

Academic Skills:

Notetaking Skills

Notetaking in Class:

Write Down Only Relevant Information

- Write down facts, dates and names with limited supporting information with each point.

Summary Points/Questions

- At the end of each class take a minute to write two or three key points from the lecture on the last page of notes as well as any questions unanswered from the lecture. After class use the key points to guide your study session and use your instructor, textbook, or a classmate answer questions you still have from the lecture.

Create Study Questions

- After rereading your notes create study questions in the left margin for each section of notes.

Notetaking in Textbooks:

Write in Your Textbooks

- Make notes in the margins of your textbooks

Create Study Notes

- After reading a page or two create a page of notes for what you have just read.

Draft Questions Beside Paragraphs

- Like class notes create study questions on the side of textbook information related to that section of information.

Study Skills

College students need to plan two to three hours a week for each credit hour they are taking (15 credits X 2hrs = 30hrs of study). Even though this sounds daunting using the tips found in the Time Management section of this page finding this time is easy. Once time has been set aside for study the tips below can make study time more effective.

Independent Study:

Plan Ahead

- Use your course syllabus and assignments to break up large assignments over several study sessions or even over several weeks.

Use Your Notes

- Taking notes in class is only valuable if you use the notes you create. During study sessions, reread notes looking for key points and develop practice exam questions from your notes.

Read Textbooks

- Although a great deal of knowledge is conveyed during course lectures, instructors cannot cover all course content in class. Keeping up with textbook reading assignments outlined in course syllabi is extremely important. While reading textbook assignments, create reading notes, write practice exam questions in the margins and highlight key points/facts to review before exams.

Take Breaks

- When planning study time anticipate and plan for regular study breaks. During each study session take a break every thirty to forty-five minutes. Breaks do not need to be long, lasting between five and ten minutes, but these short breaks are important in keeping your brain engaged in learning. Most college students have an attention span of thirty to sixty minutes so studying or reading beyond this point can be fruitless without a break.

Test Preparation

Know the Content

- Find out what will be covered on the exam by reviewing the syllabus and talking with your professor.

Attend Class

- Being in class is the best way to hear announcements about exams and to know what the professor will emphasize.

Complete Assignments

- Complete assignments as they are assigned. If you fall behind, catch up on assignments as soon as possible even if they are beyond the grading period. When studying, fill in any missed notes, and review old tests before the next exam to provide a framework for future exams.

Reread Your Textbook Assignments

- Reread the material you highlighted or underlined in your textbook. Read your textbook aloud, and visualize the material to create connections. Reread the recently covered material first to create a framework of what the older readings are leading to.

Setup Study Times

- Following the suggestions in the Time Management section, set up a special study session before exams, midterms, and finals.

Create Study Aids

- Make study aids to help you review during study sessions (lists of main ideas, definition sheets or formula sheets, time lines, flash cards). Use all of your senses can help embed new information. If possible use your best learning “mode” (hearing, seeing, touching) when creating study aids.

Practice Tests

- Complete practice test, if available, or make one up. Use the suggestions in the Notetaking Skills and Reading Textbooks sections, use questions you created during your study to create a practice test. After completing any practice test, reread or review material you are unsure of.

Test-Taking Techniques

Multiple Choice

- Before reading the question, cover the answers with your hand or scrap paper.
- Read the question carefully, underline, or circle key words or facts in the question.
- While still covering possible answers, and reading the question carefully, answer the question in your own words.
- Uncover the possible answers and choose the one that most closely matches your own.
- If possible answers do not match what you think the answer is, reread the questions and choose the answer you feel best matches what is being asked.

True or False

- When reading a true or false question, questions that use absolute terms such as: *all*, *every*, *never*, and *no*, are generally false.
- When reading a true or false question, questions that use qualifiers such as: *some*, *most*, and *sometimes*, are generally true.
- When reading a true or false question, underline negative terms such as: *not*, *cannot*, *do not*, *no*, and the prefix *in*(*incomplete*) and *un*(*unimportant*), can significantly change the meaning of a question. For this reason, you must read questions carefully to insure you are answering the question correctly.
- Remember a true or false question is only true if all information in the question is true. If any part of a question is not, or appears to not be true the question statement must be false.

Essay Questions

- When completing an essay question, you first must read carefully all parts of the question. Many essay questions include multiple parts, so making sure you fully understanding what a question is asking is critical.
- When considering what an essay question is asking, look for key words such as: *analyze, categorize, classify, compare, contrast, criticize, defend, define, discuss, describe, enumerate, evaluate, explain, illustrate, justify, prove, relate, summarize* and *trace*. Each of these words relates to a task that must be completed in your question response.
- Once the understanding of the question is gained, an outline needs to be created. The outline should provide the structure and basic content that needs to be included in the final answer.
- From your outline, begin to write your response. Include an introduction that introduces the key points/facts. In the body of the response, include all key points/facts along with supporting information. After providing a clear answer to the question, make sure the final response includes a conclusion or summary paragraph. The conclusion or summary paragraph should wrap back to your introduction to support your body content.
- Before submitting your completed essay questions, review your final responses to insure they fully address each question and if they do not, revise our responses.

Time Management

Viewing Time

- It is human nature to believe that we do not have enough time and too many things to do. The truth is there will always be 24 hours in a day and seven days in a week.
- Instead of thinking we do not have enough time, we must look at our time and what we have to do verses what we want to do.

Planning Time

- The most powerful tool in managing your time is learning the power of saying “NO” and not feeling guilty. By saying “NO” to social requests, can free-up time or allow plan tasks to be completed.
- Develop a weekly schedule that balances not only your courses, but also study sessions, and social events. Two sample schedules and templates can be found [here](#).
- In addition to a weekly schedule, a weekly to-do-list can help keep track of weekly tasks. By sitting down each week on Saturday or Sunday, looking at course syllabi and Sakai courses pages, develop a to-do-list either by subject or by day. Two sample to-do-list and templates can be found [here](#).
- All time management planning tools are only valuable if used. Any technique used to plan time should be one that fits personal habits and strengths.

Time Management Tools

- As discussed above the two primary time management tools are to-do-list and weekly calendars.
- Alarms are excellent tools which ensure students wake up for class and can be set as reminders of class and study sessions.
- Timers are very valuable during study sessions. You can set times to signal breaks during study sessions. Using a timer to signal breaks, during study sessions helps students take breaks every thirty to sixty minutes. A timer can also be used to insure breaks do not last more than fifteen minutes and as the signal to get back to work.