

3 Pass Approach To Taking Notes in College

Note taking is a three-step process. In order to take notes effectively you must prepare before, during, and after class.

1) Before Class:

- **Read the assigned reading**
 - In college, the lectures do not necessarily repeat what you have read in the book. Rather, it expands on what you should have read. Professors will often assume you have done the reading and use terms, ideas, and explanations related to the readings. Give yourself an advantage in class, and do the readings!
- **Review previous notes**
 - Warm up your brain by rereading what you have written previously. If you still cannot understand the material, this gives you time to ask your professor questions *before* the lecture for the day begins. Move information from your short-term memory to your long-term memory by reviewing your notes.
- **Develop a mindset for listening**
 - This can be tough, especially for college students. Not enough sleep, hunger, or other important events can easily cloud your mind and may not allow you to focus on the immediate lecture. Try to focus your mind and concentrate, you will get more information out of the lecture and you'll be more likely to catch important details.

2) During Class:

- **Choose the right seat**
 - Research has shown that people who sit toward the front of the classroom are less distracted and more engaged in class discussion. The closer to the front you sit, the more information you are likely to absorb and understand.
- **Listen for repetition and examples**
 - Often when a professor wishes to emphasize a point or idea strongly, he or she will repeat a sentence or phrase with that point or idea in it. This is a cue to you that this is an important piece of information. Listen for phrases such as "It is important to remember..." to give you more verbal clues. It is also helpful to write any examples the professor may give to help you understand the important concepts.
- **Do not be afraid to ask questions!**
 - Just as with the assigned readings, professors assume that you know and understand the information if you do not ask questions. There are no foolish questions! It is the professor's job to be sure you understand. Whether you ask before, during, or after class, make sure you understand the material and speak up when you do not.

3) After Class:

- **Review your notes (again!)**
 - After twenty-four hours, most new information has left your brain. In order to prevent this, make sure you review your notes to help you understand and prepare for the next lecture. Be sure to identify emerging themes over the course of several lectures to help prepare for the next test. This will be a worthwhile investment in your classroom success.
- **Align your notes with the text**
 - Keep your notes and the text material in your long-term memory by reviewing them together. Writing down the page numbers next to the appropriate note can help keep your notes organized. Edit your notes, label main points, add recall clues, and write questions that need answers in order to make the studying processes smoother.

Other Tips:

- **Use your tests**
 - The kind of material emphasized on the first test will be emphasized on future tests. Were you prepared enough? Did you have all the relevant and correct information in your notes? The first test will allow you to determine what kind of information to note in the future as well as determine what style of note taking will work for this class.
- **Develop your own abbreviations and symbols**
 - Your own abbreviations and symbols will help you to write notes quickly and keep them organized, as you understand them. If you can indicate common items while you write, you can better focus on the lecture. For example, use a question mark to indicate that you want to explore the topic further and use a star to indicate what may be on the next test.
- **Make friends!**
 - Having a reliable source to compare your notes and tests can be invaluable to a student's success. Other students can help you catch up on your notes if you miss a class. You can also go over lecture notes together to see the various areas that your partner deemed important versus what you deemed important and you can then discuss the differences.