Note Taking
Before Class

łuż Check your syllabus before going to class to have a better idea of what will be discussed that day.

Do reading assignments or homework questions before class, it is easier to take notes when you know what the instructor is talking about. Write down any terminology along with the definition that the instructor may present.

Know what time your class begins and get to class at least 5 minutes early so you have time to get settled in without interrupting the class. Remember, "Early is on time, on time is late, and late is unacceptable."

Try to sit towards the front and center of the class where you’ll be less distracted and can hear the professor the best and have a good angle on any visual aids that may be shown.

Helpful Supplies

Pen or Pencil

Paper - Don't keep notes on oddly shaped pieces of paper. Keep notes in order and in one place. Try to use a three-ring binder, it allows for more flexibility in rearranging your notes and any handouts that you may receive.

Audio Recorder - If your instructor talks fast, it may help to bring an audio recorder and record the lecture while taking notes. After the lecture is over you can replay the lecture and fill in any parts that you missed in your notes. ALWAYS ask your instructor first if they are comfortable being recorded.
Note Taking
During Class - The Basics

- Date your notes. Add titles and subtitles when you move onto a new topic for easy referencing.
- Make sure that you write legibly, if you can't read them later, they'll be useless. If you have sloppy handwriting it may be wise to type your notes so that they are easier to read.
- Notes should consist of key words, or very short sentences. As a speaker gets side-tracked you can go back and add further information.
- Take accurate notes. You should usually use your own words, but try not to change the meaning. If you quote directly from the author, quote correctly.
- Think a minute about your material before you start making notes. Don't take notes just to be taking notes! Take notes that will be of real value to you when you look over them later.
- If you didn't get a point, make a note of it, and wait until after class to ask. If you missed a point, make a note to remind yourself to ask the professor about it after class or leave space and try to pick up the material you miss at a later date, either through reading, questioning, or common sense.
- Have a uniform system of punctuation and abbreviation that will make sense to you. Use a skeleton outline, and show importance by indenting. Leave lots of white space for later additions.

Common Abbreviations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>&amp; or +</th>
<th>and</th>
<th>etc.</th>
<th>et cetera</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No. or #</td>
<td>number</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>question</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>=</td>
<td>equal to, is the same as</td>
<td>b/c</td>
<td>because</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b/f or b/f</td>
<td>before</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>w/</td>
<td>with</td>
<td>@</td>
<td>at</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>w/o</td>
<td>without</td>
<td>...</td>
<td>when you repeat the same information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&lt;</td>
<td>less than</td>
<td>info.</td>
<td>information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i.e.,</td>
<td>that is</td>
<td>p.</td>
<td>page</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vs.</td>
<td>versus, as opposed to</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>important</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>eg.,</td>
<td>for example</td>
<td>??</td>
<td>I'm confused or look up</td>
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</table>
Note Taking During Class – What to write down

Only write down the main points of the lecture. Don’t write everything down! Your goal isn’t to transcribe your professor’s lecture word for word, rather it’s to extract and record the main points of it.

Your professor will likely go off on tangents during the lecture and spout off stuff that won’t be on the exam. You don’t want to waste your time writing down and studying info that you won’t even be tested on.

So how do you know what the professor’s main points are? Pay attention to cues your professor gives off either consciously or subconsciously. Here are a few cues your professor may give during the lecture. Whenever you see them, it probably means he’s saying something important, so write it down.

- Anytime the professor says, “You need to know this;” or “This will be on the test.”
- Anytime the professor repeats himself.
- Anything the professor writes on the board or includes in a PowerPoint slide.
- Anything the professor repeats very slowly so that it can be taken down word for word.
- If your professor starts talking more quickly, or loudly, or with more emphasis.

Watch for language that shows relationships between ideas. These sorts of points are often where professors get their exam questions from:

- first, second, third
- especially, most significant, most important
- however, on the other hand
- because, so, therefore, consequently

Write down any examples or hypotheticals the professor gives during class. This is especially important for math and science classes. You’ll probably see a similar hypothetical on your final exam.

Note Taking Styles

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Style</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Outline Style</td>
<td>Outlines work particularly well when the material being presented is well organized and when the information moves from main ideas to support detail. In an outline style of note taking, each point being recorded is separately numbered or lettered.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charting Style</td>
<td>Use if your professor’s lecture will be focused on comparing and contrasting one or more ideas. Create a table, making and labeling as many columns as there are categories being compared or contrasted.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocabulary Style</td>
<td>Many introductory courses deal exclusively with the development of new vocabulary. As you take notes, one of your main objectives is to list the new vocabulary items and to spell them correctly. Although you may just list the words and definitions in your notes, these terms will have to be integrated with textbook notes and other materials. You need to have these definitions handy so you can formulate questions about concepts involving these words.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drawing, Graph, and Problem Style</td>
<td>In many of your classes, your notes will be essentially non-verbal. Some obvious examples include diagrams, mathematical formulas/problems, drawings, and all sorts of charts and graphs. These pictorial representations are most important because they condense and summarize information that is difficult to write out.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Note Taking
After Class

Compare notes with a classmate to make sure you didn’t miss any important points, but don’t rely on someone else’s notes, you may not understand everything that they write down and you’ll learn the best by taking your own notes.

Shortly after making your notes, go back and rework (not recopy!) your notes by adding extra points, spelling out unclear items, etc.. Remember, we forget quickly. Budget time for this vital step just as you do for the class itself.

Synthesize notes into a master outline. In the comments on the study tips post, someone asked me what I meant by “synthesizing your notes.” It simply means combining your lecture and reading notes into a coherent whole. This is a lot more difficult than it sounds. It requires you to look at different bits of information, figure out the main ideas and how they relate, and organize them in a way that makes sense.

- One of the best ways to synthesize your notes is to create a master outline. The very act of creating an outline forces you to combine all your notes into a congruent whole. For more advice on creating an outline, see our article on study tips.

- Review your notes periodically. This is the only way to achieve lasting memory.

Sources:
http://www.testtakingtips.com/note/
http://www1.chapman.edu/arc/goodnotes.html