

Note Taking Strategies

Develop your own note taking system

1. **Come to class prepared.** If there is assigned reading, ensure it is completed before the lecture. This will aid in further understanding of the material.
2. **Label your notes.** Put the date, abbreviation of class title and the page number on each piece of paper (this only takes a couple of minutes while you are waiting for the lecture to begin).
3. **Leave lots of space** to make your notes easier to read and edit later.
4. **Listen, think, and then write** to ensure you are understanding the information.
5. **Use coloured pens** and highlighters to underline or emphasize certain parts of your notes and diagrams.
6. **Make use of mind mapping** to organize your thoughts after a lecture. Mind Maps, you can quickly identify and understand the structure of a subject. You can see the way that pieces of information fit together, as well as recording the raw facts contained in normal notes.

Keep accurate and complete notes

1. **Summarize at the end of the lecture.** Listen for and write out lecturer's conclusion or summary at the end of the lecture to confirm important points.
2. **Listen for keywords.** Listen for and take note of those ideas that the lecturer emphasizes, repeats, or spends a great deal of time on.
3. **Set up a buddy system** and go over notes with each other to fill in gaps and to go over those ideas that you are having trouble with.
4. **What's on the board?** If an instructor takes the time to write something on the board, it is probably important.



5. **Develop your own style of speed writing.** If you have trouble keeping up with the lecturer make up your own abbreviations and save time by not copying down information that you already know.
6. **Understanding your notes:**
 - **Ask questions either during or after class.** Don't sit on those ideas that you don't understand. Learning in problem solving courses is accumulative and therefore, so is "not" learning in problem solving courses.
 - Students who do very well at university **keep a good set of notes.** They file them or set them up in such a way that they can refer to them easily. They also enrich their notes by adding asides like "This is a key point." or "This point will become relevant next week."
7. **Edit your notes soon after taking them.** Set up a regular time to go over your notes as soon as possible (ideally within 24 hours of taking them). This strategy will help you to remember what was said and allow you to fill in any words and ideas that you left out.
8. **Set up your notes so you can study from them easily.** Develop a strategy to highlight the key points in each lecture. This could be making cue cards for the main points, writing them in the margins of your notes or any other creative ideas. Review these key ideas regularly.
9. **Visit a success coach:** If you would like more information on how to incorporate these strategies into your study routine visit a success coach. To book an appointment, visit the student success office (2nd floor of south campus hall) or call 519-888-4567 ext. 84410.

Adapted from Simon Fraser University & University of Waterloo Counselling Resources.

