GENERAL NOTETAKING GUIDELINES

Class notes from lectures and discussions will usually be your best source of help for understanding course material and for deciding what you should study when you prepare for tests and examinations. During classes, teachers may give you the following information:

1. Hints about what you should learn when you study for tests.
2. Explanations that will help you understand complicated materials.
3. Important information to learn that is not printed in course reading materials.

Make some notes that will help you remember what the said professor, but do not copy verbatim every word that is spoken. In your own words, summarize the main ideas and key facts in a few brief, logical phrases. The following are clues and cues used by lecturers and teachers to enable you to listen successfully for main ideas and supporting details in lectures:

CLUE:

1. Voice change--louder.
2. Rate change--slower.
3. Pointing with finger for emphasis.
4. Hitting a flat surface for emphasis.
5. Writing on board for emphasis--anything written on the board should be copied.
6. Repetition of facts--If it bears repeating, it bears writing it down.

WORD CUES:

A. Main ideas:
   The main point is…
   Note this…
   Remember this…
   The uses are…

B. Supporting details:
   Besides…
   Furthermore…
   Moreover…
   Likewise…
   In addition…
   Detail is…

C. Summary:
   Finally…
   In conclusion…
MAKING NOTES INSTEAD OF TAKING NOTES

You must have good class notes to prepare efficiently for tests. Studies of successful students’ class notes suggest the following techniques:

1. Use a notebook with standard, loose-leaf paper that measures 8½ by 11 inches. Divide your notebook into sections -- one section for each course.

2. Use a **pen** -- *never a pencil* (except for math and science). Write *legibly*.

3. Begin each day’s notes with a heading that includes the name or number of the course, the instructor’s name, the date, and the topic of the day.

4. **Write only on one side of the page.** Leave a margin at the top of the page and write assignments and other important information there.

5. Use white space effectively -- separate topics, leave margins. Use only the **right 3/4 of the page** (the Cornell format). Right after the lecture or as soon as possible, write down the main points, questions, and cue words in the **left-hand column**.

6. Organize notes so major thoughts stand out clearly. Use *asterisks* and underlining to emphasize significant information.

7. List supporting details in an orderly manner under major thoughts. Include examples, charts, definitions, graphs, tables, and formulas in your notes.

8. Listen for clues of what the instructor thinks is important. If the instructor stresses specific pieces of information, **write them down**. Also copy what the instructor writes on the board or overhead.

9. **Summarize** what instructors say rather than trying to write everything they say word for word.

10. Leave blanks for information you missed and talk with the instructor after class to clarify your questions. Fill in the ______ later.

11. Define difficult vocabulary. Use correct spelling -- if unsure, find out.

12. Take consistent notes throughout the **entire** class period.

13. Review your notes right after you make them -- the same day if possible. Cover the right-hand section of your notes, and see if you can recite the notes in your own words when they are covered up. If you can, you know them. If you cannot, this is the best time to learn them. Review as often as you need to until exam time.

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