

Note Taking

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Using Online Lecture Notes

Instructors may provide online lecture notes to their students in order to facilitate the learning process. These notes can be very helpful when they are used effectively. Research into the use of online lecture notes has demonstrated that they are extremely beneficial when students

- use them as a tool for guiding their note-taking process,
- continue to take their own notes while attending class, and
- use the online notes to understand information when it is first encountered in class.

Simply having the lecture notes does not guarantee that the information will make sense when it comes time to review for a test, so it is not advisable to use online notes as an alternative to attending class.

Before class

Often instructors will post materials for students on Angel or Jump. Make sure that you access any course resources that are available at the beginning of term, and spend some time familiarizing yourself with these resources. In particular, if the online lecture notes are available before class, it is important to print them so that you can take them with you to the lecture.

- Print or prepare your note pages before class. Use PowerPoint to print handouts or publish them into a Word document in order to take notes on a laptop.
- Preview the notes and familiarize yourself with any new vocabulary by looking up new terms in the textbook or in the dictionary.
- Formulate possible questions that you might ask in class based on your first reading of the instructor's notes.

During class

- Bring the online notes with you to class, and add additional information in the margins or alongside the notes.
- Instead of rewriting what is written on the PowerPoint slides, focus on what the instructor is saying, and note any new ideas or examples that add meaning.
- Whenever possible, add meaning by using your own examples and by putting things into your own words.
- Listen for the answers to the questions that you have formulated before class.
- Predict and mark possible questions that might be on the test.

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After class

- Take some time to summarize or edit the information in the notes.
- Get clarification from the instructor or review the information in your textbook if any slides are confusing or unclear.
- If the online notes are only available after class, print them off and add ideas that are important from your own notes.
- Review the notes frequently in order to keep the information fresh.
- Find ways to engage and interact with the material as much as possible by reorganizing the information graphically, summarizing and rewriting it in your own words, noting key words, or testing yourself from memory.

References

Pardini, E.A., Domizi, D.P., Forbes, D.A., and Pettis, G.V. (2005). Parallel note-taking: A strategy for effective use of webnotes. *Journal of College Reading and Learning*, 35, 38–55.

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Stage 1: Encoding

Encoding is the process of recording sensory data from the outside world.

- Encoding uses the five senses (i.e. hearing, sight, touch, taste, and smell) to input sensory information.
- Encoding is an automatic brain function; but it is to some extent, indiscriminate. In order to ensure that one is encoding specific information, one needs to actively select that information.
 - e.g. If a student is studying in a noisy room, there is a danger that competing stimuli will be recorded instead of the material being studied.

Strategies for Improving Encoding

The following strategies improve the process of encoding:

- Exclude competing stimuli.
 - Many students believe they study better with music or television in the background. Most do not.
- Use various sensory modes.
 - The use of a number of different sensory modes (e.g. Student retention of information during lectures increases when they both hear the information and see it displayed graphically).

Stage 2: Sensory Storage

Sensory storage allows incoming information to be held briefly and interpreted.

- Interpretation is the process of making sensory information comprehensible.
- Interpretation is not always an active process (e.g. It is possible to listen to a lecture without paying attention).
 - Interpretation that is not active and critical can result in the storage of incorrect information (i.e. One remembers a lecture, but the memories may not have been the things that were said).

-encoding="recording senses"

-uses all five senses (e.g. smell of Chemistry lab)

-must actively select info (e.g. most important PowerPoint slides)

-e.g. noise (I can't study with music)

-study in a quiet place (limit outside noise and distractions-not in University Centre)

-use a variety of senses (listen, read, write)

-e.g. text and pictures help memory

-briefly holding and interpreting

-interpretation=make it meaningful

-interpretation is not always active (more than just listening)

-Info can be stored incorrectly (pay attention!)- my problems with Biology