

Better Notes for Better Grades

Why Take Notes?

Lecture notes will help you make sense of your textbook, figure out what your instructor thinks is important, and focus your studying for tests.

When Should I Take Notes?

Pretty much anytime you're doing something class-related. Take notes:

- When your instructor is lecturing.
- When other students are giving presentations.
- During class discussions.
- When you watch films for class.

How Do I Know What to Note?

Never write down every word! Focus on recognizing the main ideas:

- Pre-read the chapters lecture will cover, then listen for keywords you remember from your pre-reading.
- Watch for signs of emphasis in your instructor's gestures or tone of voice.
- Prepare for class physically (bring your book, pen, & notebook); emotionally (let go of outside drama); & mentally (pre-read & review your old notes before class).

What else should I note?

- Both the "what" and the "what about it."
- How events/examples fit into (or contradict) the larger ideas.
- Possible questions or concepts that you're told will be on the test.
- Assignments & deadlines.
- Anything the instructor writes, diagrams, draws, or otherwise emphasizes.

How Do I Write My Notes?

- Use two-column note taking or outlines or both.
- The only one who has to read your notes is you! Use symbols & abbreviations whenever possible. Invent your own shorthand! Keep up with the lecture.
- Leave blanks if you need to. Fill them in as soon as you can after class.

What Do I Do With My Notes Once I Have Them?

- Review them as soon as possible after class.
- Use them when you study the textbook.
- Use them to quiz yourself to prepare for an exam.
- Each week, spend 20 min. per class reviewing all your notes for the week.

Here's a sample of how you might take effective notes during lecture. The example uses the Two Column (or Cornell) Note-Taking System with outlining and abbreviations. You can either draw a line down your paper (about 1/3 of paper in left column, 2/3 in right column) or fold the paper to create a line. Record your notes in the right side during class—use lots of spacing and indenting to help yourself. Later, use the left column for key words that describe the information in the right column.

Lecture: “Each of the three major world religions, by which I mean the three religions who have the largest numbers of followers worldwide, are what? Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. As expected, each has its own defining characteristics that separate it from the others. Which is why some of you may be unaware of how much these faith-based systems have in common. They share not only some of the same key figures, people who shaped the faiths, but also some very similar texts and tenets.

While Christians base their belief (in varying degrees) in the words of the Bible, Islam uses the Koran, and Judaic study is centered in the Torah. Three different texts, formed when, at some point early in the religion’s development, different, smaller writings (we usually call these “books”—the book of Job, the book of Genesis, and so forth)—anyhow when these smaller books were grouped into a larger sort of anthology.”

Your Notes:

World Religions Class 01/01/10 p 1

The 3 major world religions	(lgst # of follwrs wrldwd)
	--Christianity
	--Islam
	--Judaism

Common elements	key fig.'s, txts, blfs
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(#1) = texts	--Bible (Chr'y)
	--Koran (Islm)
	--Torah (Jud'm)
	All made by grpg tog. smllr txts (“bks”)

Study by folding the notes page onto itself lengthwise so that only the left column shows. Then try to recall (by writing or reciting) as many details (right-column entries) of the topics (left-column entries) as possible, item by item. You should do this reviewing at least weekly.

*Check the schedule for our workshop on this topic!
The El Centro College Learning Center, Rising Star, and TRIO
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