

Step Five Take Good Notes

Tests usually cover material that's been presented in class. It is, therefore, important to have good notes from which to study.

Be an Active Listener. In order to take good notes, you must pay attention and actively listen to what your teacher is saying.

Kelly is listening to the radio while she's getting ready for school. The DJ plays several songs, and then he announces that he's going to play a new song by Kelly's favorite artist. As soon as she hears this, Kelly stops getting ready and she listens intently to the song on the radio. As she listens, Kelly tries to catch every word in order to understand the meaning of the lyrics.

In this scene, Kelly went from passive listening to active listening. When you're actively listening in class, you are not just hearing the words the teacher is saying, you are also thinking about, and trying to understand, the information that's being presented.

Take Notes to Help You Pay Attention. You can think much faster than anyone can talk. This is one of the reasons that your mind sometimes wanders when you're listening in class. When you take notes, however, your mind has something additional to do, and you don't have time to think about anything else. Taking notes, therefore, helps you stay focused. Taking notes, of course, also shows your teacher that you're interested in the class and that you're paying attention.

Recognize Important Information. You can often hear a change in your teacher's voice when he/she is going to say something that's important for you to know. Teachers often speak louder, speak slower, or they give verbal cues like "the most significant outcome," "the main point," "the most important reason," "the three causes," etc.

Anything that your teacher writes on the board or overhead should also be considered very important. Double underline or put a star beside any information that you think's important. You'll then know to give this information special attention when you're studying later.

"I use a yellow marker to highlight things in my notes that are important." Jermaine

Take Notes that Are Easy to Read.

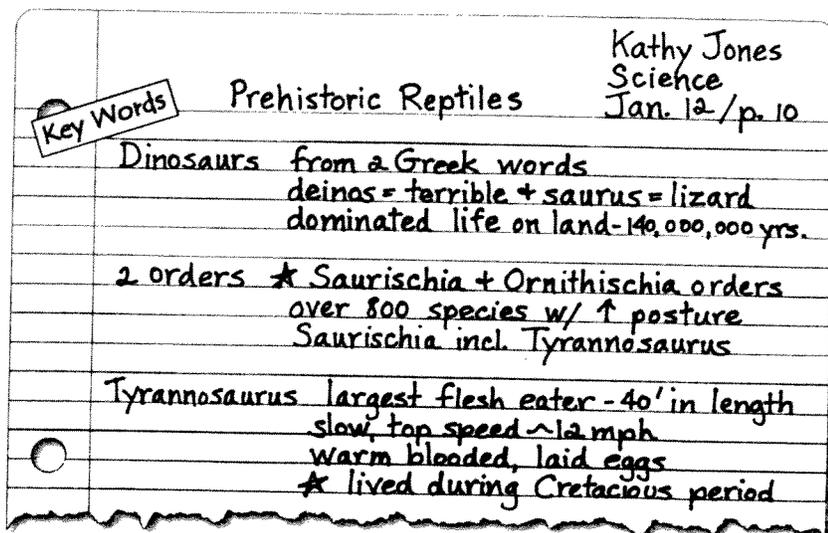
- Put the name of the class, the date, and the page number at the top of each page of notes. This is easy to do, and it will help keep your notes organized.
- Put the subject of your notes at the top of the page.
- Skip lines between topics and only use one side of the paper. Your notes will be neater and easier to read. You'll also have space if you want to add something later.
- Use symbols and abbreviations whenever possible. The following symbols will help you take notes faster.

=	same or equal	↑	up or increasing	w	with
≠	not equal	↓	down or decreasing	w/o	without
>	greater than	→	resulting in	w/in	within
<	less than	*	most importantly	b/c	because
~	approximately	eg	for example	v	very
∴	therefore	ie	that is	esp	especially

- Use pencil or erasable pen to keep your notes neat.
- Leave a wide margin on the left side of each page. As you're taking notes, listen for **key words**. When you hear a key word, write it in the left-hand margin. Key words (topics, people, places, events) help you organize your thoughts, and they make your notes more understandable. They're also helpful to use when you are reviewing for a test. Just cover up your notes, look at each key word, and then test yourself to see what you can remember about that topic, person, place, or event. (*See Kathy's notes on page 12.*)

Go Over Your Notes as Soon as Possible. While the information is still fresh in your mind, take five minutes to go over your notes. Redo anything that's confusing, fill in the spaces, and make sure that you have all of the key words written in the left-hand margins. Of course, while you are going over your notes, you are also "fixing" this information in your memory.

If you are really serious about getting the best grade possible in a class, completely redo your notes. Eliminate the unimportant information, and rewrite the rest of your notes using your own words. Your notes will be much clearer, and as you rewrite them, you'll also be learning the material. This is time consuming, but it pays off.



Get Copies of Class Notes if You're Absent. When you are absent, it is your responsibility to ask your teacher for handouts and assignments. It is also your responsibility to make up any work that you've missed. *Do not just assume that your teacher will tell you if there's something you need to know or do.* Also, get copies of the notes you've missed, and put them in your notebook as soon as possible.

"If I know I'm going to miss school, I try to get work ahead of time. If I'm out sick, I make sure to get the work and the notes I missed the very next day. I really try not to miss school though - it's such a pain to make things up." Greg

REVIEW Step Five
Take Good Notes

- Be an active listener.
- Take notes to help you pay attention.
- Recognize important information.
- Take notes that are easy to read.
- Go over your notes as soon as possible.
- Get copies of class notes if you're absent.