

HINTS FOR TAKING NOTES

These suggestions can help you get a good start with note-taking. Your teacher may offer other ideas to help you, and you should think of your own techniques to help improve your skills.

- * Do not get so caught up in taking notes that you forget to listen! If you do fall behind, listen for the beginning of the next sentence or idea, so that you don't miss whole sections of an exercise. Transition words such as next, later, after, or another will help you know when a new idea is being presented.
- * Do not try to write down everything. Write key words and phrases that will help you remember important ideas. Listen for words and phrases that would answer questions such as who did something, when something happened, where something took place, etc.
- * Learn to abbreviate whenever you can. You can write just enough of longer words such as government (gov) or agriculture (ag) to help you remember the idea later. It takes less time to write \$1 bil than to write all the nine zeros you would need for one billion dollars. Names and places that you know can be abbreviated. You will find other ways to abbreviate that make sense to you.
- * Smaller handwriting takes less time than writing larger letters, and this may help you to keep up.
- * Numbers and dates are hard to remember, and you might want to write these down. If there are many figures in a few sentences, and you can't write them all, learn to listen to how the numbers are related to each other. Listen to see if two things are being compared, or if the numbers get larger or smaller.
- * Some exercises might contain unfamiliar words that you cannot spell. Learn to listen to how they are used in the sentence to understand their meaning. Use phonetic spelling where you need to write them in your notes. Then you can recognize the words if you see them in questions.

Helpful abbreviations for speedy note-taking

This handout lists a number of common abbreviations that may be helpful when note-taking, especially from lectures. It also explains two common abbreviating techniques that can be applied to almost any word.

You should remember, however, that **you can and should also invent and use your own abbreviations**, especially for words or phrases that occur frequently in your subject area. The key to success in using your own abbreviations is not to invent too many and, more importantly, to use them consistently.

Common symbols used in note-taking

& or +	and, plus, with (<i>the ampersand symbol is rather difficult to draw freehand – many people use a simple squiggle (ƿ) to represent 'and'</i>)
–	minus, without
=	equals, is the same as, results in
≠	does not equal, is not the same as, does not result in
≈	is approximately equal to, is similar to
<	is less than, is smaller than
>	is greater than, is larger than
↑	increase, rise, growth
↑↑	rapid increase
↓	decrease, fall, shrinkage
↓↓	rapid decrease
⇒ or ∴	therefore, thus
→	leads on to, produces, causes
x	no, not, incorrect
xx	definitely not, disproved
?	uncertain, possibly, unproven
✓	yes, correct
✓✓	definitely, certain, proven
#	number
*	special, important, notable (<i>when added to a word or phrase</i>)
/	per (e.g., £50/day instead of 'fifty pounds per day')

Some common general abbreviations

c.	approximately, roughly, about (<i>abbreviation for the Latin 'circa'</i>)
e.g.	for example
i.e.	in other words (<i>usually used when adding more detail or an explanation</i>)
cf.	compared to, by comparison with
w/	with
w/o	without
v.	very
vv.	extremely
C	century (e.g. C19 for 'nineteenth century')
etc.	and so on
K or k	a thousand (e.g. 500K for 'five hundred thousand')
m	a million (e.g. \$6m for 'six million dollars')
vs	against

Two abbreviation techniques

- 1 Use the first few letters of the word – just enough to remember what the abbreviation stands for, e.g. **imp** for 'important'
info for 'information'
eval for 'evaluation'
- 2 Remove all (or most of) the vowels from the word and use just the key consonants bunched together, e.g. **mngmt** for 'management'
mkt for 'market' (and **mkting** for 'marketing')
dvpt for 'development'

An example of the use of symbols and abbreviations to take efficient notes

Imagine you heard the following in a lecture:

At the end of the twentieth century the United Kingdom's population, at around sixty million, was similar to that of Italy, but Italy's population was shrinking because its birth rate had fallen below its death rate. The UK's population was still growing, albeit very slowly – at a rate of 0.09% between 1995 and 2000.

Your notes on this part of the lecture might look like this:

end (20 UK pop c60m ≈ I. BUT I. ↓ due BR < DR – cf. UK ↑ slow ie 0.09% 95–2K