Note-taking Workshop

Slide 1: Today we are going to talk about the very important topic of note-taking. Admittedly, note-taking is more important in some classes as compared to others, but for many courses, good note-taking is absolutely essential.

Slide 2: Note-taking is a two-step process: 1) Take notes, 2) Review and reorganize notes. A lot of times, students forget to do the second part, or they wait too long between taking notes and reviewing for them to be truly useful. More on that later, but during this short workshop, we are going to go over both some strategies for taking notes in class and for using that information to better understand the material.

# Slide 3:

Slide: Graph of the “forgetting curve.” This is called the forgetting curve, and basically it illustrates why you need step two. If you do not consistently review new material, you will likely forget a large percentage of it as time passes. This graph may be a little dramatic, but let’s say that after a month, you really do only remember about 20% of the material. It is not unusual for students to have 3 or 4 tests a semester. Trying to relearn 80% of your classroom material a couple of days prior to an exam is a bad plan. We will talk about how to make the smarter choice in a few slides.

Slide 4: Classroom note-taking tips

* Most research shows that handwriting notes is more effective than typing notes.
  + I understand that many students prefer to use their laptops to take notes. Although you may be able to type faster than you write, chances are you will remember the information better when you use a pen or pencil. Plus, your laptop can be distracting. If you must use your laptop to take notes, remove distraction by shutting all open windows and turning off the internet.
* Don’t try to write EVERYTHING the professor says.
  + Having a word for word transcript of the class may not be as helpful as you think. The process of note-taking forces you to pay attention and determine what the main points of discussion or lecture are. That is an important part of the learning process.
* Make friends in the class. Share notes.
  + Are you afraid you will miss something important? Make a friend in the class and plan to have coffee every Wednesday after class to share notes. This is a great way to review and make sure you are on the right track. If you have nagging concerns, make it a point to go see your professor during office hours and ask him/her to take a look at your notebook and give you some feedback.
* Preview the readings BEFORE class if possible.
  + Sometimes note-taking is a challenge because what the professor is saying is so new, so novel that it’s hard to wrap your mind around it all. Many professors recommend or require this anyway, but make sure you are accessing the reading PRIOR to class.
* If given the option, consider annotating PowerPoint slides.
  + PowerPoint lectures are popular. If your professor gives you access to the slides prior to class, think about printing them out and annotating (or adding to) the information given.

Slide 5: Troubleshooting

Problem: My mind wanders and I get bored. Solution: Sit in the front of the room. Pose questions you expect to be answered.

Problem: The instructor talks too fast. Solution: Develop a shorthand system; use abbreviations. Leave blanks and fill them in later.

Problem: The lecturer rambles. Solution: Preview correlating text assignments to determine organizing principles.

Problem: Everything seems important or nothing seems important. Solution: You have not identified key concepts and may lack necessary or background knowledge. Are you reading PRIOR to class?

Slide 6: Step 2: Review and Reorganize Notes

* Plan time at least once (preferably twice) a week to go over your notes.
* Build it into your schedule—15-20 minutes.
  + Some things to try:
    - Rewrite your notes.
      * This act can help you reorganize your thoughts into a more coherent set of notes.
    - Generate questions.
      * Write a couple of questions down on note cards. How would your professor ask you about this topic on an exam. If you did 10 questions a week, after a month you would have 40 review questions.
    - Begin writing a study guide containing the MOST important information.
      * Kind of like those questions, this exercise can really help you prepare.
    - Jot down possible essay topics
      * If you need to write essays or response papers, your notes are fertile ground for ideas.
    - Sit with a friend and have him/her quiz you.
      * You just learned this material this week. Let’s see how much you remember!

Slide 7: Note-taking conclusion

**Remember—note-taking is a two-step process.**

If you need additional help, do not hesitate to contact Learning Support Services to set up an appointment.

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