

Eight Tips on Creating Good Notes

Based upon "NoteTaking" by the Department of Academic Assistance at Pacific Lutheran University and "Taking Lecture Notes" by the Academic Skills Center at Dartmouth College

- 1) **Preview Coming Attractions.** It is important to at least skim if not read over the material the lecture is going to cover prior to class. Jot down any questions on the material to ask the professor during class.
- 2) **Having the Proper Materials.** Use one side of 8 1/2" by 11" loose leaf notebook paper. Do not use oddly shaped pages or a spiral bound notebook. Use different color pencils and have an eraser available. Be sure to keep your notes for a particular course separate from the notes for your other courses.
- 3) **Be Early to Class.** Plan to be early to class so you have time to organize your note-taking material and sharpen your pencils.
- 4) **Short-cuts.** Develop a uniform abbreviation and punctuation system that you can easily and consistently use. Use a highlighter or indentions to set off main ideas from specific points.
- 5) **Get to the Point.** When taking notes, do not write down every single word your teacher says. Write down the main ideas and key phrases. Make sure you can identify each point. We are after quality, not quantity so it is more important to have short accurate notes.
- 6) **What's on the Board.** For most classes, what the instructor writes on the board is important so copy it down. Be sure to leave spaces for points missed or ideas not fully understood. Copy down formulas, specific facts, definitions, and worked-out examples as they appear on the board. Add a key word or phrase that justifies each step in a specific worked-out example.
- 7) **Ten-Minute Rule.** As soon as you can, take between five and ten minutes after class and review your notes. Fill in any missing steps if you can and mark areas that you still do not understand.
- 8) **Comparison Shop.** Compare your notes with a classmate's or your study buddy's notes to fill in any holes and correct any misunderstandings. If you still have a problem or misunderstanding, get with your teacher or a Math Tutor to clear things up.