



**Southbank**  
Institute of Technology  
Education for aspiring minds

# Managing your Studies

Note Taking



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## Note Taking



Good note taking skills will help you prepare for exams and assignments more effectively.

### Taking Notes and In-Class Skills

The Cornell system for taking notes is designed to save time while being highly efficient. There is no rewriting or retyping of your notes. It is a **"DO IT RIGHT IN THE FIRST PLACE"** system.

#### First Step – PREPARATION

- Use a large, loose-leaf notebook.
- Use only one side of the paper (you then can lay your notes out to see the direction of a lecture).
- Draw a vertical line 5 cm from the left side of your paper. This is the **'recall' column**.
- Notes will be taken to the right of this margin.
- Later key words or phrases can be written in the recall column.

#### Second Step – DURING THE CLASS

- Record notes in paragraph form.
- Capture general ideas, not illustrative ideas.
- Skip lines to show the end of ideas or thoughts.
- Using abbreviations will save time. Write legibly.

#### Third Step- AFTER THE CLASS

- Read through your notes and make it more legible if necessary.
- Now use the 'recall' column. Jot down ideas or key words that give you the idea of the lecture. You will have to reread the teacher's ideas and reflect in your own words.
- Cover up the right-hand portion of your notes and recite the general ideas and concepts of the class.
- Cover your notes showing only recall columns and you have your review.

### Editing Class Notes

**There are several good reasons for organising and reviewing your notes as soon as possible after the lecture:**

- While the class is still fresh in your mind, you can fill in from memory examples and facts that you did not have time to write down during the class. Moreover, you can recall what parts of the class were unclear to you so that you can consult the teacher, a classmate, your text and/or additional readings for further information.
- Immediately reviewing notes, results in better retention of the information than reviewing the notes after a longer period of time. **Review within 24 hours** after the class or at least before the next class for that subject, or you will need to relearn the information rather than review it.

A method of annotation is usually preferable to recopying notes.

**The following suggestions for annotating may be helpful:**

- Underline key statements or important concepts.
- Use asterisks or other signal marks to indicate importance.
- Use margins or blank pages for coordinating notes with the textbook.
- Indicate relevant pages of the text beside the corresponding information in the notes.

### Use a key and a summary:

- Use one of the margins to keep important names, formulas, dates, concepts and the like. This forces you to anticipate questions of an objective nature and provides specific facts that you need to develop essays/assignments.
- Use the other margin to write a short summary of the topics on the page. Condensing notes in this way not only will help you learn them but also prepares you for the kind of thinking required on essay exams.

### More Note-Taking Tips And In-Class Skills

- Listen actively – if possible think before you write – but don't get behind.
- Be open minded about points you disagree on. Don't let arguing interfere with your note-taking.
- Raise questions if appropriate
- Develop and **use a standard method of note-taking** including punctuation, abbreviations, and margins.
- Take and keep notes in a **large notebook**. The only merit to a small notebook is ease of carrying and that is not your main objective. A large notebook allows you to draw up margins and add extra notes where needed between spaces.
- Leave a few **blank spaces** as you move from one point to the next so you can fill in additional points later if necessary.
- Do not try and take down everything that the teacher says. Spend more time listening and attempt to take down the main points. Many teachers attempt to present a few major points and several minor points in a class. The rest is explanatory material and examples.
- Listen to cues as to important points, transition from one point to the next, repetition of points for emphasis, changes in voice inflections, detail a series of points, etc.

- Make your original notes legible enough for your own reading, but use abbreviations of your own invention when possible. The effort required to recopy notes can be better spent rereading them and thinking about them.
- **Copy down everything on the white/blackboard regardless:** Every scribble on the board might be a clue to an exam item. If you copy it, it may serve as a useful clue for you later. If not, what the heck – you haven't wasted anything. You were in the classroom anyway.
- **Sit close to the front of the class,** there are fewer distractions and it is easier to hear, see and attend to important material.
- Get assignments and suggestions precisely – ask questions if you're not sure.

### Need Further Assistance?

If you continue to experience difficulty in managing your studies and are not obtaining the grades you would like, talk with a Southbank Institute of Technology counsellor about further strategies to improve your study time.

### Southbank Institute of Technology Counselling Service

To make an appointment, contact the following number:

Phone: 3244 5095

[studentsupport.services@deta.qld.gov.au](mailto:studentsupport.services@deta.qld.gov.au)

### Sources

This information was acquired from the following website: [www.ucc.vt.edu/stdysk/stdyhelp.html](http://www.ucc.vt.edu/stdysk/stdyhelp.html) (2002) Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University (Cook Counselling Centre).

