Charling Your Tourney

THE PROCESS OF NOTE TAKING



illiam loved to play pool. Pool was his passion, his hobby, his job, and his first love. Few things ever got in the way of William's pool game. On more than one occasion, William cut class to go to the pool hall with his buddies. "I'll just get the notes from Wanda," he said. "She's always there."

When class met on Monday morning, William asked Wanda for her notes. She explained to him that her handwriting was not very good and that she took notes in her own "shorthand." "Oh, that's alright," William said. "I'll be able to get what I need from them." Wanda agreed to make a copy of her notes for William and bring them to him on Wednesday.

Wanda kept her promise and brought a copy of her notes. William put them into his backpack just before class began. The notes stayed in his backpack until the night before the midterm exam. He had not taken them out to look at them or to ask Wanda any questions about the notes. When he unfolded the notes and smoothed out the wrinkled pages, he was shocked at what he found. The notes read:

Psy started as a sci. disc. from Phi and Physio. Wihelm Wundt/GERM and Will James/US=fndrs. in It. 19th cent. APA est. by Stanley Hall in US.
5 mjr Pers in PSY= Biopsy. Per Cog. Per.
Psychodyn. Per Bek. Per.
Humanistic. Per
Psy wk in 2 mjr. areas 1. Acad. 2. Practicing

Needless to say, William was in big trouble. He could not understand Wanda's shorthand and had not bothered to ask her to translate her notes. To add insult to injury, William had lost his book a few weeks earlier. After trying to make sense of Wanda's notes, he gave up and went to the pool hall to relax and have fun before the test. William failed his midterm.

e've all missed a few classes from time to time, haven't we? There are very few students who have not missed a class for one reason or another. There are two important reasons for attending almost every class meeting: First, if you are not there, you will not get the information presented; second, even if you get class notes from someone else, there is no substitute for your own notes. William had several problems, including setting priorities, but one of his biggest problems was that he was not in class to take his own notes. His other problem was that he did not bother to review the notes with Wanda to make sure he understood them.

This chapter will help you to develop a system of note taking that works for you. At the end of this chapter, you will be able to:

- Identify key phrases and words for effective note taking
- Understand why note taking is essential to successful students
- Use the "L-STAR" system
- Develop and use a personalized shorthand note-taking system
- Use the outline technique
- Use the mapping (or webbing) technique
- Use the Cornell (split-page or modified) technique
- Put into practice "Roadways to Effective Note Taking"

The 10 Milestones questions are intended to make you think about your ability to take effective notes. Take a moment to answer each statement carefully.

How many of your answers were either "No" or "Sometimes"? If you want to change more of your "No" answers to "Yes" answers, this chapter will help you achieve that goal. Consider this—taking notes effectively is one of the most important skills you can develop. This is also one of the easiest skills to learn. Effective note taking can help you record all of the information your instructors present, and will be the basis for later review. Think of note taking as a tool that will help you achieve academic success.

WHY TAKE NOTES?



s note taking really important, you might ask? Actually, knowing how to take useful, accurate notes can dramatically improve your life as a student. If you are an effective listener and note taker, you have two of the most

WILESTONES

WHERE ARE YOU NOW?

Answer each statement by checking "Y" for Yes, "N" for No, or "S" for Sometimes.

- I am an excellent note taker.
 - (Y) (N) (S)
- 2. I am a good listener.
- (Y) (N) (S)

(Y) (N) (S)

4. I use abbreviations when taking notes.

3. I have a personal note-taking system.

- YNS
- 5. I use symbols when taking notes.
- (V) (N) (S)
- 6. I read each assignment before class.
- YNS
- 7. I ask questions in class.
- YNS
- 8. I know how to listen for clues.
- YNS
- 9. I recopy my notes after each class.
- YNS
- 10. I reread my notes before each class.
- YNS

valuable skills any student could ever use. It is important to take notes for several reasons:

- 1. You become an active part of the listening process.
- 2. It creates a history of your course content.
- 3. You have written criteria to follow when studying.
- 4. It creates a visual aid for studying the material.

As mentioned previously, listening is a learned skill, and so is note taking. Simply writing information down does not constitute good note taking. There are note-taking systems and helpful clues that enable students to become more effective note takers. This chapter will discuss, review, and analyze these systems and methods and help you determine which works best for you. Just because your friend uses an outlining method does not make that method right for you. If you are a visual learner, you may need to consider the mapping system. A note-taking system is personal and individualized. You will discover the best style for you as we move through this section of the chapter.

DO I NEED TO WRITE THAT DOWN?

ollege professors hear this question daily: "Do we need to write this down?" If it were up to most professors, they would have students write down the majority of what is said in class, but they know this is practically impossible. With that in mind, students who are effective listeners and note takers have figured out how to actively listen and distinguish the most important material covered. As discussed in the chapter on listening, they know how to listen for key words and phrases. To recap from the chapter on listening, some of the most important key phrases professors may use are:

in addition	as a result of	above all
because	finally	in contrast
due to	most importantly	to illustrate
the main issues are	you'll see this again	specifically
such as	nevertheless	characteristics
another way to	for example	in comparison
on the other hand	therefore	as stated earlier

Generally, when these phrases are used, you can be assured that the professor is making a major point and you should listen carefully and write it down. Usually, if material is presented on an overhead, chalkboard, slickboard, or other media, you should take notes on it.

PREPARING TO TAKE NOTES



n order to become an effective note taker, some preparations have to be made. An artist must have materials such as a brush, palette, canvas, paints, and oils in order to create a painting. Likewise, the student must have certain materials and make detailed preparations for note taking. For example:

• Attend class. This may sound completely elementary and out-of-place, but you will be surprised how many college students feel that they do not have to go to class. "Oh, I'll just get the notes from Wanda," they say, like William in the opening story of this chapter. The only trouble with getting the notes from Wanda is that they are Wanda's notes. You may be able to copy her words, but you may very well miss the meaning behind them. If Wanda has developed her own note-taking style, you may not be able to read many of her notes. She may have written something like this:

G/Oke lyd in C/SC for lyr ely 20c.



Come to class prepared. It is easier to take notes when you have a preliminary understanding of the material.

Can you decode Wanda's notes? How would you ever know that these notes translate to mean: "Georgia O'Keeffe lived in Columbia, South Carolina, for one year in the early part of the twentieth century"? In order to be an effective note taker, class attendance is very important. There is no substitute for it.

• Come to class prepared. Do you read your assignments nightly? College professors are constantly amazed at the number of students who come to class and *then* realize that they should have read the homework materials. Reading your text, handouts, and workbooks, or listening to tapes is one of the most effective ways to become a better note taker. It is always easier to write and take notes when you have a preliminary understanding of what is being covered. Few student tasks are more difficult than trying to take notes on material that you have never confronted before. Preparing to take notes involves doing your homework and coming to class ready to listen.

Coming to class prepared also means that you have brought the proper materials to take notes. This means that you have your textbook or lab manual, at least two pens, enough *sharpened* pencils to make it through the lecture, a notebook, and a highlighter. Some students may also bring a tape recorder. If you choose to use a recorder, always get permission from the instructor before recording, and don't rely solely on the tapes you record.

- Bring your text to class. Many students do not feel as if they need to bring their text to class if they have read the homework. You will find that many professors will refer repeatedly to the text while lecturing. Always bring your text to class with you. This will assist you in your note-taking endeavors, especially if the professor asks you to highlight, underline, or refer to the text in class. Following the professor in the text as she lectures may also help you in organizing your notes.
- Ask questions and participate in class! One of the most critical actions a student can perform in class is asking questions and actively participating in the class discussion. If you do not understand a concept or theory,

it is imperative that you ask questions. It is not wise to just leave class with a feeling of being lost. Many professors use student questions as a way of teaching and reviewing materials. Your questioning and participation will definitely help you, but it could also help others who did not understand. Asking questions moves you from a passive learner to an active learner.

NOW WE'RE READY TO BEGIN THE BUILDING PROCESS

t this point, you have been exposed to several thoughts about note taking. First, you know that you have to cultivate and build your active listening skills; second, you must overcome the obstacles to effective listening such as prejudging, talking during the discussion, and bringing emotions to the table; third, you have to be familiar with key phrases used by professors; fourth, you must understand the importance of note taking; fifth, you should prepare yourself to take effective notes; sixth and finally, you must realize that scanning, reading, and using your texts helps you understand the materials to be discussed.

THE L-STAR SYSTEM



ne of the most effective ways to take notes begins with learning the L-STAR system. L-STAR stands for:

Listening

Setting It Down

Translating

Analyzing

Remembering

This five-step process allows you to compile complete, accurate, and visually oriented notes for future reference. By using this system, you will greatly improve your ability to take accurate notes, participate in class, help other students, study more effectively, and perform well on your exams and quizzes.

LISTENING. As mentioned in the listening chapter, one of the best ways to become an effective note taker is to become an active listener. It is also important to sit near the front of the room so that you will be able to hear the professor and see the board and/or overheads. It is best to sit where you will be able to see the professor's facial expressions and mouth. If you see that the professor's face has become animated or expressive, you can bet the information he is presenting at that time is important. Write it down. If you sit in the back of the room, you may not be able to hear or see certain expressions.

SETTING IT DOWN. The actual writing of notes can be a difficult task. Some instructors are very organized in their delivery of information, others

are not. Your listening skills, once again, are going to play an important role in determining what needs to be written down. In most cases, you will not have time to take notes word for word. You will have to be more selective about the information you choose to "set down." One of the best ways to keep up with the information being presented is to develop a shorthand system of your own. Many of the symbols will be universal, but you may use some symbols, pictures, and markings that are uniquely your own. Some of the more common symbols are:

w/	with	w/o	without	etc	and so on
2 7 2,11	equals	≠	does not equal	e.g.	for example
<	less than	>	greater than	vs	against
%	percentage	#	number	esp	especially
@	at	\$	money	u	quote
&	and	٨	increase	?	question
+	plus or addition		subtract		and so on
*	important				

m uo a mada an

These symbols and abbreviations can save you valuable time when taking notes. You may wish to memorize them because you will use them frequently. As you become more adept at note taking, you will quickly learn how to abbreviate words, phrases, and names.

Using the symbols listed above and your own shorthand system, practice reducing the following statements. Be sure that you do not reduce them to the extent that you will not be able to understand them at a later date.

1.	It is important to remember that a greater percentage of money invested does not necessarily equal greater profits.
	Reduce:
	ngarijek voorgegending provinsit is in tekniste oor in
	d & szach ontal service major attal en la la
2.	She was quoted as saying, "Money equals success." Without exception, the audience disagreed with her logic.
	Reduce:
2	He found a question number of books at the new stone than he the well

3. He found a greater number of books at the new store than he thought possible. For example, there were over 1,000 dictionaries available; a far greater number than at any other store.

Reduce:

4. The increase in scholarship money has allowed a greater number of students to attend college.

~ .			
Reduce:			

TRANSLATING. One of the most valuable things that you can do as a student is to translate your notes immediately after each class. This can save you hours of work when you begin to prepare for exams. Many students feel that this step is not important and leave it out—don't. Many times, students take notes so quickly that they make mistakes or use abbreviations that they may not remember later.

After each class, go to the library or some quiet place and review your notes. It may not be possible to do this immediately after class, but before the day ends, you should have rewritten and translated your classroom notes. This gives you the opportunity to put the notes in your own words *and* to incorporate your text notes into your classroom notes. You also have a chance to correct spelling, reword key phrases, spell out your abbreviations,

and prepare questions for the next class. Sounds like a lot of work, doesn't it? Well, it is a great deal of work, but if you try this technique for one week, you should see a vast improvement in your grades and understanding of material.

Translating your notes helps you to make connections between previous materials discussed, your own personal experiences and readings, and new material presented. Translating aids in recalling and applying new information. Few things are more difficult than trying to reconstruct your notes the night before a test, especially when the notes may have been taken several weeks ago. Translating your notes daily will be a precious gift when exam time comes.



When you are translating your notes, ask yourself, "What does this mean and why is it important?"

ANALYZING. This step happens when you are translating your notes from class. When

you analyze your notes, you are asking yourself two basic questions:

- 1. What does this mean?
- 2. Why is it important?

If you can answer these two questions about your material, you have almost mastered the information. It is true, some instructors want you to "spit" back the exact same information you were given; most professors, however, will ask you for a more detailed understanding and application of the material. When you are translating your notes, begin to answer the two questions using your notes, textbook, supplemental materials, and information gathered from outside research. Again, this is not simple or easy, but it is important to test yourself to see if you understand the information. It is important to note that many lectures are built on past lectures. If you do not understand what happened in class on September 17th, you may not be able to understand what happens on September 19th. Analyzing your notes while translating will give you a more complete understanding of the material.

REMEMBERING. Once you have listened to the lecture, set the notes to paper, and translated/analyzed the material, it is time to study, or commit the material to memory. The next chapter on studying will assist you in this endeavor. Some of the best ways to remember information are to create a visual picture, read the notes out loud, use mnemonic devices, and find a study partner.

PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER: NOTE-TAKING TECHNIQUES

here are as many systems and methods of note taking as there are people who take notes. Some people write too small, others too large. Some write too much, others not enough. Some write what is really important, while others miss key points. This section is provided to help you use the L-STAR system as a formalized note-taking technique. The L-STAR system can be used with any of the techniques about to be discussed.

Before we examine the three most commonly used note-taking systems, we need to review a few principles about basic note taking.

- Date your notes and use a heading.
- Keep notes from each class separate by using a divider or separate notebook system.
- Use $8-1/2" \times 11"$ paper with a three-hole punch.
- Copy any information that is written on the board, used on the overhead, or shown with charts and graphs.
- File your notes in a three-ring binder.
- Organize and review your notes the same day they are taken.
- Try not to "doodle" while taking notes.
- Use your own shorthand system.
- Clip related handouts to appropriate notes.

THE THREE MOST COMMON NOTE-TAKING SYSTEMS ARE:

The Outline Technique

The Cornell or Split Page System (also called the T System)

The Mapping System

The Outline Technique

Although the outline technique is one of the most commonly used note-taking systems, it is also one of the most misused systems. Outlining your notes in class can be a difficult thing to do, especially if your professor does not follow an outline while lecturing. When using the outline system, it is best to get all the information from the lecture and then *combine* the lecture notes and text notes to create an outline after class. Most professors would not advise you to use the outline system of note taking in class. You may be able to use a modified outline while taking notes in class, but the most important thing to remember is not to get bogged down in a "system"; it is much more important that you concentrate on getting the

FIGURE 7.1

Sample outline style notes.

Topic: Listening T. The Process of Listening (ROAR) A. R = Receiving I. W/in range of sound 2. Hearing the information B. O = Organizing & focusing I. Choose to listen actively 2. Observe the origin, direction & intent C. A = Assignment I. You assign a meaning 2. You may have to hear it more than once D. R = Reacting I. Our response to what we heard 2. Reaction can be anything TT. Definitions of Listening (POC) A. P = Listening w/ a purpose B. O = Listening onstructively		Study Skills	Oct. 18 Wednesday
A. R = Receiving 1. W/in range of sound 2. Hearing the information B. O = Organizing & focusing 1. Choose to listen actively 2. Observe the origin, direction & intent C. A = Assignment 1. You assign a meaning 2. You may have to hear it more than once D. R = Reacting 1. Our response to what we heard 2. Reaction can be anything II. Definitions of Listening (POC) A. P = Listening w/ a purpose B. O = Listening w/ objectivity		Topic: Listening	
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C. A = Assignment 1. You assign a meaning 2. You may have to hear it more than once D. R = Reacting 1. Our response to what we heard 2. Reaction can be anything IT. Definitions of Listening (POC) A. P = Listening w/ a purpose B. O = Listening w/ objectivity		1. Choose to listen actively	Dat Sa
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2. You way have to hear it wore than once D. R = Reacting 1. Our response to what we heard 2. Reaction can be anything II. Definitions of Listening (POC) A. P = Listening w/ a purpose B. O = Listening w/ objectivity		C. A = Assignment	mell from
D. R = Reacting 1. Our response to what we heard 2. Reaction can be anything II. Definitions of Listening (POC) A. P = Listening w/ a purpose B. O = Listening w/ objectivity		1. You assign a meaning	rg = L = Z
1. Our response to what we heard 2. Reaction can be anything II. Definitions of Listening (POC) A. P = Listening w/ a purpose B. O = Listening w/ objectivity			
2. Reaction can be anything II. Definitions of Listening (POC) A. P = Listening v/ a purpose B. D = Listening v/ objectivity			
TT. Definitions of Listening (POC) A. P = Listening w/ a purpose B. 0 = Listening w/ objectivity			
A. P = Listening w/ a purpose B. 0 = Listening w/ objectivity			
B. D = Listening w/ objectivity			
C. C = Listening constructively	0		
		C. C = Listening constructively	
			SECOND PROPERTY.

ideas down on paper. You will always be able to go back after class and "arrange" your notes accordingly.

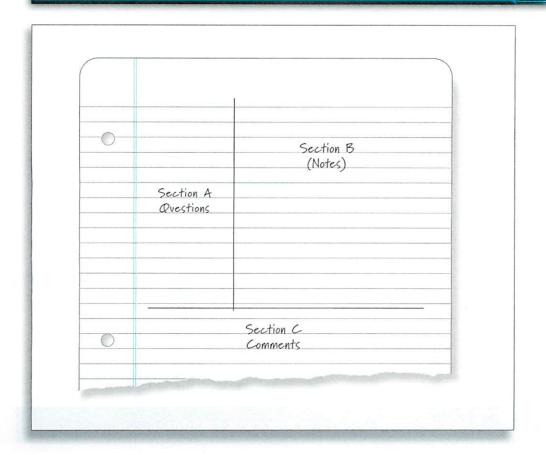
If you are going to use a modified or informal outline while taking class notes, you may want to consider grouping information together under a heading as a means of outlining. It is easier to remember information that is logically grouped rather than scattered throughout the pages. If you are in an economics class and the lecture is on taxes, you might outline your notes using the headings *Local Taxes*, *State Taxes*, and *Federal Taxes*, for example.

After you rewrite your notes using class lecture information and materials taken from the text, your pages may look something like Figure 7.1.

The Cornell (Modified Cornell, Split Page, or "T") System

The Cornell system was developed by Dr. Walter Pauk of Cornell University. The basic principle of this system is to split the page into three sections. Each section will be used for different information. Section "A" will be used for questions that summarize information found in section "B." Section "B" will be used for the actual notes from class, and section "C" will be used for a summary. Your blank note page should look like Figure 7.2.

When using the Cornell method, you should choose a technique that is most comfortable and beneficial to you. You might use mapping (discussed



next) or outlining on a Cornell page. A page of notes using an outline with the Cornell method will look like Figure 7.3.

The Mapping System

If you are a visual learner, it might be important to review this section carefully. This note-taking system creates a picture of your information. It may be easier to recall for those who learn best by visualization. The mapping system is just that; it creates a "map" or web of your information that allows you to see the relationship among certain facts, names, dates, and places. Your mapping system might look something like Figure 7.4. Mapping using the Cornell system might resemble Figure 7.5.

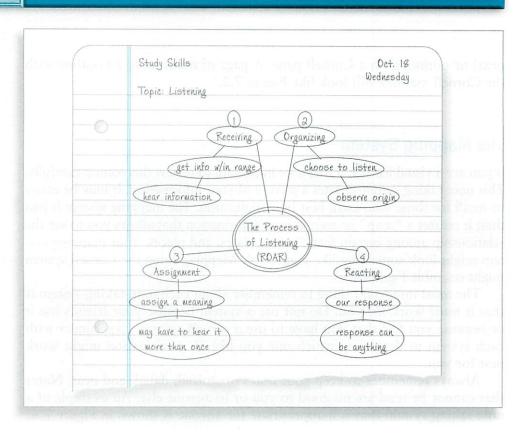
The most important thing to remember about each note-taking system is that it *must* work for you. Do not use a system because your friends use it or because you feel that you have to use a certain system. Experiment with each system to determine which one you like. A combination might work best for you.

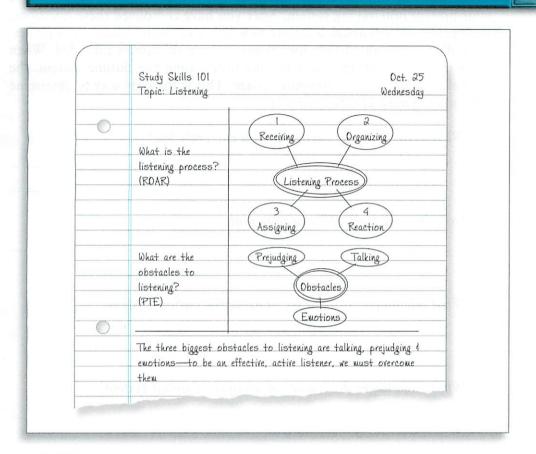
Always remember to keep your notes organized, dated, and neat. Notes that cannot be read are no good to you or to anyone else. An example of a note-taking system that is inappropriate for anyone is shown in Figure 7.6.

Study Skills 101	Oct. 20
9	Friday
Topic: Listening	
	*The Listening Process or (ROAR)
	A = Receiving
What is the	1. Within range of sound
listening process?	2. Hearing the information
(ROAR)	B = Organizing & focusing
	1. Choose to listen actively
	2. Observe origin
Definition	*Listening Defined
of listening	A. Listening w/ a purpose
(POC)	B. Listening w/ objectivity
	C. Listening constructively
Obstacles	*What interferes w/ listening
(PTE)	A. Prejudging
	B. Talking
	C. Emotions
The listening proces	s involves Receiving, Organizing, Assigning \$
Reacting—Talking, F	Prejudging & Emotions are obstacles.

FIGURE 7.4

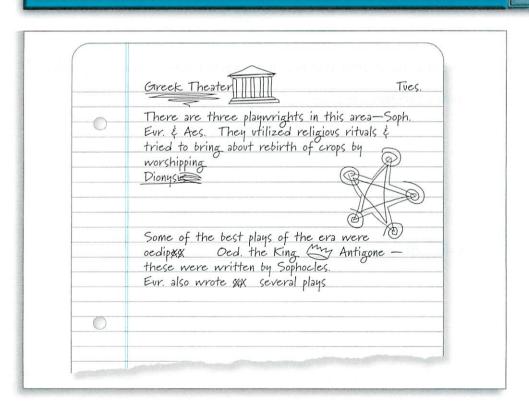
Sample notes using the mapping system.





Doodles, not notes.

FIGURE 7.6



Below, you will find a few questions that you should ask yourself about your present note-taking system. After you have completed these questions, your professor will assign a lecture to which you should listen. Your professor will give you the details for taking notes in the spaces provided. When listening to the lecture, you will take notes using the outline system, the Cornell system, and the mapping system. This is the only way to determine which is the most effective for you.

	What system of note taking do you currently use?
	A Carrier Marie C
•	Does it work well? Why or why not?
	What advantages do you see in using the outline system?
	The property and at the present of the second of the secon
	What advantages do you see in using the Cornell system?
	Use the spaces provided below to practice your note-taking skills. THE OUTLINE METHOD
	Supplier the second of the sec
	all the formal artificial to special that and the time?
	THE CORNELL METHOD

Take a moment to complete the Milestones checklist again.

Hopefully, you have turned some of your "No" and "Sometimes" answers to "Yes" answers as a result of this chapter. Have you effectively utilized the Cornell and mapping strategies? Which system of note taking works best for you? How does taking notes effectively assist you in your studying? Do you take advantage of using a note-taking partner? Why or why not? All of these questions relate to your ability to use new techniques to tackle study tasks. *None* of these techniques will be successful for you if you do not try them. Take some time to get acquainted with each of the methods. You will find that your overall note-taking ability will improve, directly affecting the grades you earn.

MILESTON	
NOW THAT YOU ARE HE	RE
Answer each statement by checking "Y" for No, or "S" for Sometimes,	Yes, "N" for
I am an excellent note taker.	YNS
2. I am a good listener.	YNS
3. I have a personal note-taking system.	YNS
4. I use abbreviations when taking notes.	YNS
5. I use symbols when taking notes.	YNS
6. I read each assignment before class.	YNS
7. I ask questions in class.	YNS
8. I know how to listen for clues.	YNS
9. I recopy my notes after each class.	(Y) (N) (S)
I recopy my notes after each class.	

ROADWAYS

TO EFFECTIVE NOTE TAKING

- Attend class.
- Be prepared for every class by doing homework assignments.
- Sit where you can see and hear the professor.
- Recopy your notes after each class.
- If it's on the board or overhead, while it down.
- Use loose-leaf paper and a three-ring binder.
- Keep your notes for each course separate from other class notes.
- Keep good, straight posture when in class.
- Develop your listening abilities and Tune out chatter.
- · Ask questions.
- Use *abbreviations* and special notes to yourself.
- Keep your notes neal and clear; do not doodle on your notes.
- Parlicipale in class.

Applying What You Know



Developing the art of taking notes can be challenging; however, with practice you can become an effective and efficient note taker. Hopefully, this chapter afforded you the opportunity to improve your note-taking skills.

Now that you have finished this chapter on the process of note taking, refer back to the Case Study about Gwen at the beginning of this book. Based on Gwen's situation, answer the following questions:

1.	What note-taking technique would you suggest that Gwen implement?
2.	How would you explain to Gwen how to use the L-STAR method in her MUS 105 class?
3.	How would you convince Gwen that taking notes would help her to improve her grades in all her classes?

Observations

CHARTING YOUR COURSE



If you remember the concepts of the L-STAR system (Listening, Setting It Down, Translating, Analyzing, and Remembering), use this system as a study pattern, and find a note-taking system that is comfortable and useful to you, then you will begin to see drastic changes in your abilities as a note taker and in your performance as a student.



Getting There on Time

Once again, it is important to realize the impact that time management has on the study skill of note taking. Not using a system of note taking can directly affect the amount of time you need to spend preparing for an exam. How much time do you usually spend with your notes before a test? If you've been an effective note taker, the time spent reviewing notes can be the most effective use of your time. Filing your notes in your three-ring binder is another time-saving technique.

ume wen speni	₹ Why or why not?
How does not i	having any notes affect the time you have to spend preparn?

Effective note taking is a combination of listening, recording, and efficiently using a valuable resource: time.



Exploring Technology

In this assignment, you will visit an instructor's website and print the lecture notes. Many instructors use course websites to provide you with valuable course information, including the syllabus, lecture notes, and resources. To complete this activity, begin your journey at www.fdtc.edu. Click on "online college," then "WebCT," and finally "Login to WebCT." Username: public. Password: public. Under "my courses," select "The American Civil War." Now that you have arrived at the American Civil War course taught by Mr. David Eldridge, take a few minutes to browse the contents.

In this exercise you will:

- 1. Locate the instructor's lecture notes, then print a set of lecture notes that you find most interesting. What note-taking method does the instructor use?
- 2. Review the notes and convert them to the Cornell system.

Web Connections

TRAVELING THE INFORMATION SUPERHIGHWAY



During your journey, you may want to check out some of the following note-taking Web addresses:

www.sheridanc.on.ca/career/tips/classrm.htm www.csbsju.edu/academicadvising/help/lec-note.htm www.yorku.ca/cdc/isp/notesonline/note1.htm www.ucc.vt.edu/stdysk/notetake.html



As a result of this chapter, and in preparing for my journey, I plan to
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