

How to Take Class Notes

What can I do to keep from being bored during lectures and keep focused on what's being said?

A. Be active.

1. Sit toward the front of the class.
2. Sit away from friends who may distract you.
3. Sit up.
4. Make an effort to concentrate as completely as possible and understand what is being said.
5. Listen first before writing.
6. Reflect and think about what is being said.
7. Respond to what is being said.
8. Always be thinking of questions: How does this relate to other points in the lecture, in the book?
9. When you don't understand something, stop the teacher and ask.

What format should I use to take notes?

B. Cornell Notetaking format.

1. Use lined paper and mark a wide left margin.
2. At the top of the page note the date, class, and topic of the lecture.
3. During the lecture, write in the right column.
4. After the lecture, develop questions in the left-hand column, and write a reflection or summary of the content.

How can I take down all that's being said?

C. Use shortcuts and clues.

1. Write notes in your own words. Develop a shorthand or abbreviation system.
2. Write in phrases.
3. Write quickly but legibly—your notes do not have to be immaculate.
4. Take down new vocabulary and definitions.
5. Try to write down the outline the teacher is using, looking for organization.
 - i. A lecture is like a paper; it has an introduction, body, and conclusion.
 - ii. Write down the main points and their supporting evidence.
6. Leave plenty of space and go back and add details (from your memory, other people's notes, the textbook).
7. Sometimes there is no organization. Take down what you can and sort it out later with a friend, the teacher, or your textbook.
8. Be selective.
 - i. Too many notes destroy the value of notetaking.
 - ii. If you find you are not writing fast enough, it really means that you are writing too much.