

wide-margin notes

reading and listening

Make It Happen:

time management
 concentration
reading
listening
 memory
 taking tests
 writing papers
 self-regulation
 learning styles
 motivation

The most effective note-taking system is one that allows you to take notes in a format that best suits the class and encourages you to engage with the information during your review. Leaving a wide margin for your notes allows you to add information later and also allows you to use the notes as a study tool when it comes time for review. Wide margin notes can be used for reading or lecture notes.

Steps for Wide-Margin Notes

1. Leave a 2 ½ inch margin and take your notes as usual, using phrases instead of complete sentences, abbreviations, and symbols.
2. When class is finished, use the margin to write “reminder” questions or key phrases next to the related material in the notes. You can also underline key phrases in your notes.
3. To review, cover up the notes and try to recall the material using the question or key phrase in the margin. Then check your answer against your notes.

Other Note-Taking Tips

- Leave lots of white space in your notes in order to add more information from future lectures or clarify points you may have missed.
- Be sure to write the date and class on every page of notes.
- Listen for verbal and non-verbal cues that a point is important—and then designate that in some way in your notes.
- Listen for organizational cues to help guide your note-taking. “The four stages of...” or “Three reasons why” or “Therefore...”
- Create a symbol or cue to designate your thoughts from the lecturer’s.
- Highlight assignments or discussions of assignments in your notes so you can easily find them.

Now that you've mastered note-taking during lectures, open your text book and try these skills while reading. For help with reading strategies, visit the Center for Learning.

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Your notes could like something like this:

good for discussion in class

| | Date | Page # |
|------------------|------------------------------------|--------|
| writer's thought | Professor: _____ _____ | |
| | Student: _____ _____ | |
| writer's thought | Professor: _____ Student: _____ | |
| | Professor: _____ | etc. |

OR

good for running notes (to organize later)

| | Date | Page # |
|--------------------|---------------------------|--------|
| important point: | • _____ _____ _____ | |
| clarify this idea: | • _____ _____ _____ | etc. |

OR

good for an organized lecture

| | Date | Page # |
|----------------------|---|--------|
| this is on the test: | 1. _____ a. _____ b. _____ | |
| | 2. _____ | |
| | 3. _____ a. _____ i. _____ ii. _____ | |
| see page # in text: | b. _____ | etc. |

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