GUIDELINES FOR EFFECTIVE NOTE-TAKING DURING LECTURES

Why is it important to take notes? Maybe it's obvious: your grade, at least in certain classes, depends upon effective note-taking. Think of it this way: here is where the instructor tips his or her hand; here the instructor is in the flesh, emphasizing what is important. So, take note.

Fortunately, note-taking is a skill that can be learned--and once learned, contributes to further learning. Note-taking is also an art. As you'll see in some of the guidelines below, your own creativity is an essential part of effective note-taking.

For the following, please indicate how often you practice the specific guidelines by circling the appropriate letter: A = Always; S = Sometimes; N = Never.

After completing the survey, note the guidelines that are marked S = Sometimes and N = Never and make a conscious effort to incorporate these guidelines into your note-taking method in order to become more efficient and effective in this important study skill.

A S N 1. Be prepared before you go into class. Have chapters read in advance before instructor covers material.

A S N 2. Pay attention. The act of taking notes can help you stay focused.

A S N 3. Take notes, but think about what you are writing. Listen for ideas, but use the teacher's phrasing as closely as possible.

A S N 4. Listen effectively and try to understand the lecture as a whole. Then you can listen and take notes simultaneously because you will be aware of the sense of the lecture.

A S N 5. Keep notes in one binder that can be altered.

A S N 6. Take notes on one side of the page only. Often it is a great help to spread out the pages and see the pattern of the lecture.

A S N 7. Record the name of the course and the date on each sheet of lecture notes. This is a safeguard against loss or mixed-up notes.

A S N 8. Use large sheets of paper to give yourself room to indent and to see the pattern of your notes. The standard size for a large notebook is $8 \frac{1}{2} \times 11$ inches.

A S N 9. Do not doodle. Any manual activity of this kind inhibits note-taking, interferes with concentration, and breaks eye contact with the lecturer, whose gestures and facial expressions give important clues for remembering and
10. Make your notes complete and clear enough so that they will have meaning for you weeks and months later. You need not write in full sentences, however, since note-taking is a process of selection, condensation, and compression.

11. Write legibly. Later when you review, legible handwriting will let you concentrate on ideas and facts rather than on deciphering your notes. Also, copying notes may not be a form of review but merely a mechanical process, wasteful of time.

12. Leave blanks for words, phrases, or ideas you think you may have missed. Directly after the lecture, ask the instructor or a fellow student to help you fill the gaps.

13. Develop your own system of enumeration and indentation. Don't indent so far that you are crowded into a small area at the right-hand side of the page. The following is a list of abbreviation and rules which are useful and could help you devise your method to be used in taking lecture notes.

   w/ with
   e.g. or ex. example
   i.e. therefore
   N.B. nota bene - note well
   w/out without

* Always use numerals - 19 not nineteen.

* Use standard abbreviations such as months, days of the week, weights, measurers, countries, states, etc.

* Use as many word abbreviations as possible, but be sure not to lose the sense of the paragraph.

* Exclude vowels from words whenever possible.
  e.g. Drg retd trfcl accdnts are dcrsng acrdng to rcnt stats.

  Drug related traffic accidents are decreasing according to recent statistics.

FOR ADDITIONAL ABBREVIATIONS, SEE HANDOUT STUDY SKILLS E 4.11 ABBREVIATION IN NOTE-TAKING.

14. Develop abbreviations of common words and recurring terms. This will give you more time both to listen and to write.

15. Use a symbol (such as an asterisk, arrow, or underline) to mark the ideas the lecturer emphasizes.
16. Mark off assignments that are mixed in with the lecture. Similarly, note and mark off any books or other references the lecturer mentions; these will be valuable guides to further reading.

17. Separate your own thoughts from the lecturer's. It is an excellent practice to jot down questions, your own examples, ideas, and references; but make sure you bracket or otherwise label these as yours, not his or hers.

18. Be alert for clues. Often an instructor will say, "You'll see this later," or "This is important," or "This is a common pitfall." Following such clues, note important statements, and put an asterisk or another symbol in the margin. Watch for enumerations—e.g. "The four steps in the process are as follows." Watch for words such as "finally," "therefore," "furthermore," which may warn that an important point is about to be presented. Listen for other transitional words, phrases, or sentences which may signal the end of one main idea and the beginning of another.

19. Always record the lecturer's examples. They often clarify abstract ideas. Indicate that they are examples by using the following abbreviations: e.g. or Ex.

20. Pay as close attention to the end of a lecture as to the beginning. Lecturers do not always pace themselves accurately and may cram half the content into the last five or ten minutes. Record such packed finales as rapidly as you can, and, if necessary, stay in your seat for a few extra minutes to write down as much as you can remember.

21. Record additional ideas of your own immediately after the lecture.

22. Review your notes after the lecture, and improve the organization if necessary.

This lengthy list of note-taking techniques may seem cumbersome and complicated, but if these basic guides are followed and utilized often, they will soon become spontaneous and useful.