

Do's & Dont's: Note Taking

DO. . .

- **Date and number pages** you use when recoding notes in lectures.
- Make sure that you **can read what you record**. If your handwriting is really bad you may want to look into using a laptop computer for taking lecture notes. However...
- **Think carefully before deciding to use a laptop!** You need to make sure you can type faster than you can write, and that your laptop battery can last the length of a lecture, or you have access to a power supply. Make sure you **BACK UP** your notes regularly!
- **File your notes** regularly don't leave your notes lying in your bag as they may go missing!
- Leave plenty of space between topics so that you **have room to edit your notes** if the lecture revisits a particular topic.
- Set aside a few minutes each day, as soon as possible after class, to edit your notes. Find and **fill in any missing points, underline and highlight titles and important points**, and summarise the main points of the lecture.
- If your notes are available before going to your lecture, make sure you read them and bring a copy of them with you to your lecture. **Preparing in advance** is key to your learning.
- Develop and use a **standard method of note-taking** including punctuation, abbreviations, margins, etc.
- **Listen for cues** as to important points, transition from one point to the next, repetition of points for emphasis, changes in voice inflections, enumeration of a series of points, etc.
- **Copy down everything on the board**, regardless. Did you ever stop to think that every blackboard scribble may be a clue to an exam item?

DON'T . . .

- **Don't depend on someone else's notes.** Your notes are particular to your skills and prior knowledge - they are unique to you. If you cannot attend a lecture make sure you look obtain someone else's notes, but also speak with your lecturer to ensure you haven't missed out on important information.
- **Don't cause or tolerate distractions.** If someone is distracting you, simply move to another seat – if this isn't possible then tactfully ask those making noise to be quiet.
- **Don't assume for any reason that going to class is unnecessary.**
- **Don't try to take down everything that the lecturer says.** It is impossible in the first place and unnecessary in the second place because not everything is of equal importance. Spend more time listening and attempt to take down the main points.