In-Class Note Taking
Clear, Concise Notes

Take these steps to create clear, concise lecture notes!

I. Prepare Before Class

- Create an organized notebook for each class
- Review notes from last class
- Read—at least skim—current reading assignment
- Read/skim text assignment
- Bring all needed materials to class
- Sit close to front of room
- Decide to listen actively

II. Construct During Class

- Choose method of organization for each notebook/class
- Get to class on time – professors give important information during first 5 minutes
- Use a note taking method that works with your writing style and professor's teaching style
- Create abbreviations, take notes in lists, and minimize unnecessary words
- Listen for guide words voice inflection
- Don't bury your head in your notes; watch for non-verbal cues
- You can think 4 times faster than your professor can talk so use that extra time to: think of examples, connect new information to last class's lecture, evaluate what you have learned, etc.
- If you can't ask questions during lecture, write them in your notes to ask after class
- Leave space between ideas and missed points
- Concentrate on major ideas and write in own words
- Copy all the material written on the board

III. Interact After Class

- Review notes and fill in gaps as soon as possible after class
- Review notes within several hours of class: with no review, you lose more than 50% of newly-learned information
- Summarize the class briefly in your own words
- Highlight/write down words/phrases for recall column if you are using the Cornell system
- Recite answers to questions
- Combine lecture/text notes into condensed study guide
- Create study materials from notes

Try these note taking methods to see what works for you!

1. The Outline Method

When to use it:
- When professor has a well-organized lecture style
- When information is sequential

How to do it:
- Review last class's lecture/review text reading to think of possible outline
- Be on time (*early!*) for class in case professor introduces topic for day
- *Listen* for main ideas, subheadings, supporting points, and examples
- Organize above into informal outline—*don't write too much*: keep outline format

2. The Graphic Organizer Method

When to use it:
- When you are a visual learner
- When you need to see connections among components

How to do it (one way):
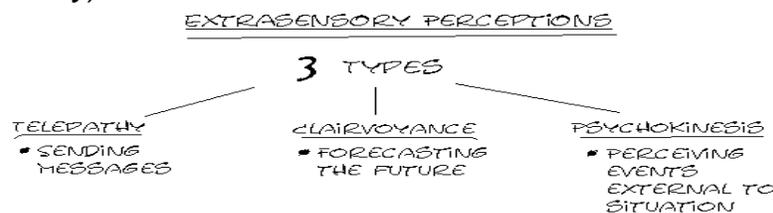
From Calpoly Student Academic Services

- Identify the main ideas and supporting points
- Create a diagram/flow chart/picture that incorporates info and possible connections

3. The Notecard/Summary Method

When to use it:
- With any type of lecture material
- When exams require both memorization and application of material

How to do it:

Notecards (ex.)

1865	-Slvy. Ablshd. -Lin. Inaug. -Lst Btl of Lee -Lin. shot

Summary (ex.)

"2/14: events of 1865, incl end of cw and how ldrs changed roles. Chgs in southern way of life—how diff. For blacks and for whites? Fall of lee—wht next for him? Did evrybdy love Lincoln? Why/why not?"