Note-Taking

GO TO CLASS PREPARED
- Have a strategy and system to stay organized. Get a three ring binder or notebook to keep notes and handouts in the correct order.
- Bring highlighters to class. Instructors will frequently make comments like, “This is an important concept. Make sure you understand this.” These are clues that this will likely be on an exam. Highlighting these notes will help remind you later that this is definitely something you need to know.
- Read assigned material and previous notes before class.
- Make notations about material or concepts you do not understand.
- Look up vocabulary words that are unfamiliar to you. You will have a better understanding of what the instructor is lecturing about which will allow you to better decipher the more important points of the lecture.

PAY CLOSE ATTENTION TO CONTENT
Include the following in your notes:
- Main points and clear details that make sense to you - sufficient to complete full understanding
- Details, facts, or explanations that expand or explain the main points that are mentioned; use examples
- Definitions, word for word
- Enumerations or lists of things that are discussed
- Material written on the chalkboard or on a transparency, including drawings or charts
- Information that is repeated or spelled out

REVIEW AND EDIT YOUR NOTES
- It is extremely important to review your notes within 24 hours.
- Edit for words and phrases that are illegible or do not make sense. Write out abbreviated words that might be unclear later.
- Edit with a different colored pen to distinguish between what you wrote in class and what you filled in later.
- Fill in key words and questions in the left-hand column.
- Note anything you do not understand by underlining or highlighting to remind you to ask the instructor.
- Compare your notes with the textbook reading and fill in important details in the blank spaces you left.
- Consider rewriting or typing up your notes.

IMPROVE YOUR LISTENING SKILLS
- Start by entering the classroom with a positive attitude. Going to class thinking, “This is the last place I want to be today” only sets the stage for unattentive listening. Approaching lectures with a positive attitude allows you to be open-minded and get the most out of the information presented.
- Make a conscious effort to pay attention. Concentrate on concentrating. Without concentration there is no focus, and without focus there is no learning.
- Adapt to whatever direction a lecture takes. When a lecture takes an unexpected detour (a student asks a question you aren’t particularly interested in) fight the tendency to “zone out”. Before you know it, the lecture will be back on track.
- Don’t text in Class!

DEVELOP A NOTE-TAKING METHOD THAT WORKS FOR YOU
- Fine-tune the structure, organize your notes to increase your note-taking speed and comprehension later.
- Start each new lecture on a new page, date and number each page. The sequence of material is important!
- Write on one side of the paper only. You can set them side-by-side for easier reviewing when studying for an exam.
- Leave blank spaces, add comments or note questions later.
- Make your notes brief, capture the most important points.
- Develop a system of abbreviations or symbols you can use wherever possible.
- Note all unfamiliar vocabulary or concepts you don’t understand. This reminds you to look them up later.