Note Taking Tips
(Using the “GREAT” notes method)

GREAT Notes = Get ready
               write
               Edit
               Ask questions
               Test yourself

Get Ready Phase: Set the stage
- Complete all written homework assignments
- Complete all reading homework assignments
- Bring the right materials
- Browse notes prior to class, anticipate a “pop” quiz
- Sit front and center
- Prepare yourself to be focused

Write Phase: Note taking
- Include key information
  Ex. main ideas, facts, details, examples & definitions
- Listen for instructor’s cues of importance, ex. repetition, enthusiasm
- Use abbreviations and symbols
- Write only on the front side of the paper
- Try the Cornell, outline, and/or mind map formats (see examples)

Edit Phase: Make notes usable
- Clean up after class, ex. check spelling
- Fill in the gaps
- Maximize your chosen note taking strategy
- Use the back side of the paper
  - Vocabulary words
  - Make up your own examples
  - Draw charts, pictures, diagrams
  - Add new notes from your textbook
  - Write down questions for your instructor

Ask Questions Phase: Put yourself in an instructor role
- Design sample test questions
- Change passive learning to active learning

Test Yourself Phase: Move info to long term memory
- Can only be done if/after questions are made
- Read the questions and recite your answers aloud
**Cornell Method example:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cue Column – 1/3 portion of the page</th>
<th>Today’s Date, Instructor Name, Class, Topic(s), Your Name</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Main ideas here – Insert after lecture</td>
<td>All notes go here during class lecture – 2/3 portion of the page</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Summary section: Create sample test questions here

**Outline example:**

I. First main topic
   A. Subtopic
      1. Detail
      2. Detail
   B. Subtopic
      1. Detail
      2. Detail

II. Second main topic
   A. Subtopic
      1. Detail
      2. Detail
   B. Subtopic
      1. Detail
      2. Detail

**Mind Map example:**

```
  TOPIC
     \--------\--------\--------
    Main Point Main Point Main Point
       \--------\--------\--------
        detail detail detail
datail
```
Miscellaneous Tips:

- Use a three-ring binder so you can add handouts
- Create flash cards from 3x5 note cards
- Label your notes
- Copy down information from the white/chalk board or overhead
- Leave blank spaces (if you use both sides of your paper)
- Use graphics for parts of your notes that you need to focus on (ex. ?)
- Use graphics for parts of your notes that you totally know (ex. ☐)
- Take notes in pencil so you can erase easily
- Try highlighting, but use sparingly
- Type up your notes (or a summary page) on the computer
- Notice your wandering mind, it's ok, just refocus
- Participate in class discussions
- Relate the class and your notes to your ultimate goals
- "Be" with the instructor with eye contact, good posture, etc.
- Sit in a class room location with minimal distractions
- Compare notes with a classmate, if possible, right after class
- Experiment with formats and use what works for you
- Use a tape recorder and FYI to your instructor as a courtesy
- **Ask Your Instructor for Clarification!!**

Adjusting to Different Lecture Styles

"Talking over your Head" – When difficult concepts are not thoroughly explained.
  ☐ Strategy: Ask questions (lots if necessary!)

"Rambling" – When the presentation consistently goes off track from the topic at hand.
  ☐ Strategy: Ask carefully worded questions related to the last main point.

"Mumbling" – When the instructor speaks too softly or does not enunciate well.
  ☐ Strategy: Sit up front, listen closely, and ask to repeat main points.

"Tortoise and Hare" – When the instructor speaks too slowly or too quickly.
  ☐ Strategy (tortoise): Ask to repeat or clarify the main points.
  ☐ Strategy (hare): Anticipate what is to come, abbreviate, and make connections between concepts. Try not to stress out!

** Comparing notes with a classmate AND communicating with your instructor are two good strategies for all of the above!**

Located inside the Learning Commons, room #1262
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Connect to Success Office
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