

# Note-Taking

Note-taking skills are critical to being successful at Stony Brook. Since a majority of your first-year classes will be lectures taking place in large lecture halls, good note-taking skills can be the difference between failing and passing a course. You will need to be prepared, ready to listen, aware of what methods work for you, and willing to review all of your notes to not only survive college, but to do well. Keep in mind that you may need to try a variety of methods before finding out what works best for you.

## Be Prepared

- Use a binder instead of spiral notebook.
- Try to have one binder per class.
- Bring multi-color pencils and highlighters to class.
- Read the assigned material before class.
- Start each lecture on a new page (always date and note topic).
- Leave blank spaces for notes recorded later.

## Ready to Listen

- Have a clear mind.
- Eat before class.
- Get enough sleep.
- Pay attention (this may take some conscious effort).
- Sit as close to the instructor as possible.
- Put all distractions away (iPods, cell phones, etc.).
- Listen for details, facts, explanations, and definitions (these are usually test answers).

## Use a Variety of Methods

- Use a highlighter.
- Using a laptop may allow you to type fast and not worry about deciphering later.
- Use short-hand or abbreviation.
- Draw diagrams or pictures that help you understand.

## Use Abbreviations

Abbreviations can assist you in taking notes faster so that you can jot down more information during class lectures. Some examples are below. You may know several more, or you may even create your own!

- w/o = without
- b/c = because
- e.g. = example
- esp. = especially
- w/ = with
- vs. = versus
- etc. = etcetera
- ch = chapter

## Review and Edit Notes

- Review your notes sooner rather than later (the longer you take, the more you will forget).
- Fill in your shorthand or abbreviations.
- Circle or highlight things you don't understand so that you can clarify with your professor or classmates.
- Rewriting your notes may help you memorize them.

To improve your note-taking, reflect on the following questions and talk about your answers to your 101 instructor, T.A., advisor, or a student who has taken the same class.

- How do I take notes currently?
- Does how I take notes differ depending on what class I'm in? If so, how?
- What are some ways I have seen students take notes differently?
- How can I improve my note-taking to make it more effective for me?

## Study Skills

Studying is very important in college. Your study hours may vary, but it is best to set a schedule. Once you set your class schedule, look for gaps throughout your day. It is during these gaps that you should avoid going back to your room to watch TV, hang out with friends, or take a nap. Instead, head to your favorite study spot. This will allow you more social time after your classes are finished for the day. In college the amount of time you study usually directly correlates with what your grades become. Here are a few more differences when it comes to studying in college instead of high school:

STUDYING IN HIGH SCHOOL	STUDYING IN COLLEGE
You may study outside of class as little as 0 to 2 hours a week, and this may be mostly last-minute test preparation.	You need to study at least 2 to 3 hours outside of class for each hour in class.
You often need to read or hear presentations only once to learn what you need to know.	You need to review class notes and test material regularly.
You are expected to read short assignments that are then discussed, and often re-taught, in class.	You are assigned substantial amounts of reading and writing which may not be directly addressed in class.
Guiding principle: You will usually be told in class what you needed to learn from assigned readings.	Guiding principle: It's up to you to read and understand the assigned material, as lectures and assignments proceed from the assumption that you've already done so.

## Here Are Some Great Study Tips for Stony Brook Classes:

### When to Study:

- Plan 2–3 hours of study time for every hour you spend in class.
- Study your most challenging or least favorite subjects first.
- Avoid scheduling marathon study sessions (cramming is not effective).
- Be aware of your best time of day to focus.
- Be productive during time gaps between classes.


### Handling the Rest of the World:

- Pay attention to your studies.
- Come to an agreement with roommates about times for visitors, times you'd prefer to study without distractions, times you'd like to sleep without disruption, etc.
- Avoid noise distractions.
- Notice how others misuse their time and don't make the same mistakes.

### Where to Study:

- Decide on a regular study area where you can be productive.
- Don't get too comfortable (it is NOT effective to study in your room)!
- Use designated study spots or lounges on campus.
- Avoid sitting in front of a computer (Facebook can be too tempting).

### Know Your Resources:

- Your peers, fellow students
- Your professor, instructor and/or TA
- Your College Advisor <http://ucolleges.stonybrook.edu/advising> 

- Residence Hall Director/Resident Assistant—they can help you find quiet places in the building to study or help to control noise on your floor if it's too loud to concentrate.
- Commuter Assistants— they can help you identify strategies for effective studying given the challenges of commute time (i.e. study on public transportation, schedule gaps in between classes, utilize commuter student lounges, etc.).

## Good Places to Study on Campus

- Atrium in the Humanities Building
- Library North Reading Room, Central Reading Room
- Music Library
- 3rd and 4th floor of the Main Library Stacks
- 6th and 7th floor lounges of the Social and Behavioral Science Building
- SAC 3rd floor lounge
- Commuter lounges in the SAC and Library
- Residential Quad Lounges