



Taking notes

WHY TAKE NOTES?

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Some teachers have good handouts and clear PowerPoint presentations that help you to understand. But that is all they do - help you to understand. It is your job to check 1. you really do understand and 2. to think about what the subject or content means for you and how it connects to what you already know. To do this, it is important to take good notes in class and to review and think about them later. But how can you do that?

GOOD NOTES HELP YOU:

- To understand the topic
- To review and remember what you read or heard
- To organize your thoughts



The most important thing to do is to listen actively. When you sit in front of the TV and watch a comedy show you listen, laugh and keep watching. You do not think a lot about it. That is why it can be so relaxing. Listening actively is when you listen carefully and make sure you understand what someone is saying. Taking simple notes can help you focus on listening actively. The ideas on the next page have some ideas to help you take simple notes and listen actively:

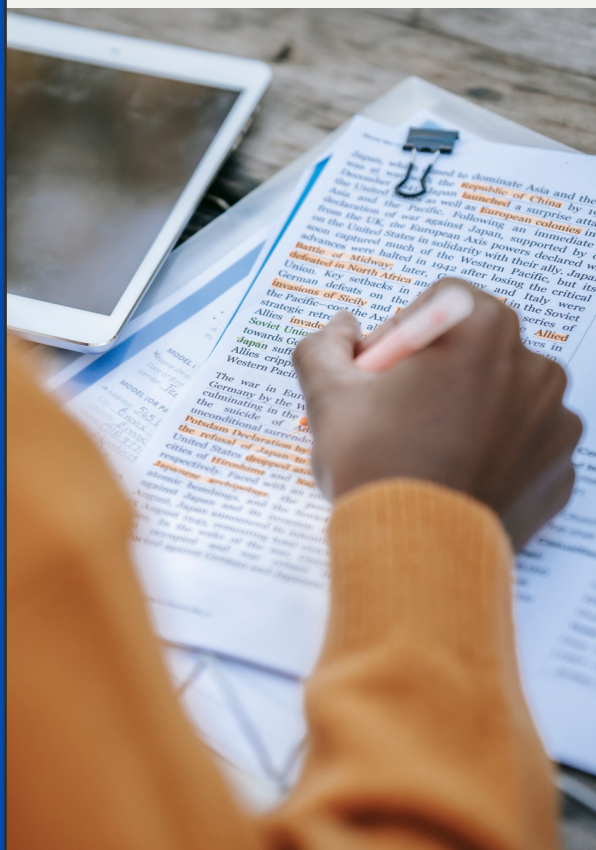
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LISTENING ACTIVELY

- To get ready, take away things on the desk that will *distract* you (“*distract*” means make you think of something else.) Are you trying to study for a test in a different class? Is your mobile phone on the desk? Put it all away. All you need on the desk is something to write with, something to write on and anything the teacher has given you that is important for what the teacher is saying now.
- When you take notes, don't copy down everything on the PowerPoint or on the board. Will you really read it all later, or are you just trying to give yourself something to do? Try to concentrate on the message of the speaker and not on writing.

- Try to catch the main points. That will help you organize the ideas. It will also help you understand the main ideas. Taking notes on everything gives you no time to think or organize it all, so keep notes short and clear.
- Watch as well as listen. Gestures and pictures are a powerful way to say something. If you are busy writing too many notes, you will miss the gestures and pictures.
- If it sounds important or the teacher says it is important, mark it. Have a clear system to show important things – underline them, highlight them, use a different color.





THERE ARE MANY WAYS TO TAKE NOTES

Here are a few ideas:

1. You could take notes as a list or outline:

1. Good-note-taking basics
 - a. Before the class, know the topic and how it fits into the course.
 - b. Keep your notes simple.
 - c. Keep your notes clearly organized.
 - d. Leave some space to add more notes later.
 - e. Review your notes after the class. Forget anything? Any questions?
2. Good ideas
 - a. Use color
 - b. Use pictures
 - c. Link points with lines or arrows like below:

2. Or you could make notes more creatively, like a graph or map:



Understand class content by:

- Thinking: what is important?
- Organizing: what is linked?



Good notes help you to:



Remember class content by:

- You write notes in your own words
- You think about links



Review class content by:

- Being easy to read
- Keeping clear records of each class
- Being well-organized



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3. You could also use one of the many systems of taking notes, like the Cornell Method (look it up on Google, but the basic idea is:)

2. Write questions and comments here. What don't you understand? What do you need to study more?

1. Write notes here: What do you think you need to know?

3. Write a summary or review after the class here.

This system helps you listen actively, study and review as you 1. take notes, showing what is most important, 2. ask questions about the notes and what you need to know, and 3. review in a few sentences, which helps you understand the larger topic (which is also called the big picture.)



4. Of course, if you are reading a textbook or a copy of something, you can also annotate - highlight in color (like in the picture,) write notes and questions, underline... do whatever helps you to question, understand and summarize what you are learning.

A FINAL NOTE

Practice writing quickly and clearly. How many times have you missed a point because you write too slowly? Have you ever tried to read your notes after class and found you can't read your writing? Also, practice keeping notes in and thinking in English. If you are always translating from Japanese to English or English to Japanese, you will miss many points.

Learning to take good notes in class (or when reading) will take time and practice. It also helps to do other things like read the textbook before class. What will the class be about? What do you know about the topic. Also, review: rewrite your notes after class, review with a friend later, and review just before the next class.