

Teacher's Style

Learn your teacher's style and pay attention to cues that indicate important ideas that will probably be on the test. The cues include transitional phrases and words, body language, voice tone and pace, repetition of ideas, and the time spent on certain subjects. Some lecturers speak slowly, some use outlines and overheads, some summarize their lectures, some repeat or highlight important points – and some don't. Some may increase or decrease the volume at which they are speaking, write something on the board or an overhead, or they may even simply state, "This will be on your exam." By listening to the cues your teacher gives, you will be able to identify crucial material. Generally, if the teacher writes information on the overhead or board or gives you a handout related to the information, it is probably important. Reading the assigned course material before the lecture and reviewing previous notes can also help you prepare.



Review

Review all your notes regularly, looking for developing themes and relationships between ideas in lectures or class discussions. Looking for relationships can assist you in "seeing the big picture," which is important to your overall comprehension and recall of course material. Your review of notes should bring together lecture notes with any notes you may have taken from the course readings or with outlines the teacher may have distributed. Reviewing your notes will allow you to address any questions you had about the material or add thoughts you had about the lecture or discussion while it is still fresh in your mind, and it will make reviewing for exams much less difficult. Rewriting your notes the same day as the lecture can also be a useful way to review while class discussion and related reading assignments are fresh in your mind.

For more information on note-taking methods, see the California Polytechnic State University's Academic Services page at the following URL:

<http://sas.calpoly.edu/asc/ssl/notetaking.systems.html>

Information courtesy of York University, Ontario, Canada; Bowling Green State University; and Stanford University.

Contact the OHS Student Services Department for more information: 608-783-4571

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Taking Notes

Study Skills for Success



**School District of
Onalaska**

**Comprehensive
School Counseling
Program**

OHS Student Services

Onalaska High School
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Why is it important to take notes?

Notes serve as a way to study course concepts and provide a written record of lectures and class discussions that you may not find in the assigned textbook chapters. Not only does taking notes help you concentrate during class, but notes are a starting place for you to understand and connect ideas within a course and highlight any questions you may have. Notes will help you review, think critically about course material, and prepare for tests. They can also be a source of information for any assigned writing in the course.

Active Listening

Taking notes during class keeps you active. Effective listening involves paying attention and developing an interest for listening to the lecture or discussion. As a lecture proceeds, pay particular attention to the beginnings and endings of the lecture to gain a better sense of its outline and main points. Select important information to record and ask questions about what you hear. Avoid being a passive listener and trying to “get it all down.” Instead listen for main ideas, key details, and transitional phrases, which show the structure and focus of the lecture. Focus on key words from overheads, information that is repeated, and details that build on course readings and previous lectures or discussions. Be sure to include details that “flesh out” the key words.

Less Is More

It is helpful to develop and use abbreviations and symbols when making notes. Come up with short forms of frequently used long words (e.g., b/c = because, w/o = without, diff = difference, p. = page, def = definition, ch = chapter, & = and). Use these short forms when recording information. Any abbreviation that makes sense to you that you will be able to understand later can be used. Short phrases should be used in place of full sentences in most situations. Exceptions are when there is a definition or information presented that you don't understand. Symbols such as “!” or “?” can help you note important details or areas that may need further explanation. Write legibly! Notes won't help you if you can't read them.

Note-Taking Formats

The organization and relative importance of ideas should be reflected in your notes. Leave a little open space to add information later. Consider using a note-taking format that will help you review later. Cornell notes (or two-column notes) and Mind Maps (mapping notes) are both useful for this.

For **Cornell notes**, divide the page into two columns, so that the left column is about 1/3 of the page wide. The other column takes up the remainder of the page. Take notes from class in the right column and use the left column for key concepts and questions when reviewing your notes. (See example.)

Cornell Notes

Questions	Your regular lecture notes go here.
Key Terms	Leave room to fill in information later or add information from course readings
Links to Other Notes	

To create **mapping notes**, identify a main topic or concept and write it in the middle of a blank page. As you discover related ideas, add them to the page and connect them with lines to the main topic. Indicate the relationships with additional lines. Finally, record important details about each idea and connect these with the rest of your idea map.

Mind Map - Bears

