

Note-Taking Tips

It is important to [take good notes](#) in class. Taking written notes almost forces you to concentrate on what the teacher is saying. Your notes will help you prepare for tests and will give you clues as to what your teacher thinks is most important for you to know. Further, your notes will contain information that may not be in your textbooks.



Here are some tips that can help you take good notes.

- Use a loose leaf notebook for taking notes. You can then remove pages as needed. You cannot do this if you use a spiral notebook.
- Write your notes on the front side of pages only. This will allow you to lay the pages side by side when reviewing your notes for a test.
- Write the date at the top of each page of your notes and number the pages. This will help you to keep your notes in the proper sequence.
- Keep your notes for each class separate from your notes for other classes. You can use different color tabs to help you do this.
- Be selective in what you write. On average, the speaking speed of teachers is five to six times faster than is the writing speed of students. Quite simply, do not try to write everything your teacher says.
- Use abbreviations and symbols to increase your note-taking speed.
- Don't be too concerned with spelling and grammar. These notes are for your use and will not be graded.
- Ask your teacher to repeat something you think you may have missed.
- As you write points made by your teacher, translate these points into your own words. Doing this will increase your understanding of your notes and your ability to remember the information they contain.
- If your teacher provides a definition for a word, write that definition in your notes word for word.
- Write legibly. You will have to read your notes later on.
- Include in your notes information your teacher writes on the board.
- Stay especially alert during the last few minutes of the class. Teachers sometime use the last few minutes of a class session to cram in everything they wanted to cover but didn't.

Your class notes are your record of what your teacher covered. Use these tips to make them as good as possible.

In classes, your teachers will talk about topics that you are studying. The information they provide will be important for you to know when you take tests. You must be able to take good written notes from what your teachers say.

Taking good notes is a three-stage process in which there are certain things you should do **before** class, **during** class, and **after** class. Here are the three stages of note-taking and what you should do during each stage.

1. Get Ready to Take Notes (Before Class)

- Review your notes from the previous class session before you come to class. This will help you remember what was covered and get you ready to understand new information your teacher provides.
- Complete all assigned readings before you come to class. Your teacher will expect that you have done this and will use and build upon this information.
- Bring all note-taking materials with you to class. Have several pens and pencils as well as your notebook.

2. Take Notes (During Class)

- Keep your attention focused on what your teacher is saying. Listen for "signal statements" that tell you what your teacher is about to say is important to write in your notes. Examples of signal statements are "The most important point..." and "Remember that..." Be sure to include in your notes information that your teacher repeats or writes on the chalkboard.
- Write quickly so that you can include all the important information in your notes. Do this by writing abbreviated words such as med for medicine, using symbols such as % for percent, and writing short sentences.
- Place a ? next to information you write in your notes but about whose meaning you are not sure.

3. Rewrite Your Notes (After Class)

- Rewrite your notes to make them more complete by changing abbreviated words into whole words, symbols into words, and shortened sentences into longer sentences.
- Make your notes more accurate by answering any questions you had when writing your notes in class. Use your [textbook](#) and [reference sources](#) to obtain the information you need to answer your questions. If necessary, ask your teacher or other students for help.
- Check with other students to be sure you did not leave out important information.

Using Abbreviations To Write Notes Quickly



ht

Many of the questions you find on class tests will be based upon the information your teachers orally present in class. Therefore, you need to [write class notes](#) that completely and accurately include the most important information presented by your teachers. This is hard to do because your teachers can talk faster than you can write.

It would be nice if your teachers talked slower so that you could keep up with what they are saying as you write your notes. This is not realistic though. It is up to you to write more quickly. One way to do this is to write **abbreviations for words**. An abbreviation is a shortened form of a word used when writing to represent the complete word. You must be able to recognize the complete word from its abbreviation.

Many words have a commonly used abbreviation. Here are some examples of words that have a common abbreviation:

| Word | Abbreviation | Word | Abbreviation |
|--------------|--------------|----------|--------------|
| department | dept | package | pkg |
| introduction | intro | negative | neg |
| junior | jr | magazine | mag |
| mathematics | math | foot | ft |
| weight | wt | highway | hwy |

You can form your own abbreviation for just about any word. Here are three ways you can do this.

1. **Write just the beginning of a long word.** Here are some examples of long words that have been abbreviated by writing just the beginning of the word:

| Word | Abbreviation | Word | Abbreviation |
|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| different | diff | feminine | fem |
| incorporated | inc | population | pop |
| elementary | elem | ambiguous | ambig |
| molecular | molec | separate | sep |
| division | div | hippopotamus | hippo |

2. Leave out the vowels when writing a word. Here are some examples of words that have been abbreviated by leaving out the vowels when writing the word:

| Word | Abbreviation | Word | Abbreviation |
|----------|--------------|----------|--------------|
| century | cntry | point | pnt |
| mountain | mntn | school | schl |
| reason | rsn | clean | cln |
| popular | pplr | teacher | tchr |
| quality | qlty | progress | prgrss |

3. For words that have just one syllable, write just the first and last letter of the word. Here are some examples of words that have been abbreviated by writing just the first and last letter of the word:

| Word | Abbreviation | Word | Abbreviation |
|-------|--------------|-------|--------------|
| quart | qt | land | ld |
| tick | tk | round | rd |
| girl | gl | pack | pk |
| night | nt | field | fd |
| link | lk | heart | ht |

Use common abbreviations of words whenever you recognize them. For other words, form abbreviations by using one of the three ways you just learned. Use the way that best fits the word for which you are writing an abbreviation. Do not try to abbreviate every word you write in your notes. Abbreviate those words that are important and for which you can quickly form an abbreviation. **REMEMBER: YOU MUST BE ABLE TO RECOGNIZE THE COMPLETE WORD FROM ITS ABBREVIATION.** Knowing the context in which you wrote the word will help you recognize the complete word from its abbreviation.

Using abbreviations for words will help you take good notes more quickly. Having good notes will help you do better on tests.

Rewriting Class Notes

Teachers often emphasize the information they provide in class lectures when they design tests. This means that your class notes are a vital resource when studying for a test. It is important that your class notes be complete and accurate.

The best way to be certain that your class notes are complete and accurate is to review them in the evening while the information that was covered in class is still fresh in your mind. At this time you should rewrite your notes, correcting any errors, filling in any gaps, and adding additional information as appropriate. Rewriting your class notes also gives you the opportunity to improve

their organization and to make them neater, thereby making your notes easier to study from. Further, rewriting your class notes reinforces the information so that you will remember it better.

Here are some tips to consider when you rewrite your class notes.

- Reread your class notes two or three times before beginning to rewrite them. It is important to do this so that you have the “big picture” firm in your mind.
- Rewrite your class notes in an outline format that shows connections and relationships between various topics and key terms.
- Question what you have written in your class notes. Make sure that what you have written makes sense and that you understand what you have written.
- Compare your class notes with those of another student in your class.
- Often, much of the information in a teacher's lecture is based upon the information in the textbook. Check to be certain that the information you wrote in your class notes is consistent with corresponding information in the textbook.
- Use sources of information other than your textbook to gain further understanding of the information in your class notes. The Internet is very helpful in this regard.
- Change any abbreviations and symbols in your class notes into complete words and statements.
- Highlight the most important words and concepts in your class notes.
- Rewrite your class notes in a designated notebook that becomes a primary resource when studying for a test.
- Jot down any questions you think you may need to ask your teacher at the next class session.

