Take Good Notes

Taking notes in class helps you stay focused on the information being presented. And because tests usually cover material that's been discussed in class, having good notes to study from can significantly improve your test grades.

Get Ready

Create a notetaking system
Whether you use three-ring notebooks, binders, or spiral notebooks for your class notes, the important thing is that you have a system for organizing your notes that works for you.

Format your notes
▶ Start a new page for each day and class. At the top of the page, write the name of the class, date, page number, and the topic of your notes.

▶ Use only one side of the paper and skip lines between ideas/topics. This will give you space if you want to add something later.
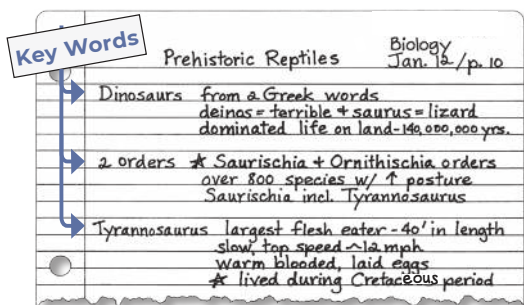
Be an active listener
When you're actively listening in class, you aren't just hearing the words; you are also thinking about and trying to understand the information that's being presented.

Teachers often give verbal cues so you'll know what information they think is important. Listen for these cues: louder or slower speech, repeating information, phrases like "the main point."
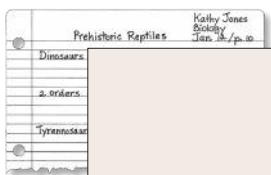
Use Key Words

Leave a wide space or margin on the left side of each page. As you're taking notes, listen for **key words** (topics, people, places, events). When you hear a key word, write it in the left-hand margin. Key words help you organize your thoughts, and they make your notes easier to understand.

Use key words to study for tests

When you're studying for a test, cover up the right side of your notes, look at each key word, and test yourself to see what you can remember about that topic, place, person, or event. Uncover your notes to see what information you got wrong or missed.

Go Over Your Notes

While the information is still fresh in your mind, take a few minutes to go over your notes.

- ▶ Make sure key words are written in the left-hand margins.
- ▶ Rewrite anything that's confusing.
- ▶ Fill in any missing information.
- ▶ Highlight the most important information.

Of course, as you're going over your notes, you are also "locking" the information in your memory.