Note Taking Strategies

Consider your options.

Laptop or paper and pen? Typing is often faster, allows easier editing, can be accessed through multiple locations or devices. Handwriting can allow for easier creation of diagrams and illustrations, and can be better for comprehension and retention. If going digital, which note taking app or word processor should you use? Play around with different strategies and softwares like Microsoft OneNote, Evernote, or Milanote, which all incorporate multiple styles of learning.

Develop a system.

Your brain craves routine, so finding a good one for notetaking will set you up for success. For example, don't wait until the lecture starts to get your orienting information (date, class, topic, etc.) down. Take some time before the week begins to set up your notetaking space for the coming week so that when you get to class, you're ready to start taking notes as soon as the lecturer starts.

Be prepared.

Preview your text or reading assignments prior to lecture. Previewing allows you to identify main ideas and concepts that will most likely be discussed during the lecture. Look at your course syllabus so that you know the topic/focus of the class and what's going to be important to focus on. Briefly review notes from previous class sessions to help you situate the new ideas you'll learn in this class. Keep organized to help you find information more easily later. Title your page with the class name and date. Keep separate notebook sections or notebooks for each class and keep all notes for each class together in one space, in chronological order.

Don't just write word-for-word.

Record questions and thoughts you have or content that is confusing to you that you want to follow-up on later or ask your professor about. Jot down keywords, dates, names, etc. that you can then go back and define or explain later.

Determine what's important enough to write down.

There is no right format to use when taking notes. Rather, there are many different structures and styles that can be used. What's important is that you find a method that works for you and encourages the use of good note-taking qualities and stick with it. Here are a few types of formats that you may want to experiment with:

- Cornell Notes
- Flowchart/Concept Maps
- Charting Method
- Sentence Method

More information on each method can be found here: **https://www.oxfordlearning.com/5-effective-note-taking-methods/**

Follow up after class.

Part of good note-taking includes revisiting your notes a day or so after class. During this time, check for clarity, fill in definitions of key terms, organize, and figure out any concepts you may have missed or not fully understood in class. Figure out what may be missing and what you may need to add or even ask about. Utilize your instructor's office hours, a study group, self-testing strategies, or rewrite your notes in order to reinforce your learning.