



Note Taking for Lectures

Why take notes?

Note taking helps you record important concepts, examples & ideas. By listening intently, and actively deciding which information is important, note taking helps you make sense of what is being said and the process helps you to concentrate.

For note taking to be effective, you need to be doing things with the material. This may include reading, writing, discussing, solving problems etc. Also, you need to take, and interact with, your notes regularly in order to effectively retain the information. Below we outline some strategies for improving your note taking skills for lectures which include preparing, reviewing and revising your notes.

Active v Passive Learning

Active learning is where you interact with the learning process as opposed to merely receiving the information and passively taking it in. Being an active learner will help you better retain information.

Some examples of active learning strategies are:

- Reflecting
- Discussing
- Questioning
- Collaborating

Before the lecture

Be prepared. Review and familiarise yourself with any necessary material before the lecture. This will help you listen more attentively and will provide the necessary background knowledge on the topic.

- Make sure you have read all the necessary readings
- Download and print a copy of the lecture notes
- Review and define any unfamiliar terminology

Before the lecture, review and familiarise yourself with the lecture content, taking notice of the slide headings. Consider how the headings relate to the overall topic. Also, think about what you already might know on the topic. Reviewing and questioning the content before the lecture will help you to actively listen for answers in the lecture.

During the lecture

It is important to come to the lecture prepared to actively learn and listen intently. You need to think critically making sure that you only note the key concepts and the most relevant material. In order to identify the relevant material, look for cues. Review the table below for the types of cues to look out for during the lecture to help you decide on what important information to note.

Structure of Lecture	Non-verbal cues	Voice	Language
Introduction	Facial expressions	Change in volume	Verbal signposts
Body	Gestures	Speed	
Conclusion		Emotion emphasis	

Make sure to arrive early and find a spot where you will be able to see and hear the presentation. If available, bring the PowerPoint slides to the presentation and use the note section to add further details in your own words in an abbreviated form. If something has been said in the lecture that you are not sure about, or you need further clarification, leave a space or include a question mark in your notes. Follow this up with your lecturer later or try to find the answers through class readings or the course textbook.

After the lecture

To get the most from your notes it is important to review them regularly. The review process helps you to retain the information and identify where you may have gaps in your knowledge.

To review:

- read and summarise your notes as soon as possible after the lecture
- find answers to the questions that you highlighted as you took notes during the lecture
- share and discuss your notes with others
- code your notes using colours or diagrams. Make the coding meaningful to you
- review your lecture notes regularly