# Chapter 5: Notetaking on Lectures

This chapter has seven resources:

* Lecture Notes Template
* Process Your Notes
* Lectures/ Videos/ PowerPoint Organizational Tool

**Lecture Notes Template**

**Date:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_** 

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| --- |
| **Statement or two summarizing the lecture** |
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| --- | --- |
| **Processing space** | **Notes** |
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Process Your Notes

It is hard to take notes on lectures and videos because the speaking voice moves faster than most people can write or type. This leads students to take confusing and incomplete notes.  To make matters worse, many students don’t review their notes until right before an exam, so by the time they go back to review their notes, they sometimes can’t make sense of them.

Nothing will make taking notes on lectures and videos easy, but there are ways to make reviewing notes a regular part of doing homework. NOTE: This resources pairs well with the resource “Lecture Notes Template” but the ideas work well with any style of lecture notes.

## Write the Date and Keep Notes Separate

Have a separate notebook for each class, or, if you take notes electronically, make sure you have carefully labelled folders for each class. At the top of the page, write the date of the lecture so you stay organized.

## Write a Summary Statement

As soon after your lecture as you can, pull out your notes. Across the top of the page, write a summary sentence or two that explains what you learned that day. The purpose of the summary sentence is to:

1. **See how confident you are about what you learned:** If you struggle to write a summary sentence, then you could benefit from connecting with your instructor, tutor, or classmates. (NOTE: Summary sentences don’t need to be long-- “How blood pumps through the heart,” or “The differences between terrestrial planets and Jovian planets” will be fine.)
2. **Provide a Study guide:** When it comes time to study for an exam, a quick glance at the top of the page will tell you what subjects, terms and concepts were covered on what day.

## Processing Your Notes

Whether you set up your notes using the Lecture Notes Template or wrote notes in your own way, you will need to do something with them so they make sense later. The suggestions below give you ideas about what you can add to your notes to create a document that is easier to understand and use. Don't follow ALL the suggestions! Read them and determine which 1-3 suggestions will help you the most. Remember, different processing activities might be helpful for some lectures, but not others.

1. *Note confusion*. Write a symbol (a question mark is a good one!) in the processing space to indicate what confuses you. Write a question if you have one. Also, write down how you hope to resolve your confusion—i.e. ask in class, see a tutor, etc.
2. *Get the Big Picture*. Use the processing space to draw a graphic organizer that shows the purpose of that part of the lecture. For example, if the goal of the lecture was to explain a process, draw a numbered list in the margins. If it was to compare and contrast two things, draw a t-chart in the processing space.
3. *Add what you missed*. If you missed something, add it. For example, during the lecture on how blood flows through the heart, if you missed details about step three, add them in the processing space.

1. *Add additional notes of explanation.* Go through your notes and ask yourself, “If I lost these notes and found them again in 10 days, would they make sense? If not, what do I need to add?” Use the processing space to make those additions.
2. *Notice random facts*. If you have a term or phrase in your notes but don’t know why you wrote it, use the processing space to define the term and why it is important.

1. *Develop a symbol system*. In the processing space, write symbols to mark different kinds of information. For example, “DEF” for definitions or “EX” for examples.

1. *Use colors*.  Colors can be great tools if you decide ahead of time what the colors mean. For example, you could highlight definitions in blue, important people in green and explanations of equations in pink.
2. *Write headings and subheadings*. If your instructor is lecturing over outcomes of the Civil Rights Act write “Outcomes of Civil Rights Act” in the processing space. Label outcomes as well. Write “Ending segregation” next to the notes you took on ending segregation.

1. *Mark notes about upcoming assignments or exams*. If your instructor says something like “This is a good example of a paper topic,” or “You’re going to have to know this for the exam” note those things.
2. *Notice connections between other course materials and the lecture*. If your instructor talks about something that was also mentioned in the book, note that in the processing space.
3. *Note ideas for projects or papers*. If your instructor says something in lecture that gives you an idea for a paper or project, mark it with a special symbol so you don’t forget.

Lectures/ Videos/ PowerPoint Organizational Tool

 Your instructor might record themselves giving a lecture, and/or they might use PowerPoints and Videos as learning tools. Some videos might be created by your instructor, but other videos might be created by others but be closely related to the concepts you are learning. Sometimes, it is difficult to know exactly how to take notes on a lecture, video or PowerPoint, and/or it can be difficult to know exactly why your instructor assigned them to you. This worksheet will help you take notes on recorded lectures, videos or PowerPoints.

Below are common "roles" lectures, PowerPoints and Videos play in a class. Read the possible roles and circle/ mark whichever roles seem most appropriate:

* Simplifies a complicated concept
* Provides information that is not in the book to give you a more complete understanding of a concept
* Provides examples of a concept students you are learning about so you can see the importance of the concept in “real life.”
* Other:

Here are some tips about taking notes on videos, lecture or PowerPoints:

* If possible, figure out exactly what you will have to do with the information you learn from the Lecture/Video/PwrPt. For example, will you need to take a test? Write a paper? Prepare for a discussion or presentation?
* Stop the recorded lecture/ video/PwrPt every seven to 10 minutes to catch up on notetaking, and determine if you understand the major ideas.
* Consider the question “How does the information in this video/PwrPt relate to or connect to the other information I am learning in this course?”
* Once you have watched the lecture/video/ PwrPoint, consider the question, “What am I supposed to get out of the video/PwrPt.?

## Lectures/Videos/PowerPoint Chart

Now that you have thought about the purpose of the lecture/video/PwrPt, and you have some tips about taking notes, use the template below to organize your notes. Here's how to fill it out:

* In the “Slide/Video” column, write down the title, etc. of the PowerPoint or video. If it helps, write down slide numbers so you know exactly what part of the PowerPoint lecture the comments refer to.
* Use the last column, “Major conclusions,” to write down major concepts, ideas and conclusions discussed in the video/PowerPoint.
* Next, complete the middle column. Where else in the course did you read or hear about the major concepts from the video? For example, if the video was about the Process of Communication, and you read about the Process of Communication in chapter 6 of your textbook, and it was the subject of the March 4 lecture, then, in the Course Component column, write “Chapter 6 and March 4 lecture.”

In the connections area, take notes about how what you learned in the video or PowerPoint was similar to or different from what you learned in the other course components. Did the video basically conclude the same things the chapter and the lecture did? Did your instructor make a point in lecture that was not in the book or in the Video/PowerPoint? Do your best to write down those differences and similarities in the “connections” area.

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| Slide/Video | Course Components | Major Conclusions |
|  |  |  |
| Connections | | |