



## STUDY SMART

### Lesson #7

## NOTETAKING

Most teachers want you to remember what they say in class. Teachers in all grades will talk about the most important ideas. If you can learn these ideas well, then you will make good grades.

### **Q: Are there any problems with learning in class?**

Yes, there are at least a couple of problems in addition to those mentioned in Lessons 5 & 6. One problem is that people forget so much of what they hear, as much as 75%. Another problem is that there is no record to improve recall. After a teacher says something the words are gone; you can't hear them again. So, if you don't listen carefully so you understand and can remember the first and only time an idea is presented, you have no chance of learning it. Yet another problem is that it is difficult to pay attention for long periods, so it is natural for attention to wander or to be distracted from time to time. Of course, there is no way to recover the ideas presented while thinking of something else.

### **Q: Are there any solutions to these problems?**

Yes, the main solution is to take good notes. In fact, it is estimated that students who take notes can learn from 2 to 7 times more than those who do not. But, increased learning is not guaranteed because you take notes. To improve your learning you must take notes **and** review them also. One problem many students have is that taking notes is unfamiliar and uncomfortable. It seems easier just to try to remember everything.

### **Q: How should I take notes?**

We suggest that you take notes systematically. By using PAT, you can make your notes help you learn more.

To take good notes you first want to **PREPARE**.

To prepare to take notes:

1. Make separate notebooks for each subject. Spiral ring notebooks are good because they are inexpensive and durable. Use a different color for each subject and write the class on the outside.

2. Write the date and class topic at the top of a blank page. You should begin every class on a new page even if you have space from the previous day's notes.
3. Write the date and page number on each page you use for each day. You will need to do this as you begin a new page.
4. Read your notes from the previous class, use your actions to prepare (see lessons 4, 5, 6) to listen and think about questions you have about assignments or expectations.

## ACTIONS

Use the actions below to take notes:

1. Listen carefully for main points and important details. Use your best listening skills (see Lessons 5 & 6)
2. Write the main points in your notes and under these main points write important details. Write quickly but clearly so you can read later. Don't try to write everything, just the most important ideas. Write these accurately but in your own words. Use abbreviations if you can (see Chart 7.1 for some common abbreviations). Remember that you have to stop listening to write so select carefully when you write. Listen for a pause, an extra example, a repeat or a change in topic to write. If you are unsure of the main points, ask your teacher for help. It is best to not write all the way across the page. Leave wide (1" - 1 1/2") margins on the left and right.

Write in a way that is comfortable for you. You don't have to write sentences, but you can. You can also outline as the teacher talks. And, you can write phrases and words. As the teacher talks, write in a way that you find best. You may find you need to change how you write for different teachers because some talk quickly or are more organized than others.

Finally, you should write what a teacher shows on an overhead or the board. But, be sure to listen and not just write. Most teachers will put several items on an overhead and then talk about them in order. If this is the case in your classes, wait to write each item until your teacher begins to talk about it. This will let you have space to write details that may not be on the overhead in your notes under the main topic shown on the overhead.

3. As your teacher changes from one topic to another leave 2 or 3 lines blank in your notes. Then, begin writing the information for the next topic.

## TEST

The third part of PAT is to test yourself and your notes. Here's how you do this:

1. After class read your notes. You should do this as soon as possible but at least on the same day. You will discover that you remember things that you have not written. Write these in the spaces you left in your notes. Also, if you have things you can't read or make sense of be sure to ask questions and clarify these in your notes. Remember, you will forget 70-80% of what you hear within 24 hours so its very important to reread and upgrade your notes the same day you take them.
2. Next, read your notes again. This time you want to highlight everything that is important. So, underline main points; put a circle around terms, dates, names; write questions about things you don't understand.
3. Finally, draw a rectangle at the end of your notes. It should cover about 1/2 page. In this rectangle write three things:
  - A. A summary of the main points in your own words. This should be short and clear. If you are unsure that what you write includes the main points, ask your teachers. It may be a good idea to ask your teacher to read your summary anyway just to be sure you have accurately identified main points.
  - B. The key terms included in the lesson. These may be names, dates, facts, substances, etc. There should be the terms you think you will need to know for tests and papers.
  - C. Write questions about this material. You can write questions you think your teacher might ask on a test and you can write questions about things you don't understand. Be sure to ask if there is something you don't understand.

To prepare for class the next day, you can read just the ideas in this rectangle. It will help you quickly review main points and terms

## HOMEWORK

Get a notebook for each of your classes and label each. For the next few weeks you may want to use form 7.2 to help you write your test part of good note taking. You can make copies of the form and tape them into your notebook when you have them completed.

  
  


Form 7.1  
Common Abbreviations

=	is, becomes, equals, same	e.g.	for example
	female	↗	increase
	male	↘	decrease
&	and	~	equivalent
∩	with	Σ	sum
>	greater than		
<	less than		
	parallel		
∞	infinity		
≠	not equal, not the same		
/	or		
@	at		
?	question		
∴	therefore		
	because		
w/o	without		
'	feet		
"	inches		
%	percent		
...	and so on		
#	number		

You can make up abbreviations by shortening words. Do this by leaving out letters of commonly used terms (e.g. Dem P for Democratic Party). You can do this for any subject. The important point is that you know what these mean. You should always look for ways to shorten what you have to write so you can listen more effectively.

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Form 7.2  
Daily Note Summary

Summary:

Key terms:

Questions: