Note-Taking: Building Effective Listening Skills

** Note-taking is one way to enhance listening. Using a systematic approach to the taking and reviewing of your notes can add to your understanding and memory of the lectures.

BEFORE CLASS

✓ Develop a mind-set geared toward listening: tell yourself that you are ready to listen.
✓ Test yourself over the previous lecture while waiting for the next one to begin.
✓ Skim relevant reading assignments to acquaint yourself with main ideas, new technical terms, etc.
✓ Enhance your physical and mental alertness:
  o Eat a snack before class
  o Sit in the front and/or center of the room
  o Focus your attention on the speaker.
✓ Choose notebooks that will enhance your systematic note-taking.
  o A separate notebook with full-sized pages is recommended for each course.

DURING CLASS

✓ Listen for the structure and information in the lecture.
✓ Resist distractions, emotional reactions or boredom.
✓ Pay attention to the speaker for verbal, postural, and visual clues to what's important.
✓ Label important points and examples.
✓ When possible, try and translate the lecture into your own words.
✓ Be consistent in your use of form, abbreviation, etc.
✓ Ask questions if you don't understand or you need to clarify something.
✓ Don't close your notebook early and get ready to leave. The professor may be summarizing or highlighting the main points from the lecture.

Source adapted from http://www.clarion.edu/24064/
AFTER CLASS

✓ Clear up any questions raised by the lecture by asking either the teacher or classmates.

✓ Fill in missing points or misunderstood terms from the text or other sources.

✓ Edit your notes:
  o Label main points
  o Add recall clues and questions to be answered.

  ** Key points in the notes can be highlighted with different colors of ink.

✓ Make note of your ideas and reflections, keeping them separate from those of the speaker.

Helpful reminders:

✓ Review your notes often!

✓ Look for the emergence of themes, main concepts, methods of presentation over the course of several lectures.

✓ Make up and answer possible test questions.