

Note Taking Tips and Guidelines

Being able to take effective notes is one of the most important skills you need to have in order to be a successful college student. If you did not need to take notes during high school, it can be a challenge to adapt to the demands of note taking in your classes at The University of Montevallo. Even if you are an experienced note taker, there are always ways to improve your skills and get even more out of your lectures and notes. Below are key principles and tips to help your notes become a key resource for your studying and learning.

Helpful Hints: Do's

- Prepare for the lecture by doing the reading ahead of time. That way, you will be at least somewhat familiar with the content and will be able to focus more on what the lecturer is saying and will be able to pull key points more easily than if you are hearing the material for the first time.
- Go with a good attitude and be prepared to listen with your full attention.
- Set up each page in an orderly and consistent format. Always list the date, course, and topic of the lecture.
- Be observant of the lecturer. If he or she repeats key points, places special verbal emphasis on them, makes gestures while discussing the topic, and/or writes them down, it is very likely that the information is important.
- Take notes in your own words as often as possible, unless the lecturer emphasizes specific terms and language. By paraphrasing you will reduce the volume of what you write as well as helping you understand the material better.
- Emphasize important words and concepts: underline, capitalize, circle, box, and draw arrows.
- Review your notes shortly after the class to reinforce the information and to make additions and corrections. Meet with other students in the class to discuss the notes and make further additions or revisions.
- Use abbreviations. Create your own form of shorthand or code system. Here are some samples:

Lk = like	w/ = with	ch = chapter	ex = example
w/o = without	Q = question	p. = page	2 = to, two, too
lrn = learn	no. or # = number	@ = at	> = larger than
b/c = because	wrt = write	< = smaller than	b/4 = before
rt = right	wd = word	i.e. = that is	etc = and so on

Don'ts

- DON'T use full sentences. Eliminate unnecessary words such as: a, an, the.
- DON'T erase mistakes. Draw a line through the material. It saves time and you might want the material later.
- DON'T try to get all of the information in note form – it is impossible and will frustrate you.

References and Resources

Dartmouth Academic Skills Center <http://www.dartmouth.edu/~acskills/success/notes.html>

University Learning Center, Penn State http://www.ulrc.psu.edu/studyskills/note_taking.html

University of Leeds Academic Skills Center <http://www.leeds.ac.uk/skillscentre/for-students/skills-grid/academic-skills/note.htm>

Setton Hill University Note Taking Tips <http://jerz.setonhill.edu/writing/academic/notes-tips.htm>