Note Taking Techniques

The most comprehensive note taking systems require attention on your part. You must be alert enough in class to take legible, meaningful notes. You can’t rely on "writing everything down" because a lot of information in a given lecture won't help you actually learn the material. If you have problems determining the specific relevant points in a particular class, you can always ask the professor to clarify them for you.

**THE 2-6 METHOD:**
The 2-6 refers to the way you divide the space on your notepaper. Make two columns, using the red line on the left of the page as your border. Then, when you take notes in class, use the 6 column for the notes and the smaller 2 column on the left as a highlighting system. Write main headings and important points on the left, including material you think you will be tested on. When you’re finished, you should have a comprehensive page of information that you can quickly scan for important points. Studying is 99% perspiration; if you give it a real, concentrated effort over the course of a semester you will see an improvement. Your academic success is entirely up to you. - By George Mason University

**SPLIT PAGE METHOD:**
Class lectures and your textbook--they're the primary sources of course content and you need to learn both. So combine them with the split page method of taking notes. Just divide your notebook page in half lengthwise. Draw a line down the middle of the page. Take class notes on one side of the page and outline the text on the other side. When you study you'll have both. Class notes and text together, integrated. Some students find it helpful to add a third column for questions they need to ask the professor. - By Sherry Reynolds

**USING GROUP NOTES:**
Are you tired of struggling to keep up with a lecture while copying page after page of notes in class? My advice? Don't take the notes -- at least not every day. Instead, form a group with some of your classmates and take turns taking good class notes. When it's not your day to be the note-taker, really concentrate on what is being said in class. You might want to jot down a few particularly important points, but mostly try to participate in class. Ask questions when you can't understand the point your teacher is trying to get across, and score points by answering questions your teacher asks. After class you can either photocopy the notes from your classmate, or better yet, copy them over by hand while reviewing in your mind what happened in class. - By Fred Weening

[http://www.academictips.org/acad/literature/notetaking.html](http://www.academictips.org/acad/literature/notetaking.html)
Secrets to Taking Better Notes

There is no magic to taking good notes, just common sense. It's simply a matter of being thorough and accurate. Now, not many people can write fast enough to capture everything their professor says in class, so it is a good idea to also use a tape recorder (make sure you have permission from your instructor first). That way you won't miss something while you write, and you can double-check the tape for accuracy. Whether you use a recorder or not, it's important to transcribe your notes as soon as possible while the subject is still fresh in your mind. By re-writing or re-typing your notes, you become more familiar with the material. You mentally reinforce what was said in class. And you get practice writing the information, making it easier to write the material a second time whether it be for a test or a term paper. - By Brian Pitzer

NOTEWORTHY NOTES: Are your grades as good as you want them to be? Are your notes worth reviewing? Notes are phrases and abbreviations that we hurriedly jot down while trying to follow a lecture. Later, when we go back to review our notes, there are times when we can't seem to understand or remember what those key words and phrases meant; sometimes we can't even read our own handwriting. Here is a note-taking study tip that has proven to be effective. After you have finished class, immediately rush to the nearest computer lab and retype your notes. You need to rewrite those phrases as complete thoughts and sentences; dot your I's, cross your T's and use "cut and paste" to put your notes into some type of a logical sequence. While retyping your notes you are using several modalities: you review as you read your notes aloud, you use your hand to type, and you reread again as you proof read what you have typed. Research indicates that 80% of new material can be recalled if you review notes within the first 24 hours of presentation. Also, clean typed notes are easier to read and highlight as you study. If you retype your notes daily, you will keep the task from becoming overwhelming, you will learn good study habits that aid in memory retention and, at the same time, improve your grades. - By Janet Jenkins

ATTEND CLASS: The most important advice I can give to you is to make sure you attend your classes. Attendance in class enhances the chance you'll get a passing grade in a course. In addition to attending class, it is important to brush up on your note-taking skills to really achieve optimum success. Some general recommendations for improving note-taking skills are to: Read all textbook material relevant to the topic being covered prior to attending class.

Make sure you take notes in class. If you fail to take notes, much of what you learn from the lecture will be forgotten in a few days. If you have something written down on paper, you can always refer to the material later. By attending class and utilizing the note-taking techniques just described, your chances for success in college will increase significantly. - By Kiran Misra

PREPARE FOR THE LECTURE: The greatest advantage is that you are familiar with the subject you know what to ask you are not going to waste time by writing down stuff that is already there in your study material. Rather, you know what to write, where to pick links and to clear your concepts.

By the time the lecture is over, you are in a much clearer state of mind. This way, taking down notes becomes more meaningful and worth the time you spent doing it. - By Ms. Sreelatha Anand

USE COLORS: This may take a little bit longer but it will work. Just give it a chance. When you are taking notes change the color of your pen! Don't write in blue or black ink. Writing in color will help you retain 50% - 80% more of the information without reading it a second time (also highlight in purple). I am a teacher of adult education and this is the rule for my class room. - By Nicole Watts

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Stress Reduction Tips

USING LISTS: "When the pressure and stress of the semester begins to build and you can't imagine how you can possibly accomplish everything you need to do, make a list. Include everything that needs to be done on the list, including homework, class assignments, grocery shopping, laundry and even hanging out with friends. Then make a weekly schedule. Fit all of your tasks within the weekly schedule. This will help you to be more organized; less overwhelmed and remember everything you need to do. You will find that there is indeed time to fit everything in. When you have completed one of the tasks on your list, cross it off. Crossing everything off the list is a good feeling of accomplishment. This is also a great way to see how much you actually do during the day and pat yourself on the back for a job well done." - By Sue Amendolara

FIGHTING DEPRESSION: "You know that academic success depends on achieving satisfactory grades. Sometimes, however, students who are typically successful find their academic performance begins to slide for personal reasons. Prolonged unhappiness or dissatisfaction with one's self or one's relationships with others can drain a student's energy and become a hindrance to academic effectiveness. Yes, students can get depressed or anxious and find themselves having a hard time shaking it off. It's not an unusual occurrence; but if it goes on for weeks, you should be concerned. When social or emotional issues get in the way in your life, do something about it. The first step is to find someone with whom you can talk about it. This usually makes a world of difference. Don't continue to hold it in. Take care of yourself by eating and sleeping regularly, and get exercise. Make yourself go to class. Fight back and work to regain control of your life. Your emotional health and academic success go hand in hand. Keep a handle on both." - By Michael Bucell

OVERCOMING ANXIETY: "I find that many students have already acquired pretty good study habits. So, unless they have basic skill problems in areas like reading and math, they actually possess the ability to take notes effectively, manage their time, and so on. So, what gets in the way of effective performance in the classroom? I believe that "anxiety" is the culprit. Many students put themselves down by believing that they are "stupid" and "ineffective," especially in comparison with their peers. These feelings of inadequacy can lead to the paralyzing anxiety that "blocks" successful performance in the classroom -- especially on tests. I have personally experienced this gut-wrenching feeling and kicked myself later for making those dumb mistakes that result when anxiety gets in the way. In order to overcome anxiety, I recommend the following:

Gain temporary control of your anxiety by practicing relaxation techniques during especially anxious times. Deep breathing combined with muscular tensing and relaxing can be helpful. Massage and meditation can help too. Work on feeling better about yourself. Try replacing negative thinking with positive thoughts. Praise yourself once in a while and forgive yourself for mistakes. Read books that suggest ways to improve your feelings of self-worth.

In general, try being your own best friend!" - By Dr. Salene Cowher

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GENERAL STRESS REDUCTION TIPS: "As classes become more demanding, you need to consider ways to reduce stress. There are certainly a few things not to do, such as procrastinate. If you have a project or paper assigned early in the semester, get started on it right away. In order to do your best job, you need to spend a lot of time on it. Remember, Rome wasn't built in a day. Also, don't work long hours without rest. Ideally, you should sleep seven to eight hours daily to function properly. One activity that reduces stress is exercise. Whether it be jogging, bicycling, basketball, racquetball, swimming, or a daily walk, make sure you make time to exercise. Remember, to help reduce stress, don't procrastinate, get plenty of rest, and exercise regularly." - By Gary Grant

VISUALIZATION and Relaxation: "When the pressure seems to be getting to you, don't panic. Try one of these instant stress relievers. Take six deep breaths. Slowly breathe through your nose and out your mouth. Visit the Bahamas or any other pleasant place through your imagination. Visualize the scene in detail. Hug someone. Four hugs every day will do a lot to calm you down. Change your scene. Walk to the window, watch the birds, take a stroll down the hall. Go outside and breathe deeply for two minutes. Exercise and stretching will improve your mind. Jog up the staircase. Find something or someone who will make you laugh. Stress can often come from taking yourself or your task too seriously. Ask yourself what is the worst possible thing that could happen if you made a mistake or missed the deadline. Lastly, change your focus. Think about your out of class life and focus on what you'll do this weekend or this evening." - By Barbara Kantz

PERSONAL MAINTENANCE: "We all know the importance of maintaining a car. We can push it to the limit, but sooner or later it starts to run poorly. By setting aside some time for a little maintenance, we can keep it running smoothly and efficiently. Unfortunately, we tend to forget these simple truths when they're applied to college life. We push ourselves to keep up with demands and ignore warning signs such as decreased productivity and a negative attitude. We fail to recognize that some time spent on rest and relaxation may actually save time in the long run. People often notice that their mood improves and they work more effectively after taking a break. Personal maintenance may include very simple and inexpensive activities such as taking a walk in the snow, having dinner with a friend, or listening to some favorite music. So take a little time out today to do something fun and relaxing -- your system just might run a little smoother tomorrow." - By Gary LaBine

SELF-IMPOSED BARRIERS: "Have you ever thought about the influence of the person you see in the mirror? It takes a mature person to honestly evaluate themselves. It takes a strong person to recognize self-imposed barriers and to do something about them. Some of us have told ourselves or were told by others that we didn't possess the qualities of a good student. It then becomes easy to quit trying and to stay in groups that mock things like good study habits, regular reading in the library, and shooting for the best you can do. This is an understandable coping response, but we have to be willing to reassess ourselves. These are things that influence who we will be in the future, how we feel about ourselves, and the opportunities we will have. Cast aside those behaviors that make school unnecessarily harder and limit your potential. Start today." - By Roy Shinn

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