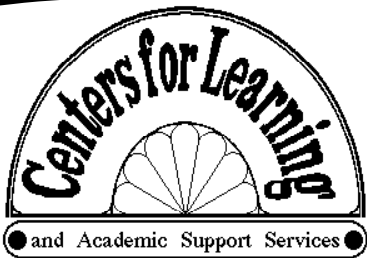


# Listening and Notetaking Skills



Presented by The Advising Center  
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# GOOD LISTENING AND NOTE-TAKING SKILLS

**GOOD LISTENING = (ATTITUDE + WILLINGNESS)<sup>2</sup>**



Everyone knows someone who listens particularly well. Good listeners are attentive to the speaker. They care about what is being said. Much of what makes a good listener is a positive attitude and a willingness to focus on and understand the speaker's message.

In college, learning effective listening skills is an important tool for participating in class lectures. More than just a skill however, good listening involves several behaviors we can adopt which can make us truly be a part of the lecture. Here are some of the qualities of good listeners.

## GOOD LISTENERS:

**Don't** find the message boring - they stay attentive and analytical to find useful material.

**Don't** judge the speaker - they judge only the content of the message.

**Don't** "jump in" - they understand the importance of letting the speaker finish.

**Don't** want only the facts - they want to know the importance of the facts.

**Don't** try to write everything down - they're flexible not takers.

**Don't** expect everything to be laid out for them - they know good listening is hard work.

**Don't** get distracted - they stay on track, knowing they can't afford to stop focusing.

**Don't** get carried away by emotions - they adopt an objective attitude toward the speaker.

**Don't** resist difficult subjects - they know minds are muscles which need workouts.

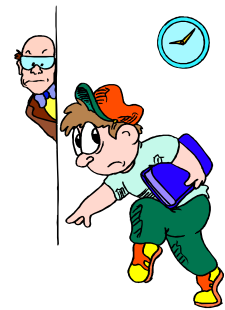
## STRATEGIES FOR GOOD LISTENING

**1. Go To Every Class!** - Even if you think you can easily cut a class, the syllabus may change, assignments may be added, or pop-quizzes may be given. Borderline grades will go one way or the other based on attendance.

**2. Preview the Lecture** - Reading over the material to be covered in lecture will boost your comprehension, especially of the central idea to be discussed.

**3. Go Early!** - Starting early cuts down the stress from rushing; arriving early gives you a chance to ask your instructor questions and to review notes and discuss material with your classmates.

**4. Sit Up Front** - This helps a great deal. It eliminates distractions from other students, it makes it easier to read the board and hear the lecture, and gives you the best chance to interact with the instructor.



**5. Get Away From Distractions** - There is a potential for many distractions. Avoid windows with views, opening and closing doors, hallway sounds, and people who talk often during class.

**6. Be Courteous** - Students who talk during class aren't entitled to waste your time as well as their own by distracting you during the lecture. When you are able, quietly tell them that they should wait until after class to talk.

**7. Speak Up - Carefully!** - During class discussion, instructors will welcome your input with questions, comments, even debate. *But be careful!* You should know when it is appropriate to speak - courtesy in the classroom dictates that you should raise your hand and be recognized.



**8. Adapt Your Listening Style To Instructor's Lecture Style** - Most instructors tell you what material is important to remember. However, instructors have different styles: some may use a slight inflection or volume change in their voice to indicate important information.

**9. Take Care of Yourself** - Other distractions can come from being too hot or cold, too hungry or thirsty - dress in layers to adapt to uncomfortable temperatures, eat and drink before you come to class so you can concentrate. Sit up straight to keep the blood flowing to your brain!

**10. Identify the Main Points** - Active listening keeps the main points about the material. Their input and the instructor's response are worth listening to.

**11. Listen To Other Students** - Other students often raise important points about the material. Their input and the instructor's response are worth listening to.

**12. Stay Objective** - Be open-minded and consider the validity of the material even though you may strongly disagree with it. Keep in mind that your instructor is likely an expert in the subject and deserves to be seriously considered.

## THREE NOTETAKING STYLES

### 1. Outline Note-Taking Format

The outline note-taking format is the most familiar notetaking format. It helps to keep your notes organized in a way that makes reviewing and studying easier. What is sometimes difficult is finding out whether the instructor is presenting the material in outline form. Outlines are generally a very organized way of structuring material. See the example below:



- I. The Main Idea
  - A. Part of the Main Idea
    - 1. Major Detail
      - a. minor detail
      - b. minor detail

- II. The Second Main Idea
  - B. Part of the Main Idea
    - 1. Major Detail
      - a. minor detail
      - b. minor detail
    - 2. Major Detail
      - a. minor detail

## **2. Paragraph Style (Block Style)**

Another notetaking format is paragraph style. This style can be used when the instructor does not structure the lecture in a way that makes main ideas and major details clear. By writing abbreviated paragraphs, you will be able to highlight, circle, or underline the main ideas when they become apparent to you.

With the paragraph style you don't need to write complete sentences; however, you should try to write meaningful phrases. You can combine the outline style with this block style by writing phrases and sentences under numbered headings.

## **3. The Cornell System**

The Cornell Note-Taking System is a system developed to use lecture notes as a form of "self-test" by separating the note paper into two sections: a notes section and a "cue" column for testing your recall of notes section. The Cornell System can be easily combined with the outline and paragraph formats since it only makes an addition to the other styles. See the following page for instructions on how to use the Cornell System.

### **How to Use the Cornell System**

**1. Use 3-Ring Notebook Paper** - Loose-leaf paper is best but spiral bound notebook paper can be used if you already have it. Use only ONE side of the paper so that you can spread all your notes out facing up on a desk or table (it's not wasteful if you recycle).

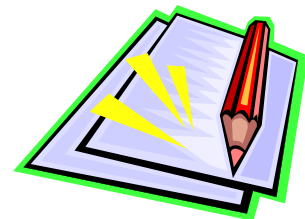
**2. Make a "Recall" Column** - Draw a vertical line down the page two and a half inches from the left edge of the paper. The left column will be your "recall" column; on the right side, you'll write your lecture notes.

**3. Make a Summary Section** - Draw a horizontal line 2 inches from the bottom of the page. This section will be used to summarize the whole page of notes in your own words.

**4. After Lecture** - Review your notes, then write down key phrases related to the material in that section. These "cues" will be the words that trigger your memory about the details of your notes.

**5. After Review** - Test yourself by covering the lecture side of your notes to see whether you can recall the important parts of your notes from the cues in the "recall" column.

**6. Continue** - Continue testing yourself by using the "recall" column cues until you can recall all the important details of your notes.



**Below Is an Example of the Cornell System:**

<b>(Recall Column)</b>	<b>(Notes Column)</b>
3 periods of English	<i>Early History of the English Language</i> English Language Time Periods - Old English mid 5th C. up to 1100 - Middle English 1100 - 1500 - Modern English 1500 - present
2 original peoples	<i>English in Britain</i> - Original Inhabitants - Britains (Celtic) - Picts (non-Indo-European) >lived in the North
3 invading peoples	<i>Invasions Brought New People and Languages</i> - Angles - settled on N. 2/3 of Eng. - called it Anglaland - Saxons - settled on S. 1/3 of Eng. - Jutes - settled in Kent, Hampshire, Isle of Wight
gained control in __yr	! - took these tribes 150yrs. to gain tot. control of England
<b>(SUMMARY SECTION)</b>	The English language has an ancient history that has not only evolved from the original inhabitants' language but was also shaped by invading tribes from throughout Europe.

Taken from Success, Your Style! Right & Left-Brain Techniques for Learning by Matte and Henderson

**STRATEGIES FOR GOOD NOTETAKING**

*These strategies will help you to write effective lecture notes and help you review your notes so they will continue to help you.*

**Developing Good Recording Skills**

**1. Preview the Material Before the Lecture** - You will understand the meaning of key concepts and terms, plus have a good overview of the main subject of the lecture.

**2. Use Pictures and Diagrams** - Copy all the diagrams written on the board and invent your own to help you visualize different terms and how they fit together.

**3. Use a Lost Signal** - If you're not understanding the material completely, continue to take notes and mark that section of the page with a cue, like a question mark for example, to remind you to get a clarification later.



**4. Date, Number, and Label Your Notes** - Keeping your note pages organized saves time and reminds you of the order in which the material was presented.

**5. Add Textbook Notes** - Take notes while you read your text, just as you would during a lecture. Add your lecture notes to your text notes to get a bigger picture of the subject.

**6. Write Terse!** - Don't try to write down complete sentences; instead, paraphrase sentences into short phrases.

**7. Use Shortcuts and Abbreviations** - See the enclosed list of commonly used shortcuts or develop your own if you have frequently used technical or scientific terms. Keep some reference of your symbols so you don't forget!

**8. Re-Write Messies!** - If your notes are messy, re-write any words that are hard to read as soon as possible after class. If all your writing is messy, you may need to write more slowly, even if it means writing less.

**9. Consider a Tape Recorder** - *not as a substitute for note-taking*, but as a way to review and augment notes. Commuters often take advantage of drive time to listen to cassettes of lectures while they drive.

Taken from College Study Skills: Becoming a Strategic Learner, by Dianna L. Van Blerkom

## MORE STRATEGIES FOR GOOD NOTETAKING

*After finding a notetaking style that makes it possible for you to take effective notes, you will need to find the best way to review your notes so that they will continue to help you learn.*

### Developing Good Reviewing Skills

**Identify Missed Information** - Was there something you didn't get a chance to write down? As soon as possible after class, consult your instructor or a classmate and fill in the gaps that you missed. If you missed an entire class, make sure you know someone that is willing to lend you her/his notes to copy.

**Clarify** - If you and your instructor have time after class, ask her or him to explain what you didn't understand, then clarify your notes so that they make sense. Time may only allow a brief explanation, so if you need more help, use your textbook or meet with a tutor to get a better clarification.

**Check for Errors** - If you see something that looks like it's incorrect, check with your instructor, a classmate, and/or your textbook.

**Add Recall Cues** - If you use the Cornell system, use the "recall" column to add key words that can be used to test yourself later. This is done by condensing the concept of your notes into a key word or phrase, or into short questions.



**Review Soon!** - This suggestion can save you hours of re-learning material. Review your notes later the same day for at least ten minutes to transfer as much information as possible into your long-term memory.

**Review Later!** - About once a week, review all your notes for the course even if you don't have an exam scheduled. Trying to re-learn a lot of material just before finals doesn't work!

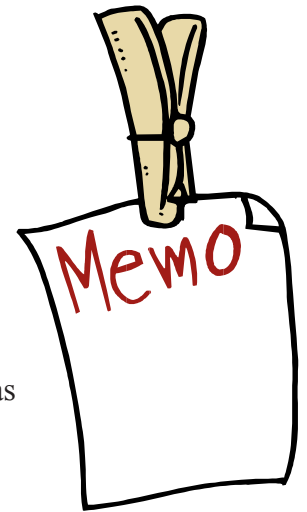
## USING ABBREVIATIONS, SHORTCUTS, AND SYMBOLS

Here is a list of abbreviations, shortcuts, and symbols for terms and phrases that you will commonly see in textbooks and hear in lectures. Using these shortcuts can help you get the most from your lecture notes and help you to better keep pace with your instructor.

yr. = year  
infor. = information  
re: = regarding  
nec. = necessary  
ea. - each  
pt. = point  
prin. = principal  
inc. = incomplete  
incl. = including  
sp. = spelling  
amt. = amount  
def. = definition  
log. = logic  
chap. = chapter  
p. = page  
ex. = example  
subj. = subject  
approx. = approximate

fem. = feminine  
masc. = masculine  
pos. = positive  
neg. = negative  
incr. = increase  
decr. = decrease  
maj. = majority  
min. = minimum  
max. = maximum  
sig. = significant  
orig. = original  
co. = company  
w/ = with  
w/o = without  
intro. = introduction  
thru = through  
i.e. = that is; in other words  
etc. = and so on

+ = plus, positive  
- = minus, negative  
= = equal to  
ref. = refers to  
< = less than  
> = greater than  
Q. = question  
ans. = answer  
ARO = as a result of  
AKA = also known as  
rel. = relatively  
vs. = versus  
Am. = American  
dept. = department  
lg. = large  
concl. = conclusion



?

### SYMBOLS AND CUES TO USE IN “CUE COLUMN”:


Use when you don't fully understand a concept or term. This will cue you to get a clarification from your instructor later, or to review your text for a clarification.

\*

Use asterisks, arrows, or stars when an instructor emphasizes a particular term or phrase. This cue is a reminder that the term has more importance than the rest of your notes.

**TEST  
FINAL**

Use when your instructor indicates that you may see an exam question on that material. This is an excellent cue because it reminds you exactly what you need to study and review for your exams.

<b><u>CUE COLUMN</u></b>	<b><u>NOTETAKING COLUMN</u></b>
Reduce ideas and facts to concise words and phrases.	Record the lecture as fully and meaningful as possible. Use telegraphic sentences.
	<b>September 5, 2007 - Notetaking 101</b>
Notetaking Tips	A. Notetaking tips
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Get to class early. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- sit in the front</li> <li>- take notes during whole lecture</li> </ul> </li> </ol>
Taking Notes	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2. Taking notes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- use your own words</li> <li>- do what is easiest and fastest</li> </ul> </li> </ol>
Alert	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3. Be alert for cues. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- listen for cue words</li> <li>- “important”</li> <li>- “you’ll see this later”</li> </ul> </li> </ol>
	
Symbols	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>4. Use symbols. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- asterisks</li> <li>- arrows</li> <li>- stars</li> </ul> </li> </ol>
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>5. Record examples.</li> </ol>
Examples	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>6. Write on one side of the paper.</li> </ol>
Write Date	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>7. Always write on the top of your sheet the course name and date.</li> </ol>
Pre-read	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>8. Pre-reading the textbook chapter will help you to anticipate the lecturer’s points and follow the topic being discussed.</li> </ol>