10 Quick Tips for Effective Note Taking

1. Keep your class notes in one place. Consider storing your notes in a three-ring binder, which will allow you to easily insert class handouts or printouts of slides.

2. Develop a system of abbreviations and symbols and use them consistently. Keeping a key or legend at the front of your notebook may be helpful.

3. You don’t need to write down every word you read or hear. Pay attention to cues such as repetition and emphasis.

4. Not sure how to organize the material in your notes? Do a Google search for “note taking systems” or visit Tutoring and Learning Services for help.

5. Mark anything you don’t understand to remind you to ask the instructor or check your textbook. Leave blank space in your notes to insert these additional details.

6. Using a laptop in class may allow you to type notes at a fast speed, but consider whether it will be a distraction. You can’t take good notes if you’re busy browsing Facebook.

7. Regularly review notes with a classmate or study group. You may find that another person has recorded information you missed or explained a concept in a way that is helpful.

8. Make an effort to write legibly. After class, fix words and phrases that are unclear. You may want to rewrite or retype your notes as a way to review the information.

9. Review and edit your notes within 24 hours of class. Use a different color of ink to differentiate between notes you took in class and those you added later.

10. Pick a seat that is close to the front of the classroom where there will be less distractions. It will also be easier to hear your professor.

Why take notes?

- Taking notes forces you to listen carefully and test your understanding of the material.
- Just because you understand the materials you are hearing in class doesn’t mean you will remember it.
- Some information your professors gives in lecture may not be in your textbook—but it will be on your test!
- When you are reviewing your textbook, notes provide a gauge to what sections your professor thinks are important.
- The writing down of important points helps you to remember them even before you have studied the material formally.

Without review, 47% of what a person has just learned is forgotten in the first twenty minutes and 62% is forgotten after the first day.