Writing Centre

Note-Taking Strategies

Taking notes while listening to lectures and reading can help students understand and remember information. Effective note-taking can save you time when studying for an exam. It’s important to find a method or process that works for you! Here are some strategies to try:

Tips:
• *Write rather than type your notes.* The act of writing increases memory more than typing, and encourages you to revise or re-write your notes to clarify points or add missing information.
• *Don’t write everything.* Focus your notes on strategic areas like summary statements, definitions, key concepts, statistics, and anything that makes you think “Oh! I get it now!” In your textbook, pay close attention to italicized text, bulleted lists, and headings.
• *Use your own words.* Paraphrasing a concept in your own words (with your own concrete examples) will make it easier to recall.
• *Use illustrations.* Sketch out graphs or other illustrations to make the concept visual. Images are often easier to remember than words.

Taking Lecture Notes:
1. *Familiarize yourself with the lecture topic.* Complete the reading before the lecture. You will find note-taking less stressful because you will already be familiar with the information.
2. *Participate actively.* Ask questions and participate in discussion so you can stay focused. If you “zone out,” your notes will be incomplete, and possibly inaccurate.
3. *Use shorthand.* Use graphic symbols and abbreviations consistently to condense your notes.
4. *Write quickly.* Don’t worry about being neat – if you can read it, it’s fine! You can always re-write your notes for clarity, and this will help reinforce the information.

Taking Notes While Reading:
Look for strategic areas to call attention to with your notes.
1. *Use a highlighter.* This allows you to easily locate the original text and explanations, but be careful not to highlight more than 10% of the page!
2. *Or use coloured sticky notes.* Leave your book unmarked, so you can sell it back to the bookstore!
3. *Self-test sections.* Use the learning objectives or review questions to make sure your notes are complete and accurate.
4. *If confused, stop and research.* Go online to find examples and explanations. If you’re still confused, email your instructor for clarification.

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Read More: College Info Geek: “How to Take Better Notes: 6 Best Note-Taking Systems” (Online)