

Tips for Effective Note-taking and Organization

- Review notes from the previous class (or classes).
- Know the topic of the lecture and review the objectives.
- Divide binders into subjects, and subjects into subtopics.
- Write the date and the topic on every page including handouts.
- Write notes legibly, in point form, in your own words.
- Divide your page into 3rds... 1/3 class notes, 1/3 notes from text, 1/3 summary of key points (see Margin Method on page 42).
- Listen actively and critically. Constantly question, conclude and summarize what is being said.
- Review notes, adding information and examples.
- Hole punch all handouts and put them into the binder with class notes.
- Add diagrams and flow charts to notes.
- Underline or highlight key words.

Binder Organization Checklist

- The date is written at the top of each page (notes and handouts).
- Notes are legible.
- Keywords (e.g. definitions, headings, names, etc.) are underlined or highlighted.
- Abbreviations and symbols are used.
- All notes are in chronological order.
- Handouts are included in the appropriate place.
- Dividers are used between subjects.
- Post-it flags divide topics and mark important information.
- Diagrams and examples are included when appropriate.
- Unclear or confusing information is marked with a question mark.

Strategies for Effective Note-taking

Before class:

- Review class notes from previous lectures.
- Consult the class schedule/outline to find the topic and/or objectives of the day's lecture.
- Complete any required reading.
- Organize your binders into subjects and divide the subjects into topics. Post-it flags are a great tool for dividing notes into topics.

Note-taking is made easier when you have an understanding of the concepts that the teacher/lecturer is going to cover before class. Preparing for class ahead of time is like looking at a map before you leave on a road trip. It is important to know where you're going before you head off on the highway.

During class:

- Listen attentively. This means that you focus on what the teacher is saying by avoiding distractions, maintaining eye contact with the speaker, and writing down important information.
- Summarize important information in point form. Few people can write everything that the speaker is saying (and it is not usually necessary). Focus on key points only, writing notes in point form in blue or black ink. Use abbreviations.
- Use the Margin Method of Note-taking described later in this section.
- When writing notes, be sure to include:
 1. Subject and date at the top of **each page**
 2. Main ideas
 3. Symbols
 4. Flow charts, diagrams, and examples.

Continued ...

After Class:

- Review notes and add any details that you may have missed during class.
- If notes are unclear, mark information with a flag so that you can clarify it later by consulting your text or by asking a classmate or teacher.
- Underline key words and headings with a colored pen. Add color to diagrams.
- Add diagrams, concept maps and flowcharts where you feel they will help you understand the information. Post-it notes can be used to add information directly into notes. If you are using the Margin Method, add information onto the column on the right side of the page.
- Keep notes in chronological order in a binder. Write a date on all handouts and add them to your notes.
- If you are unable to take complete notes during class, ask a classmate for a copy of his/her notes.
- You may find that rewriting your notes is helpful because it allows you to review and expand upon your written information, or make your information more concise. Revise and organize while you rewrite. Verbatim rewriting of notes is not good use of study time.

Common Symbols and Abbreviations

= same or equal	↑ up or increasing	w with
≠ not equal	↓ down or decreasing	w/o without
> greater than	→ resulting in	w/in within
< less than	* most importantly	b/c because
~ approximately	e.g. example	V very
# number	i.e. that is	esp especially

Perhaps the most useful abbreviations are those you create for yourself. Be certain to write the term in full along with its abbreviation the first time you use it, so that you can remember what the abbreviation means when you are studying from your notes later.

Example of notes:

April 18, 2005

Canine Parvo Virus

Clinical Signs:

- Gastroenteritis (destroyed intestinal villi):
 - Lethargy, anorexia, vomiting accompanied by diarrhea.
 - Often severe, water hose diarrhea, typically containing blood and mucus.
 - Rapid dehydration is a serious consequence, shock; untreated dogs can die within hours of onset of clinical signs. →
 - Signs of shock due to dehydration:
 - Pale mucus membranes (gums and eyes)
 - Sunken eyes
 - Cold extremities
 - Skin tents- loss of elasticity
 - Rapid but weak pulse
 - Weakness progressing to ataxia, unresponsiveness, coma, death.

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Margin Method

The Margin Method is an effective note-taking format. It involves dividing your page into three sections as illustrated below.

<u>Date</u>	<u>Topic of Lecture</u>	Additional information is added here after class:
Key words are summarized here	Class notes are written here. -in point form -in your own words -using abbreviations	-notes from your text -examples -diagrams, flow charts

Example of the Margin Method of note-taking:

Jan. 8, 2004	<u>Types of Muscles</u>	
3 kinds muscle	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Body contains 3 kinds of muscles: <u>skeletal</u>, <u>smooth</u> & <u>cardiac</u>. <li style="padding-left: 20px;">1. <u>Skeletal</u> 	
Skeletal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most muscle attaches to bones of skeleton. Contractions of skeletal muscle exert force on bones and move them. 	
Muscle contractions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Skeletal muscles- responsible for movement- voluntary muscles (controlled by conscious desires and by unconscious). 	
Voluntary muscles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regulated by signals transmitted by the nervous system (somatic nervous system). 	
Striped appearance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Under microscope, light and dark bands give the muscle a striped appearance. 	

Test Yourself: Using the Margin Method, you can study by folding your page back at the left margin so that the key words are hidden from main notes (or you can simply cover up the notes). Test yourself by trying to explain the meaning of the key word without referring back to the notes. If you cannot do this, you need to spend more time reviewing. You may need to implement other strategies as well.

Mind Mapping

Mind mapping is an alternate form of note-taking where information is written in a less linear format. This type of note-taking allows students to make better connections between ideas so that the relationships between concepts are more apparent. The example notes on Types of Muscles from the previous page were written using the mind mapping technique.

