

Note-Taking Suggestions

Share these note-taking suggestions with your students:

- Review notes from the previous class and assigned reading and ask the instructor to clarify what doesn't make sense.
- Avoid writing too small and strive for easy readability.
- Leave a generous left margin for rewriting important words and abbreviated key content later.
- Make key words, important relationships, and conclusions stand out. Underline, highlight, box, or circle them.
- Organize your notes according to the instructor's words and phrases. Listen for signal words such as "the following three...," "the most important conclusion," and "on the other hand."
- Identify the most important points by watching for instructor cues: deliberate repetition, pauses, a slower speaking pace, a drop in pitch, a rise in interest or intensity, movement toward the class, displaying a slide, or writing on the board.
- Whenever possible, draw a picture or create a concept map or diagram.
- Develop and use your own shorthand.
- Try different pens until you find an instrument that glides smoothly and rapidly for you.
- If the instructor tends to speak or move from point to point too quickly, politely ask him or her to slow down.
- If you lose focus and miss part of a lecture, leave a space and ask a classmate, a teaching assistant, or the instructor to help you fill in the blank.
- Review, edit, clarify, and elaborate your notes within 24 hours of the lecture, again a week later, and again a month later—even if for just a few minutes.