

# Note Taking Strategies

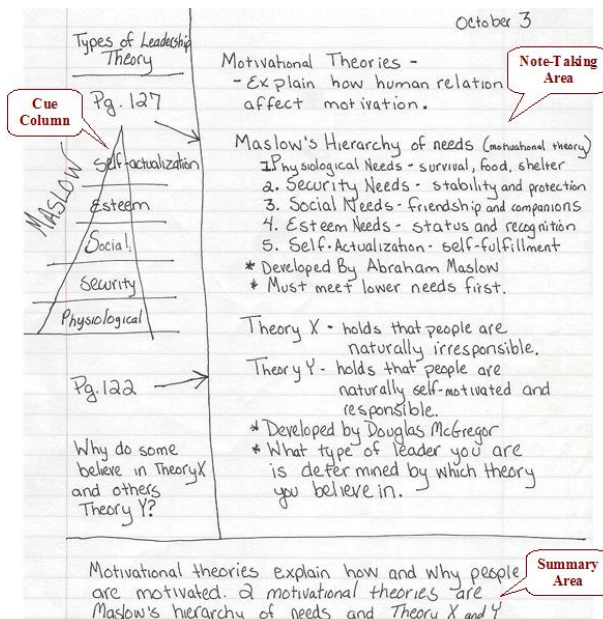
## Why take notes?

Two main reasons. Most know about having a record to refer back to later. Note taking also helps you to engage in the material in real time. One advantage of handwritten notes is that you are forced to make real time decisions about what to write down in order to keep up. Typing notes can allow for an almost stream of consciousness style of typing that allows you to mark information down without actually processing it.

## Note taking styles

Note taking styles consist of varying levels of structure. Regardless of the style you ultimately chose (which may at times vary with the course), always be sure to date your notes and label them with the course name or number.

## Cornell note taking system



The Cornell note taking system is a more structured option. You start by dividing your page into three sections using an offset I. The large area on the right is your note taking space and also the only section you will use during class. The left side is the cue or keyword column. This is where you will note the highlights, themes, or note reference pages. Finally the bottom section is where you will write out a summary of 1-2 sentences.

## Outline or Bulleted

Body Language and Oral Presentations **Traditional Format**

I. BODY LANGUAGE (conveys your state of mind)

A. Movement

1. Strive for natural movement.
2. Control distracting mannerisms. (pacing, pen-clicking).
3. Develop natural style
  - (a) Move forward to stress points.
  - (b) Step back and focus attention on screen.
4. Hold objects so audience can see them. (Never pass them around)
5. Avoid excessive and uncontrolled movement.

B. Facial Expressions

1. Smile.
2. Appear relaxed and friendly.

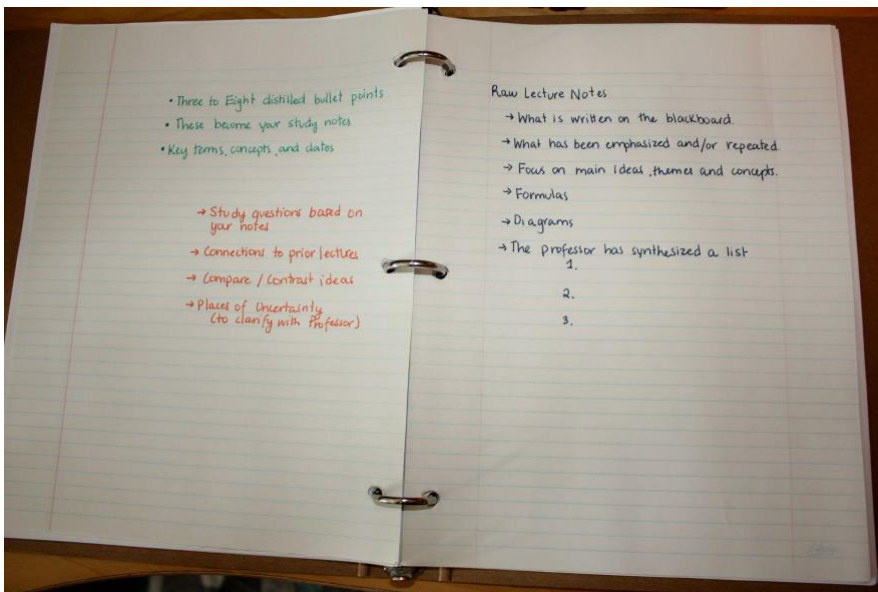
C. Gestures

1. Use natural gestures to emphasize what you're saying.
2. Integrate and coordinate gestures with text.
3. Examples
  - (a) number of fingers = number discussed.
  - (b) sizes, shapes - tall, short
4. Use gestures to help pace yourself.
5. Use gestures based on audience size.

D. Posture

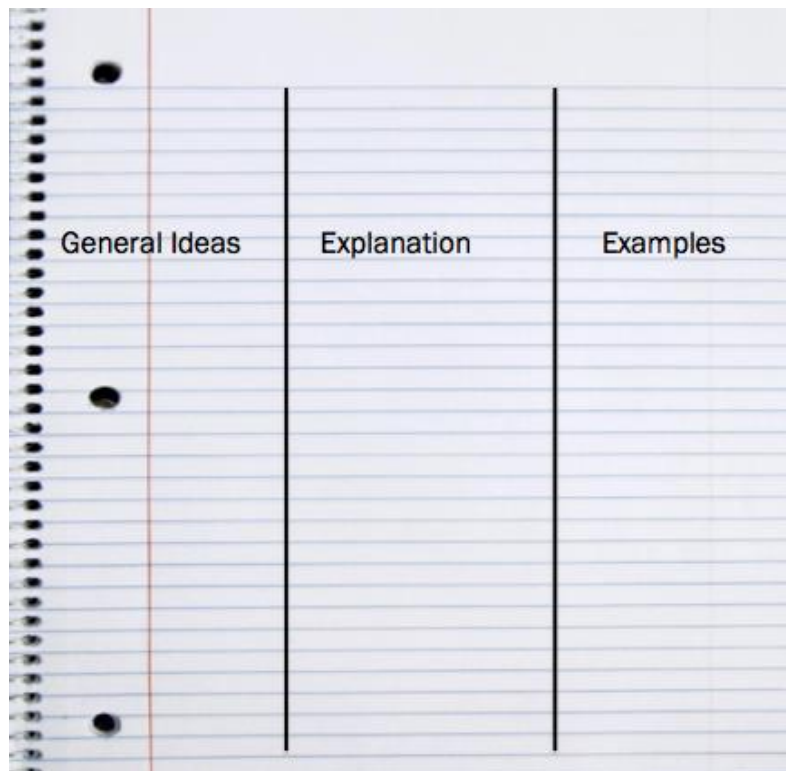
1. Practice good posture.
2. Don't prop up against wall or desk.
3. Don't sit unless it's part of presentation.

Many students work with a traditional outline or bulleted format. Both formats, used correctly, should reflect a hierarchy of general ideas down to specific details.



Ideally after class you can distill your notes into several bullet points emphasizing the key concepts. Then write up a couple of study questions, connections to earlier lecture materials or readings, or concepts you are not clear on.

## Three column



The three column style is best suited to STEM classes. The far left “general ideas” column functions much like headings making it easier to locate a specific topic. The middle column is where the majority of your notes are taken including any explanations or details of the topic and how it relates to the formula for example. The final column is for examples such as sample problems and the steps toward the solution.

## What to write?

Many students are unsure of what to include and so attempt to write down everything. This is unsustainable and can often result in notes that are disorganized, incomplete, filled with irrelevant information, and even illegible.

The most effective note taking requires making decisions in the moment about what to write down.

- Focus primarily on new content - you don't need to write down what you already know especially if it is included in older notes.
- Listen for clear emphasis on ideas and repetitions for implied importance.
- Use abbreviations that make sense consistently and drawings as appropriate. Devising ways to abbreviate your notes will help you to capture complete concepts without missing the next.
- If your instructor uses slides it is often more helpful to write down the detailed explanations than copying the bullets shown - especially if you receive copies of the slides.



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## Working with notes

Part of effective note taking includes working with your notes. Try to review your notes as soon after class as possible - while the information is still fresh. Fill in any gaps. Jot down questions or areas to clarify. During your next study session try to answer those questions. Rewrite your notes - not copying - but reorganizing, distilling, clarifying your notes. If your class has open note exams this could also be your opportunity to consolidate your notes into a format that will be most beneficial for you. This is also a means to identify the questions you still have and work on seeking out those answers