

# Improving your Note-taking Strategies

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College Success Workshop

**The need to take down information skillfully does not end when you receive your diploma.**

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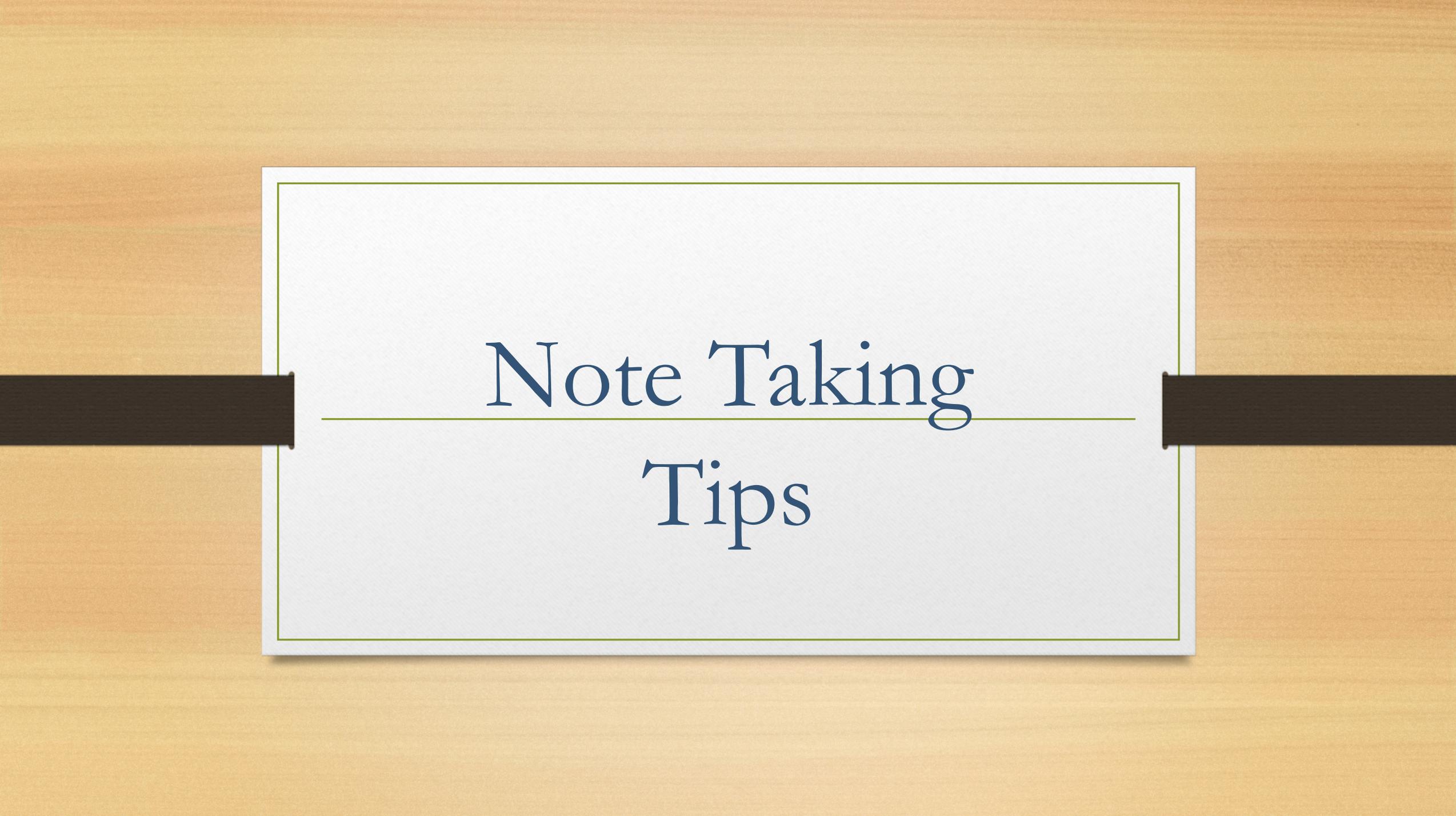
Taking good notes is *extremely* important:

- On the job
- At meetings
- Operating equipment
- When taking phone messages

# Why Take Notes in Class?

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- Organized notes will help you identify the core of important ideas in the presentation.
- A permanent record will help you to learn and remember later.
- The underlying organization and purpose of the presentation will become clear through note-taking.
- The presentation may contain information not available anywhere else. This will be your only chance to learn it.
- The presentation is where you learn what your instructor thinks is important.
- Class assignments are usually given in the presentation.



# Note Taking

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## Tips

# Three Simple Steps

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- Successful note taking can be accomplished in three simple steps:
  1. **BEFORE** Class Session
  2. **DURING** Class Session
  3. **AFTER** Class Session

# Prepare Before the Presentation

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- Familiarize yourself with the topic. Note-taking is easier if you are familiar with the presentation topic, key ideas and terminology, and the basic patterns of the content.
- Read related text assignments in advance. This can help you improve your comprehension of the presentation.
- Review the previous day's class notes before you to the next class.

# Also, Before the Presentation...

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- Make sure you're well-rested.
- Make sure your pens/pencils "work."
- Buy sufficient supplies.
- Separate notebooks for separate subjects.



# Take Good Notes During the Presentation...

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- Sit where you can see/hear well. Get used to sitting in the same place, preferably near the front of the room.
- Use ink and write/print legibly.
- Date each days notes.
- Take notes during, not after, the lecture.
- Use your own abbreviation system.
- Leave a margin on the side of your note pages to write symbols/indicate key words/ideas.

# Things to Avoid

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- Daydreaming
- Disregarding information if you disagree
- Outlining everything said
- Yielding to distractions



# Sharpening Your Listening Skills

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- Focus on **content**, not delivery
- Focus on **ideas**, not facts.
- Listen carefully to the speaker's opening comments
- Attempt to understand the lecturer's purpose.
- Treat listening as a challenging mental task.

# During the Presentation...

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- Listen for what the instructor emphasizes.
  - **Identify Main Ideas:**
    - Repeated ideas
    - Change of voice
    - Change in rate of speech
    - Listing and numbering points
    - Writing on the chalkboard
    - Direct announcements
    - Nonverbal cues

# Listen for Signal Words & Concepts

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- **Signals for main thoughts...**
  - “There are three reasons why...”
  - “First...Second...Third...”
  - “And most important...”
  - “A major development...”
- **Signals for supporting materials...**
  - “On the other hand...”
  - “As an example...”
  - “Further...”
  - “For example...”
  - “Similarly...”
  - “In contrast...”
  - “Furthermore...”
- **Signals for concluding thoughts...**
  - “Therefore...”
  - “In conclusion...”
  - “As a result...”
  - “Finally...”
  - “In summary...”
- **Signals of importance...**
  - “Now this is important...”
  - “Remember that...”
  - “The important idea is that...”
  - “The basic concept here is ...”

# Take Good Notes During the Presentation

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- **Copy anything** the instructor writes on the board.
- **Participate** during class.
- **Ask questions** when appropriate.
- Make use of pictures and visual aids.
- Include sufficient explanation and **detail**.
- Skip lines for separate ideas.



# Make Your Notes Effective

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- Mark assignments in a special way.
- Recognize that recopying your notes takes a lot of time.
- Recognize that tape recording presentations takes a lot of review time.
- Write down notes in manageable chunks, not complete sentences.
- Use abbreviations.
- Allow room to expand your notes later.
- Include examples and illustrations.

# Recognize Common Concerns

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- **“My mind wanders and I get bored.”**
  - Sit in the front of the room. be certain to preview assignments.
  - Pose questions you expect to be answered in the presentation.
- **“Some ideas don’t seem to fit anywhere.”**
  - Record them in the margin or in parentheses within your notes...for reassessment later.
- **“The instructor talks too fast.”**
  - Develop a shorthand system; use abbr..
  - Leave blanks and fill them in later when comparing your notes with a class peer.
- **“Everything seems important.”**
  - You have not identified key concepts and may lack the necessary background for the topic.
- **“The presenter rambles.”**
  - Preview correlating text assignments to determine organization.
- **“I can’t spell all the new terms.”**
  - Record them phonetically, the way they sound; fill in correct spellings during the editing process.

# Review Your Notes

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Research reveals that the sooner you review your notes after lecture, the more you will retain.



# After the Lecture...

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- Edit and Review Your Notes
  - Edit your notes after class that day by writing the major topics, key terms and questions in the left column.
    - **Use the left column as a study tool later**
  - Review these notes at a later date by covering the right-hand section of the page and quizzing yourself from the trigger words and questions in the left-hand column.

Successful Note-Taking  
Means Maintaining a  
**Positive** Attitude!

# Note Taking Resources

- Campbell, W.E. (1995). *The Power to Learn: Helping Yourself to College Success*, Wadsworth Publishing Company, California.
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