

## Notes: A How-To Guide

Note-taking is a big part of the college classroom experience, and having a good set of notes is just as important when it comes to testing as what you've learned. Although some students may see note-taking as a simplistic task, a good set of notes takes more than just writing down what is on the board or what the teacher is saying. A proper set of notes can drastically change your learning experience and your success in the classroom. Here are some tips for you to improve your note-taking skills:

- **Make Them Your Own!**

Notes aren't meant to be word for word transcripts of what your teacher says in class or an easy print-out of PowerPoint presentations. They should instead be a way for you to make your own meaningful connections among the information you're given. Try to take notes of what your teacher is saying in your own words so you'll be better able to understand them when you're looking over them later.

- **Write and Rewrite!**

Your note-taking doesn't end when class does. The best way to really understand your notes is to go over them multiple times. Insert information you have that might connect important ideas in your mind. This gives you a time to focus exclusively on your notes and make sure that the information makes sense to you.

- **Organize Them!**

Once you've written your notes effectively, always make sure to organize and annotate them in order to help you connect key ideas. Underline, highlight, create a concept map, or do whatever works for you to understand the notes in a cohesive manner, not just memorizing the information for a test.

- **Use Them in Class!**

Notes aren't just useful for test information; they can also help with discussions and class assignments. Use your notes to find information when your teacher is asking questions or leading a discussion. This will give you practice on using the information in critical thinking processes, making you better able to use these skills for tests and, more importantly, real life situations.

- **Don't "Go Over" Notes, Get Into Them!**

When preparing for a test, try not to go into your studying by memorizing your notes. Dig into them and try to think critically with them. Study in a group, with everyone using their notes to discuss and make new connections. After all, the test is not the final goal; the final goal is being able to use this information in real-life contexts.