen easily. It is also easy to edit your notes by adding numbers, marks and color coding. By covering lines and sections, you can rehearse to remember. Main points can be written on flash or note cards and pieced together into a table or larger structure at a later date. A software program such as “Inspiration” allows easy creation of concept maps for multiple purposes.

This procedure is particularly useful when the lecture content is detailed and well-organized. Using a “map” of notes for review allows you to see relationships among concepts to get the “big picture” as well as to note details.

The Charting Method

If the lecture format is distinct (such as chronological, comparisons or contrasts), you may set up your paper by drawing columns and labeling appropriate headings in a chart or table.

Determine the categories to be covered in the lecture. Set up your paper in advance with columns headed by these categories. As you listen to the lecture, record information (words, phrases, main ideas, etc.) in the appropriate category.

This method helps organize information that might normally be confusing. It reduces the amount of writing necessary and provides an easy review mechanism for both memorization of facts and study of comparisons and relationships.

This method is best used in courses like history (for chronology) or sociology or other social sciences that have definable categories. It takes time and some experimentation to know when and how to use this system. It is particularly useful when you want to reduce the amount of time you spend editing and reviewing at test time or when you want to get an overview of the whole course on one big paper sequence.

The Sentence Method

Write every new thought, fact or topic on a separate line, numbering as you progress. Use this method when the lecture is somewhat organized, but heavy with content which comes fast. You can hear different points, but you don’t know how they fit together.

Ex: Sentence Method

Lecture: (The teacher would say this in lecture)

A revolution is any occurrence that affects other aspects of life, such as economic life, social life, and so forth. Therefore revolutions cause change. See page 29 to 30 in your text about this.

Ex: Sentence Method

Sample Note: (what you would write down)

Revolution— occurrence that affects other aspects of life: e.g. econ. social, etc. see text pp. 29- 30.