

Note taking is more than simply writing down the key points of a discussion. Before putting pen to paper, you have to be paying attention in order to take effective notes that will be meaningful upon future review.

Note taking involves three steps:

1. Observe

- Important points are often stressed or repeated (word for word) and often follow after the discussion leader looks at his/her notes.
- Listen for key phrases such as “the following,” “in addition to,” “the most important,” “however,” and “in conclusion” which signal other related points.
- Copy notes, tables, or images that have been drawn.
- Note the leader’s enthusiasm for particular topics.
- Naturally, identify information that is explicitly labeled as important.

2. Record

- Use the Cornell method of note taking:
 - o On each page, draw a vertical line 1 ½ inches from the left edge, from top to bottom. Use the left side of the line for key words or main ideas and the right side for detailed notes.
- Or, use an outline (I. Roman numerals, A. capital letters, 1. numbers, a. lower case letters) to organize main and supporting ideas.
- Important points (see Observe 1) should be written in full sentences to capture the intended meaning of an idea.
- Include the date, title, and page numbers of notes.
- Equally space notes (i.e., do not cram everything into a corner) and leave empty space to later clarify points and add questions or other material.
- Use colored instruments (e.g., pens, highlighters) to identify key words or main ideas.

3. Review within 24 hours

- Review notes, for about 10 minutes, after a discussion. This helps move the information from short-term to long-term memory. [80 percent of material is forgotten within 24 hours, without reviewing.]
 - o Review all notes weekly, for about 20 minutes, to help refresh and maintain information.
- Revise your notes so that everything can be read and understood clearly and easily.
- Consider typing your notes as a form of review. However, typing notes directly has its drawbacks.