

Learning Assistance

at Trident Technical College

Ten Tips for Taking Effective Lecture Notes

Adapted from <http://www.uwosh.edu/programs/readingstudycenter/>

- 1. Be an active listener.** Arrive at class early and be ready to listen. It is best to sit up front and in the center, eliminating distractions and aiding in concentration.
- 2. Have a good attitude.** Go into a lecture with an open mind and attend fully to the material being presented. This will make taking notes much easier.
- 3. Mirror the instructor's organization.** Copy the instructor's organizational pattern of notes if he/she presents overheads. Don't limit your notes to just what is presented -- add side notes, examples, and other main ideas.
- 4. Try to recognize main ideas and mark them in a way so you remember they are important points.** There are three key ways to recognize main ideas during lecture: a change in voice (faster, slower, louder, softer, or more precise, pauses), one sentence summaries, and transitional words (therefore, however, or in contrast). After recording the main ideas, mark them by boxing, highlighting, underlining, or starring them to remind you to go back and review those points before an exam.
- 5. Leave blank spaces in your notes.** This will allow you space to go back and edit your notes later. Concentrate on writing the nouns and verbs. Go back and fill in the blank spaces with the relationships and descriptions. The goal of your written word is to trigger your auditory memory.
- 6. Pay special attention to the beginning of the lecture.** Often, instructors will give an overview of what they will be covering during the class at the beginning. This will help to make the lecture more understandable.
- 7. Pay special attention to the ending of the lecture.** It is during this time the instructor will make conclusions, summarize what was discussed, and offer information that he/she did not have time to lecture on in class. Recording that information allows you the opportunity to go into the textbook and fill in the "blanks."
- 8. Try the Cornell Notetaking System.** This notetaking system was developed more than forty years ago at Cornell University and proves to be a VERY effective notetaking system. This involves dividing your paper in half – class notes and then your additions after class.
- 9. Use loose leaf paper and three-ring binders instead of spiral bound notebooks.** Using loose leaf paper allows you the opportunity to insert pages for more notes as you read the related textbook material. You can also rearrange your notes and add handouts from class.
- 10. Ask questions if you are unclear about something in the lecture.** Don't be afraid to ask questions if you miss an idea or are confused about something that has been said. This will insure you are studying accurate information.

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