

Note Taking Strategies

University of New England
Biddeford and Portland, Maine
207-602-2443
[Www.bit.ly/UNESASC](http://www.bit.ly/UNESASC)

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Taking good lecture and reading notes is just one step in preparing for exams. Edited notes are a valuable study tool, and the process of taking and editing your notes will help you understand and memorize important information for exams. Anticipate the ways you may be tested on material presented in lectures, and develop questions for which you can seek answers.

Tips for effective note taking:

- Check the class syllabus to know what the upcoming lecture will be about.
- Maintain a separate 3-ring binder notebook for each class. Organize it in advance with tab dividers separating sections for syllabus, lecture notes and lecture handouts, labs, returned quizzes, research for papers or projects, and miscellaneous items.
- Preview the textbook reading related to the upcoming class. If the instructor provides you with copies of lecture slides in advance, download these, put them in your notebook, and preview them.
- Review your notes from the previous lecture before attending class. This helps you understand how things fit together as well as memorize information from the previous class. If you have questions for the instructor, write them in your notebook.
- Start a new page for each class, titled with the lecture topic from the syllabus and the date. If the instructor puts key terms on the board before class, copy those into your notebook.
- Collect and file handouts or returned work immediately.
- After class, review and edit your notes to fill in missing information, clarify difficult topics, and begin the process of memorizing new information. Use margin notes, highlighters, drawings and emphasis marks to help you identify the most important information.
- Summarize and review these notes before the next class
- Compare notes with fellow students and/or instructor.