



## Disabled Students Programs & Services (A113)

900 Rancho San Diego Parkway, El Cajon, CA 92019

(619) 660-4239 Voice (619) 660-4386 TTY

### TEN SUGGESTIONS FOR GOOD NOTE TAKING

- 1. Label your notes at the top of the page with your professor's name, the course, the date, and the title of the lecture.** Think of your notes as chapters in a book, each with its own title. Later, when you study your notes, the titles will immediately help focus your mind on the subject of the lecture.
- 2. Make your notes legible.** Notes taken in ink on one side of the paper can be read more easily and for a longer period of time than pencil notes.
- 3. Get in the habit of always attending lectures.** You will be less tempted to cut classes if you think of each class as a chapter in a book you are reading. If you cut a class, you miss a chapter and that interferes with comprehension.
- 4. Be an aggressive note-taker.** Regard note-taking as hard work. Sit as close as you can to your professors so that you will be able to hear them without straining. While you are taking notes, maintain an alert physical attitude.
- 5. Start taking notes when the professor starts talking.** Don't sit back during a lecture and wait for something to strike you. Your professors are likely to examine you on any of the material presented in their lectures. Writing down the title of the day's lecture and taking a note or two on the introductory remarks will get you started so that you won't miss important points later.
- 6. Ignore distractions that interfere with concentration.** Don't think about the other students in class, the good weather outside, or anything else but the business at hand. Instead, concentrate on getting as many notes as possible during the class period.
- 7. Learn the specialized vocabulary early on so that you and the professor will be talking the same language.** Your professor will use the language of that subject, and may not always take the time to define each term. Circle difficult words, draw a line from them out to the margin, and label them there with a **"V" for vocabulary**. This is a quick note to yourself that you must find out more about these words.
- 8. Learn to differentiate fact from opinion in lectures.** Get the facts straight and learn them; keep them separate from the professor's opinion. Label your professor's reflections and personal comments, as well as your own reactions, by placing them in square brackets: [ ].

**9. Develop your own set of symbols to identify or emphasize various items in your notes.**

- **A circled “V”** in the margin can identify an unfamiliar term
- **[...] square brackets** can be used to set off your own ideas or the instructor’s.
- **A circled “A”** in the margin can identify an assignment.
- **A circled “B”** in the margin can identify books mentioned in the lecture.
- **A circled “P”** in the margin can identify a possible paper topic that you thought of during a lecture.
- **A circled “Q”** in the margin can identify a question to ask at the end of class.
- **“See text p. ...”** can cross reference to passages in the textbook.
- **A star (\*)** next to material can identify material likely to be on the exam.
- **Underline** main ideas

**10. Always take notes on discussion.** Good discussion leaders come into class with a list of points that they want to make. Rather than presenting them in the form of a lecture, they draw the information from the class by asking questions. It is your responsibility in a discussion, to try to discover what points are being made and to record them so that you will not forget them. If you cannot outline the discussion, at least skip a line each time the subject is changed.

## NOTE TAKING HINTS

- ✓ Be Prepared. Do assigned reading; review previous lecture notes before class
  - ✓ Use 8 ½" x 11" paper, record date and topic of each lecture
  - ✓ Write legibly, recopying is a waste of time
  - ✓ Use abbreviations (formal or your own inventions)
  - ✓ Summarize. Use own words whenever possible
  - ✓ Record anything written on board
  - ✓ If lecturer refers to test, jot it down
  - ✓ If you miss something, leave a space. Ask instructor or another student later
- **MAJOR POINTS** – Listen for them and make them **STAND OUT!** (Should be written to left margin)
- Watch for lecturer's CLUES:**
- May state directly: "The main point is..." "I want to emphasize..."
  - May repeat information
  - May speak louder, move forward, write on board
- **SUPPORTING INFORMATION** – Listen for details, examples, etc. (should be indented from major points)
- Words that signal information:**
- Advantages
  - Types
  - Differences
  - Characteristics
  - Causes
  - Reasons