



Writing Centre

Note-Taking Strategies

Taking notes while listening to **lectures** and **reading** can help students understand and remember information. Effective note-taking can save you time when studying for an exam. It's important to find a method or process that works for *you*! Here are some strategies to try:

Tips:

- *Write rather than type your notes.* The act of writing increases memory more than typing, and encourages you to revise or re-write your notes to clarify points or add missing information.
- *Don't write everything.* Focus your notes on strategic areas like **summary statements**, **definitions**, **key concepts**, **statistics**, and anything that makes you think "Oh! I get it now!" In your textbook, pay close attention to *italicized text*, bulleted lists, and headings.
- *Use your own words.* **Paraphrasing** a concept in your own words (with your own concrete examples) will make it easier to recall.
- *Use illustrations.* Sketch out **graphs** or other **illustrations** to make the concept visual. Images are often easier to remember than words.

Taking Lecture Notes:

1. *Familiarize yourself with the lecture topic.* Complete the reading before the lecture. You will find note-taking less stressful because you will already **be familiar** with the information.
2. *Participate actively.* **Ask questions** and participate in discussion so you can stay focused. If you "zone out," your notes will be incomplete, and possibly inaccurate.
3. *Use shorthand.* Use **graphic symbols** and **abbreviations** consistently to condense your notes.
4. *Write quickly.* Don't worry about being neat – if *you* can read it, it's fine! You can always re-write your notes for clarity, and this will help reinforce the information.

Taking Notes While Reading:

Look for *strategic areas* to call attention to with your notes.

1. *Use a highlighter.* This allows you to easily locate the original text and explanations, but be careful not to highlight more than 10% of the page!
2. *Or use coloured sticky notes.* Leave your book unmarked, so you can sell it back to the bookstore!
3. *Self-test sections.* Use the learning objectives or review questions to make sure your notes are complete and accurate.
4. *If confused, stop and research.* Go online to find examples and explanations. If you're still confused, email your instructor for clarification.