

# TOP 10 NOTE TAKING TIPS

1. **CONSIDER CLASS OVER ONLY AFTER YOU HAVE REVIEWED YOUR NOTES.** This may not be only the most important note taking skill you learn, but also the most important study skill you learn! If you can adopt this skill, you are on your way to success. However, there's a huge mental hurdle to jump. You may have been conditioned to think that class is over when the bell rings or the professor has dismissed the class. Instead, remember that class is over when you have reviewed your notes. You may not be able to review your notes immediately after class has been dismissed but make sure you review your notes before the next class.
2. **WRITE ONLY ON ONE SIDE OF THE PAPER!** Your notes will be easier to read and the extra page (the back side) provides a place to add notes from your book or examples when you review and study your notes later.
3. **SKIP LINES!** Your notebook is not the place to single handedly try to save the rain forest. Space your notes out! Don't try to cram an hour lecture on to one single piece of paper. Skipping lines allows room to add information later, clearly differentiates new thoughts, and keeps your notes more readable and organized.
4. **LISTEN!** It sounds obvious, but it isn't. To be a good note taker, you can't simply go to class; you must listen actively. Before class begins, challenge yourself to stay on task and listen. If your mind wanders, make a check at the top of your notes and refocus. Make a check each time you catch yourself wandering. At first you might have a lot of checks. For each class, make it a goal to have one less check. You'll get better!
5. **TAKE YOUR OWN NOTES.** In other words, GO TO CLASS! It is difficult to understand another person's notes as well as your own. Of course, if you do miss a class, getting another person's notes is better than no notes at all, but do not make a habit of it.
6. **DISCUSS YOUR NOTES WITH OTHERS.** While it is important to take your own notes, it is valuable to talk about your notes with others. If you have a question, you can clarify them with a classmate, a tutor, or your professor. Comparing notes will force you to articulate in your own words what you have noted down.
7. **USE ABBREVIATIONS WISELY!** Abbreviations are helpful because they allow you to write more in less time. However, keep your abbreviations simple and consistent. Consider writing abbreviation meanings in the margin to avoid being confused later on by potentially vague or unclear abbreviations.
8. **WHEN IN DOUBT, WRITE IT DOWN.** If information or an example seems easy or obvious, don't fool yourself and neglect to write it down. We forget 80% of what we hear after 30 minutes unless we write it down or rehearse it. If information is important, not it no matter how confident you are that you'll remember it. Research shows that you won't.
9. **DON'T LET YOUR OPINIONS INTERFERE WITH YOUR NOTE TAKING.** Focus on the content of the information and not the way it is being delivered. Be sure to note the content being presented, even if you disagree with it. If you recorded other classmates' or your opinions, be sure that they are clearly identified as such.
10. **PAY SPECIAL ATTENTION TO THE FIRST AND LAST 5 MINUTES OF CLASS.** The first 5 minutes are important because the professor can give you a good idea of what will be discussed in that class. Use this information as a road map that can help you follow along and listen better. The last 5 minutes are critical because the professor may summarize the most important material covered or if he has run out of time, quickly try to present the main points that he hasn't yet presented. If you are looking at your watch counting the seconds or packing up your things, you might miss critical information.