



STUDENT NOTE-TAKING GUIDE

Listen • Organize • Review • Learn

WHY TAKE NOTES? Good notes help you stay engaged in class, identify important ideas, organize information, and create a study tool you can use before quizzes and exams.

1. Before Class: Get Ready to Learn

- Review the previous class notes for 5–10 minutes.
- Check the syllabus, Canvas, readings, slides, or assigned materials.
- Bring your notebook or device and required course materials.
- Write the date, course/topic, and learning objective at the top of the page.
- Identify questions from the previous lesson that still need clarification.

2. During Class: Capture What Matters

Do not try to write every word. Listen for the main ideas and record enough information to explain the concept later.

- Main ideas, definitions, formulas, processes, and key terms
- Examples the instructor uses to explain a concept
- Information repeated, emphasized, written on the board, or included on slides
- Connections between the current topic and earlier course material
- Questions you have or concepts you do not understand
- Announcements about assignments, quizzes, exams, or deadlines

3. Choose a Note-Taking Method

Cornell Method: Divide the page into notes, cues/questions, and a summary. Use the cue section to quiz yourself later.

Outline Method: Organize information using headings, subheadings, and indented details. Best when the lecture follows a clear structure.

Mapping Method: Place the main topic in the center and connect related concepts with branches or arrows. Helpful for visual relationships.

Charting Method: Create columns for categories, terms, examples, dates, or comparisons. Helpful when information can be grouped.

4. Try the Cornell Note-Taking Method

CUES / QUESTIONS	NOTES
Key terms	Main ideas

Questions Prompts	Important details Examples Definitions Formulas
SUMMARY: After class, explain the main idea of the lesson in 2–4 sentences.	

5. After Class: Turn Notes Into Learning

- Review your notes within 24 hours while the material is still fresh.
- Fill in missing information and clarify anything that is confusing.
- Highlight or mark only the most important ideas—not entire pages.
- Write questions in the margins and answer them without looking at your notes.
- Create a short summary in your own words.
- Use your notes to make flashcards, practice questions, diagrams, or a study guide.

6. Make Your Notes Active

Cover and Recall: Cover part of your notes and explain the information from memory.

Question Yourself: Turn headings and key ideas into questions and answer them without looking.

Teach It: Explain the topic aloud as if you were teaching another student.

Connect It: Write how the new information relates to something you already learned.

Practice It: Use formulas, concepts, or processes to complete practice problems or examples.

7. Note-Taking Self-Check

- ☐ My notes include the date and topic.
- ☐ I can identify the main ideas.
- ☐ I use my own words when possible.
- ☐ I mark information I do not understand.
- ☐ I review my notes after class.
- ☐ I use my notes to quiz myself—not only reread them.

8. My Note-Taking Improvement Plan

The note-taking method I will try: _____
One habit I will improve: _____
One class where I will practice this strategy: _____
When I will review my notes: _____
Who I will ask for help if I need support: _____

Need Support?

Tiger Tutoring Services: Connect with a tutor for help developing note-taking, study, and course-content strategies.

Success Coaching: Work with a Success Coach on organization, time management, study habits, and academic accountability.

Your Instructor: Ask questions when you are unsure which concepts, examples, or course materials are most important.

GOOD NOTES ARE NOT JUST A RECORD OF CLASS—THEY ARE A TOOL FOR LEARNING.