

## Notetaking and Listening in Class

Taking effective notes is one of the most important skills you can develop to stay engaged in classes, enhance your learning, encourage deeper understanding of the material, and prepare you for lifelong learning.

### Go to Class Prepared



- Do you have all your notetaking materials (whichever work best for you and the course)?
- Have you completed the assigned readings?
- Are you centered and mentally present?
- Have you minimized distractions (put devices away, use app or browser blockers, choose your seat wisely)?

### Listen Actively

A primary function of notetaking is to stay engaged and active in class.

- Listen with the aim of **understanding** and **interpreting**
- Process, and reflect on the information
- **Pause** and **paraphrase** information
- Ask yourself **questions** about the material. Voice these questions to clarify your understanding, if needed.

Play close attention to verbal cues of importance or emphasis:  
e.g.:

- "in summary"
- "moving on"
- "key question"
- "this will appear in an exam"

### Prioritize Structure and Relationships of Ideas

- 1 Your notes should reflect **how the information is structured**. This is often indicated in PowerPoint slides or through transitional phrases. Note headings, subheadings, main points, examples, and systems of organization (such as numbered lists).
- 2 When the organization of ideas is clear, you are able to see how concepts relate to each other and can **fill in missing gaps later if needed**.
- 3 As you encounter material in the lectures, **reflect on your understanding** of concepts. If it's unfamiliar, pay close attention! **Jot down your own related ideas** as they arise.

### Condense: Use Shorthand

Use symbols, acronyms, and abbreviations relevant to the course to condense sentences.

**Example:**

≠ (is not the same as)	env't (environment)
→ (leads to)	** (important for exam)
↓ / ↑ (decreases/increases)	b/c (because)

### Review and Enhance Your Notes

- Store and organize your notes from lecture and other sources by topic and date.
- Aim to **review your notes within 24 hours of class**.
- Fill in any missing details from your textbook or by meeting your professor during their office hours. **Annotate** with summaries and your own thoughts and associations; highlight or underline important concepts to return to.



To learn more, book a one-on-one coaching appointment or attend a Learning Skills Workshop!  
Visit [www.smu.ca/studentssuccess](http://www.smu.ca/studentssuccess)  
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