

Improving Lecture Note- Taking Strategies  
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Lecture note taking has a number of purposes. The most obvious is to record the information that the instructor thinks is important on a given topic, so you can come back to it later. You'll most likely forget a good deal of what you heard in class, even if you are paying close attention (see more below).

It is important to recognize that an instructor is likely to "highlight" in a lecture the points that he/she thinks are most important including (but not limited to):

- clarifying points that were confusing in the text (I have a better way to explain...)
- giving his/her own view when he/she disagrees with the text (My own theory based on my research is...)
- adding information when he/she thinks the text omits something or has insufficient material (The book only briefly covers this key point...)

instructor's approach and take good notes. You have to  
them. There are limits to our short-term memory (STM)  
es place during and after class. Students often seem  
thing they heard made sense, they took good notes,  
It shouldn't be surprising, most of what you hear in  
ructor is giving you lots of information and not giving you  
y (LTM). That leads us to a more specific reason to  
aterial because you recognize that much of what you get  
out what it takes on our part to process and learn new  
oration processes). So, you need to do the processing  
be in control of the time and select the approach. Sure,  
ng class, especially if the instructor spent considerable  
aterial, you read it in the text in preparation for class,  
se, when you go back to your notes, what you are doing  
al from your LTM.

sten and take notes at the same time. They wonder if  
ening and not taking notes. The research shows that  
re when they take notes. Studies have been done  
who take notes and those who just listen. Then, the  
ely taken away so they do not have an opportunity to  
e same exam. As a group, the students who took the  
ance to study them)! The researchers theorize that it  
more focused and more actively engaged. It makes  
say this would apply to you in any given situation. But,  
ou can in any way that you can.

Here are some simple (but powerful) strategies for dealing with a tough lecture situation:

1. Sit up front. (It doesn't work for everyone and in every situation, but it's worth a try!)
2. Find someone else in class who you think takes great notes. Ask if you can photocopy them for one class. See what you can learn about how that person formats their notes and what they choose to write.
3. Form a study group or get a study partner. Meet after every class (or at least once a week) to review the notes and deal with questions/problems.
4. Move to another section of the course taught by the same instructor at a better time (during one of your peak energy times, or maybe not right after another tough class). Ask the instructor if he/she teaches the same course at a different time and explain your reasons for wanting to switch sections.
5. Ask the instructor if you can have access to his/her PowerPoint presentations.
6. See the instructor in his/her office, or see a tutor who is familiar with that instructor's teaching style.

Some thoughts on using a recorder in class:6 ( w)1.6 p-1 o208 Td ( )Tj EMC /P <</MCID 6 9>BDC /TT0 res w t (a

## Lecture Note Taking: Before, During, and After

There are many things you can do before, during, and after class to improve effectiveness and efficiency of the note taking process. Here are some for you to consider:

### Tips and techniques for before the lecture:

- Review the material from the last session (notes, handouts, text, etc.)
- Preview the material for the upcoming session. Try to get the "big picture", familiarize yourself with new terms, and look for connections to the last lecture. If you don't have time to read the entire chapter, just look over the charts, graphs, etc. and then read the summary.

This is an often-overlooked area. It is one where just 5 or 10 minutes of work the night before, or the morning of, each class can pay big dividends in both reducing stress and taking clearer lecture notes. It also leads to better retention for tests because of the regular review.

### Tips and techniques for during the lecture:

- Use a lot of paper. Consider using only one side of each page. You can put additional notes from the book or make quiz questions on the opposite page. You can also, if you use a loose-leaf notebook, take out the notes and spread them out to study. Leave lots of space between ideas and start each new topic on the top of the next page.
- Focus on the first few minutes and last few minutes of class. The introduction, overview, summary, and next-class highlight can help a great deal.
- Write down anything (almost) the instructor puts on the board or puts on a PowerPoint slide.
- Recording tips:
  - use complete thoughts/phrases (not just a word or two)
  - show organization by indenting details under main points and numbering items
  - leave space between topics
  - label everything possible (definition, 2 examples, 3 causes, 4 stages, 5 methods, 6 results)
  - use abbreviations and codes (abbrev = abbreviation, LS = left side, + = and)
  - leave out little words like "a" and "the"
  - leave a bracket to indicate where missing information starts and ends
- Listen and look for cues to important information:
  - listen for verbal cues (saying so, change of tone, pitch, etc.)
  - listen for signal words and phrases to main ideas (three causes of..., the key differences between..., most significant was..., the results were...)
  - listen for signal words and phrases to important details  
(items in a list: first, also, in addition, next, last, finally; items in a sequence: first, next, then, finally; items being contrasted: however, but, on the other hand, although)
  - look for non-verbal cues (facial expression, gestures, etc.)
- Identify special information and make notes on it.
  - indicate important ideas (!, \*, or T)
  - indicate confusing information (use???)
  - indicate page numbers if information is taken directly from the textbook

Tips and techniques for after the lecture:

(This is a crucial, but often ignored, part of the process.)

- 1) Go back to your notes as soon as possible after class. The longer you wait the harder it will be to make sense of your notes and the longer it will take to learn them. When possible, get back to your notes the same day that you took them.
- 2) Review and "clean up" the material, adding information from your head and the textbook to clarify.