

Wide Margin Notes

The most effective note-taking system is one that lets you take notes in a format that best suits your class and allows you to actively engage with the information during your review. By leaving a wide left margin, you can add information later and use your notes as a study tool when it comes time for review.

Steps for Wide-Margin Notes

- Leave a 2 ½-inch margin on the left side of the page and take your notes as usual on the right side, using abbreviations, symbols, and phrases instead of complete sentences.
- Later that day, use the left side margin to create questions or label key terms from your notes on the right side of the page.
- To review, cover up the notes the right and try to recall the material using the questions or key terms in the margin. Then check your answers against your notes.

Example: Wide Margin Notes Page

Class:

Date:

Terms & Questions	
Big Ideas/Main Points Stressed in Class:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • • • • • 	
Adapted from How to Study in College 7/e by Walter Pauk, 2001 Houghton Mifflin Company	

Note-Taking Tips

During the Lecture:

- Always write the class name and date on every page of your notes.
- Leave white space to add more information or to clarify points you may have missed.
- Listen for verbal and non-verbal cues that a point is important—and then indicate that in your notes.
- Listen for organizational cues to guide your note-taking: “The four stages of...” or “Three reasons why”
- Write down facts and ideas using phrases
- Use abbreviations and symbols when possible:
 - ! = Note important points
 - ?! = Clarify this idea later

Within 24 Hours of Lecture:

- Write a bulleted summary at the bottom of the page: big points, things the professor highlighted, and your takeaways from the class.
- Review your Notes Section:
 - Fill in blanks of missing or unclear information by checking with a classmate or your professor
 - Make illegible writing clear
- Terms and Questions Section:
 - Start creating a “question bank” of possible test questions for future study sessions
 - Create a list of key terms

Quiz Yourself Using Your Notes: (weekly & throughout the quarter)

- Cover up the notes section and see if you can answer the test questions you created or define the key terms you noted in the left margin. Do this with all your notes on a weekly basis.
- Review right before you go to sleep. This allows your brain to do “offline processing” of your reading and helps your long-term memory retain information.