

Note Taking Tips

Do's

- Look over previous notes before class.
- Attend all lectures. (They all connect.)
- Be academically aggressive. (Sit up straight to cue your brain that this is important information.)
- Sit as close to the front as possible. (This may deter you from snoozing.)
- Write on only one side of the paper. (Save the opposite side for review.)
- Write date and course at the top of each paper; number later.
- Write in short, concise phrases leaving out articles (such as a, an, the), abbreviating words you use often, and developing symbols of your own to represent concepts and ideas.
- Use lecturers' words where possible. (Lecturers like to see their words on exams.)
- Strive to identify main topics. (As if you had access to the lecturer's notes.)
- Capture ideas as well as facts. Be sure to include all examples.
- Pay particular attention to the final barrage in the last 5-10 minutes of the lecture. (Don't be packing up your backpack. Write as fast as you can.)
- Write legibly to save time later when you review.
- Leave blanks for words, phrases or ideas you think you missed. Ask the instructor or a peer to help you fill in the gaps right after class.

Don'ts

- Don't wait to record something "important". (Record almost everything.)
- Don't convert the lecturer's words. This takes too much time.
- Don't listen for and record facts only. (Listen for ideas as well.)
- Don't stop to think about ideas. (Do this later during your review.)
- Don't over-indent in your notes column. You may run out of right-side column space.
- Don't doodle. This breaks concentration, disrupts eye contact, and prevents you from picking up clues from the instructor's body language.
- Don't consider any example too obvious to record. (Record it!)
- Avoid using Roman numerals. They become too complicated.
- Avoid using too many abbreviations. This makes it difficult to decipher your notes later.