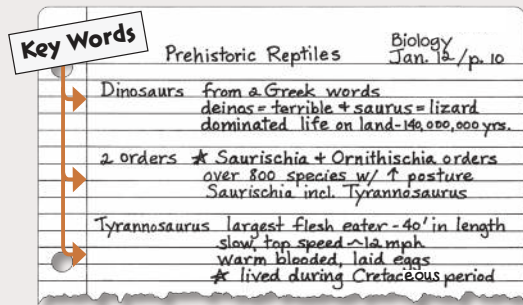Using key words (topics, people, events) in your notes will help you organize your thoughts and make your notes easier to understand.
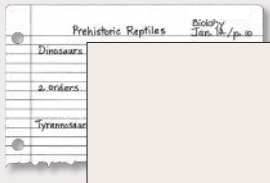
Leave a margin for key words

Leave a wide space or margin on the left side of each page. As you're taking notes, write key words in the left-hand margin.

Key Words

Prehistoric Reptiles   Biology
                              Jan. 12 /p. 10

Dinosaurs   from a Greek words
            deinos = terrible + saurus = lizard
            dominated life on land-140,000,000 yrs.

2 orders ★ Saurischia + Ornithischia orders
            over 800 species w/ ↑ posture
            Saurischia incl. Tyrannosaurus

Tyrannosaurus largest flesh eater - 40' in length
            slow, top speed ~12 mph
            warm blooded, laid eggs
            ★ lived during Cretaceous period

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 missed or got wrong.

Your class notes are your best test prep resource. It's therefore important that you have good notes to study from.

To take notes faster, use abbreviations and symbols, and don't worry about punctuation, spelling, or grammar.

=	same or equal	★	most importantly
≠	not equal	∴	therefore
>	greater than	w	with
<	less than	w/o	without
~	approximately	b/c	because
↑	up or increasing	esp	especially
↓	down or decreasing	v	very

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 missing information.

▸ Highlight the most important information.

Studies have shown that about 50% of what a person hears is forgotten in 20 minutes. Listening in class isn't enough. You need to write down the information you want to remember!

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Classroom Success InfoGuide
Taking Notes
www.woodburnpress.com

Taking Notes

Tips and strategies to help you take better class notes

Taking Notes

► Do you usually take too many notes? Not enough?

► Do you have a hard time knowing what to write down?

► Are your notes disorganized, confusing, or difficult to read?

► Do you wish you had a better notetaking system?

If you answered "Yes" to any of the above, now is the time to work on improving your notetaking skills.

Taking notes increases your focus

You can think much faster than anyone can talk. This is one of the reasons your mind sometimes wanders when you are listening to a lecture. When you're taking notes, your mind doesn't have time to think about anything else. *Taking notes, therefore, helps you stay focused on the material being presented.*

Good notes can improve your test scores

Because tests usually cover material that's been presented in class, having good notes to study from can significantly improve your test grades.

Have a Notetaking System

Develop a notetaking system that works for you. Here are some suggestions.

Use three-ring notebooks / binders

Have a three-ring notebook or binder for each subject, or a larger notebook with tabs for multiple subjects.

Using three-ring notebooks or binders for class notes makes it easy to hole punch and insert handouts and copies of notes where they belong. And when studying for a test, you can take your notes out of your notebook and spread the pages out.

Whether you use spiral notebooks, binders, or three-ring 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.

► Leave a wide margin on the left side of each page for key words (e.g., people, places, topics, events).

Develop Your Listening Skills

In order to take good notes, you need to have good listening skills.

Be an active listener

Imagine this scene: You're listening to music and a new song by your favorite artist comes on. You stop what you're doing and listen carefully. You want to hear every word so that you can understand the meaning of the lyrics.

In this scene, you went from passive listening to active listening. When you're actively listening in class, you aren't just hearing the words; you're also thinking about and trying to understand the information that's being presented. *You must be an active listener in order to take good notes.*

Recognize important information

To take good notes, you must be able to identify the information that's most important. If you listen carefully, you'll find that teachers often give verbal clues telling you what information they believe to be the most important.

To help you recognize important information, listen for the following:

► louder or slower speech
► information that's repeated
► phrases such as "the main point"