

HOW (& WHY) TO TAKE NOTES

Why Should I Take Notes?

- Notes help you remember what you hear or read.
- Notes help you concentrate in class.
- Notes help you prepare for tests.
- Notes often let you know what your instructor thinks most important (and what will show up on the next test).
- Notes often contain information that can't be found in your textbook.

How To Take Notes

- Concentrate on the lecture or the reading material.
- Don't try to write down every word.
- Translate the ideas into your own words.
- Afterward, organize notes into some sort of logical form.
- Be brief. Write down only the major points and important information.
- Write legibly. Notes are useless if you can't read them later!
- Don't worry about spelling and grammar.

How to Know What's Important in Lectures

The speaker is usually making an important point if he or she:

- Writes something on the board. (It's pretty safe to say that if your instructor has written something on the board, you should write it in your notes.)
- Pauses before or after an idea.
- Repeats an idea or formula.

Use Shortcuts

Try using these symbols when taking notes:

Instead of:	Use:
and	&
plus	+
minus	-
number	#
times	x
greater than, more or larger	>
less than, smaller, fewer than	<
with	w/
within	w/in
leads to, produces, results in	----->

So that this sentence:

The diameter of the Earth is four times greater than the diameter of the Moon.

Becomes this:

Earth = 4x > diameter of Moon.

Which is quicker to write?

- Eliminate unnecessary words when possible (the, is, are, a, an, of).
- Drop the last several letters of long words, e.g., instead of "appropriate" use "approp."
- Use numerals – write "3-1/2" instead of three-and-one-half.