

Faculty of Community Services

Academic Support & Resource Centre

Efficient Note-Taking Tips

THE GOAL

The goal of taking notes from your readings is to pull out the important information, so that when it comes time to study you can study using your notes instead of reviewing an entire reading. Figuring out the most important part of the readings will save you time (for more on reading effectively, refer to the SQ4R handout).

EFFICIENCY IN NOTE-TAKING

- Keep your sentences brief. Never use a sentence when you can use a phrase, or a phrase when you can use a word.
- Efficiency does not mean rushing. Read at a pace that allows you to use *SQ4R*. If you're not reading in detail, you might have to read it again.
- Do not record information that you already know. For example, some material may be covered in more than one of your classes, or you may already be familiar with it from another source. Focus on material that is new to you.
- Do not record information that you won't need to remember; for example, if a professor says that you will be provided with formulae on the test, you do not need to write it down.
- Use abbreviations and symbols wherever possible; here are some examples:

Symbol or abbreviation	Meaning
wrt	With respect to
b/c	Because
i.e.	That is, as in
e.g.	For example
->	Therefore, leads to, or results in
★	Important, to memorize
?	Don't understand, get help

MAKE CONNECTIONS

- Your professor may expect you to review textbooks and readings on your **own time**. This means that your note-taking sessions will serve to teach you material not covered in class.
- When you have completed your notes from textbooks or readings, **review** them alongside the notes you made during lecture.
- Make note of **facts** or **theories** that support each other, and ones that are opposing ideals; this is a helpful connection to make, because essays will often ask you to evaluate different arguments, or "pick a side."
- Use **examples** from your readings to back up theories that your professor has discussed. The more you add to an idea, the better you will understand it.
- Look for **case studies** that demonstrate the real-world applications of course material.
- Use the readings to provide additional insight into concepts that are unclear to you.

Well organized, thorough, and personal notes lead to both better grades and better understanding!