

Taking Good Notes in Class Improving Your Listening

What kind of listener are YOU?

- How do you let someone know you are listening? What do you say? What do you do?
- What helps you listen attentively in class? What makes listening difficult?
- What do you do to avoid daydreaming and to listen better in class?
- On a scale of 1 to 10 (10 being highest), how would you rate yourself as a listener in class?

Being a good listener takes some preparation and knowledge of what to listen for, especially for taking good notes. Use the information provided below to help you improve your listening and note-taking skills in this class.

Preparation for Class

Check the boxes of the preparation activities you already do. Then look at what you did not check. Use those suggestions as areas you might work on.

- I take care of all of my physical needs before coming to class. (i.e. using the restroom, getting a drink, eating a snack, etc.)
- I become familiar with the next day's discussion by looking it over the previous night (if possible)
- I sit in good view of the teacher and the boards where the information is presented.
- I look interested by sitting in an attentive manner and I am not slouched over or putting my head down on the desk.
- I have only the tools needed on my desk. (I don't have my phone on the desk)
- I really work hard at trying to understand difficult concepts.
- I have a study partner who compares his/her notes with mine after class.
- I am always prepared to ask questions.
- I am ready to take notes with my notebook paper and pen/pencil.

What to Listen For

If you watch and listen carefully to your teachers, you will find that what they say and/or do will help you know what to take notes on. Use the following tips to help you.

Write it down if they:

- Tell you "It's important!"
- Repeat the information or pause
- Write on the board or overhead
- Change voice level or facial expression
- Glance at their notes
- Distribute handouts and/or study guides/questions
- Show specific order of things
- Introduce new vocabulary terms and their definitions
- Give detailed descriptions
- Discuss characters in detail
- Identify symbols
- Relate it to the real world

Taking Good Notes in Class Effective Note-Taking Strategies

Taking good notes in any class forces you to listen attentively and concentrate on what is being said. In your classes, your notes have to be good. Without good notes, what would you have to refer back to when completing assignments or studying for tests? There are many effective strategies that make taking good notes easy.

Start each class with a fresh piece of paper. Every page of your notes is like a photo of what happens on a given day. By starting class with a fresh piece of paper, you will keep your 'photos' separate and leave yourself room for extra information if needed later.

Write only on one side of the paper. This will give you open space on the opposite for adding or changing your notes. Also, when reading a story, you can keep track of characters or write down questions for your teacher/classmates there.

Always date, title and number every page. You then have an easy reference guide to follow when studying and it helps keep the material together.

Use key words, never full sentences. Take notes like newspaper headlines. Write only the most important words. (Hint: important words are usually longer than 3-4 letters.)

Take notes until the end of class. Teachers tend to rush at the end of class to cover remaining material and to give homework assignments.

Use mini-graphics. Mini-graphics are symbols that you create that say what you need without words.

=	equals	≠	not equal, not same as		
* or !	important	↑	more		
** or !!	very important	↓	less	?	help
→	leads to	Δ	change	∅	none, no

Use colored pencils and/or highlighters. These are useful for underlining and highlighting important information. Create your own simple color system.

Create graphic organizers. They help make relationships visual. Start with a topic or character and draw branches off it with your ideas and information.

Use abbreviations. A simple way of creating your own abbreviations is to shorten the word, use a symbol or mini-graphic or just omit vowels. Create your own abbreviation dictionary to make sure you remember what your abbreviations mean. How would you abbreviate the following?

character _____	communication _____	remember _____
symbolism _____	with _____	definition _____
relationship _____	without _____	homework _____
population _____	letter _____	transportation _____
different _____	experience _____	effective _____
similar _____	important _____	efficient _____
decision _____	explanation _____	subject _____

Taking Good Notes in Class
The Cornell Method of Note Taking

There is no one best way to take notes for any class, however there are many effective strategies and various methods that can work. The Cornell Method can be especially useful for taking notes from factual textbooks and sequential or organized lectures/reading. Use and adapt the following information to your own style of note taking.

The Cornell Method of note taking was developed by Walter Pauk, a professor at Cornell University. It is a logical way to take notes using an informal outline and key words.

The paper. Using the Cornell Methods begins by drawing a dark margin about 3” from the left side of your paper from top to bottom. This creates two sections: the ‘recall’ column and the ‘body’ column.

The ‘Recall’ Column. This is the most important part of this method. This expanded left-hand column can be used for many purposes. Uses for the recall column can be any of the following:

Vocabulary or spelling word	definition
Grammar concept	example(s)
Key words	something you want to remember
Character name	description of who they are in relation to the story
Story events	what happened
Question marks	information you need to get help with
“On the Job” application	explanation of how it applies – on the job
Possible test questions	material for a test
Quote	explanation of text
Literary term	explanation of how it applies to text.

Many students use the recall column to prepare themselves for tests by covering the body of their notes and then trying to remember as much as possible by using clues in the recall column.

The ‘Body’ Column. This is the right-hand side of the margin where you want to write most of your notes. Your notes may consist of vocabulary terms and definitions, grammar rules and examples, spelling words, character names and events in stories. At times, you may even need to create an informal outline. Informal outlines organize ideas visually on paper—you write the most important ideas closer to the margin while supporting details are indented and farther away.

	RECALL COLUMN		BODY COLUMN
Page	Quote		Response
1 -	“The story held us, round the fire...as on Christmas Eve in an old house a strange tale should be...only case...in which a visitation had fallen on a child.”		This establishes the setting of the story.

OR

	RECALL COLUMN		BODY COLUMN
Page	Literary Term		Explanation
1 -	Setting		The setting of the story is Christmas Eve, in an old house around a fire.

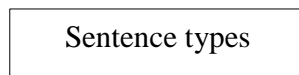
Taking Good Notes in Class

Mind Mapping: A Graphic Organizer

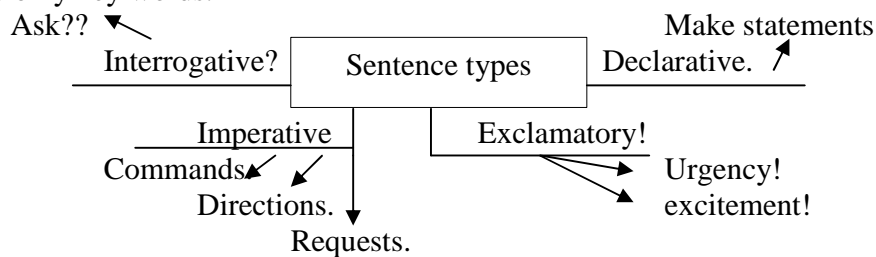
There is no one best way to take notes in class. There are many effective strategies and methods that can work for you. One method might be Mind Mapping and graphic organizers that are especially useful for taking notes from stories and from teachers/reading that might be random and unorganized. You should adapt the following information to your own style of note taking.

Mind mapping, a graphic organizer, was developed by Tony Buzan. It is a creative way to take notes that organizes ideas through visual patterns and pictures. Unlike an informal outline, it allows flexibility in where you write information.

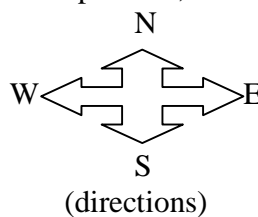
Step 1: To create a basic organizer, start by writing the topic of the day, main idea or character in the center of a piece of unlined white paper. Place a cloud, square, circle or shape of your choice around it.



Step 2: When a supporting idea is presented, either by the teacher or from your reading, draw a new branch off the center and write it on the branch. Write details to your supporting ideas on connecting branches. Use only key words.

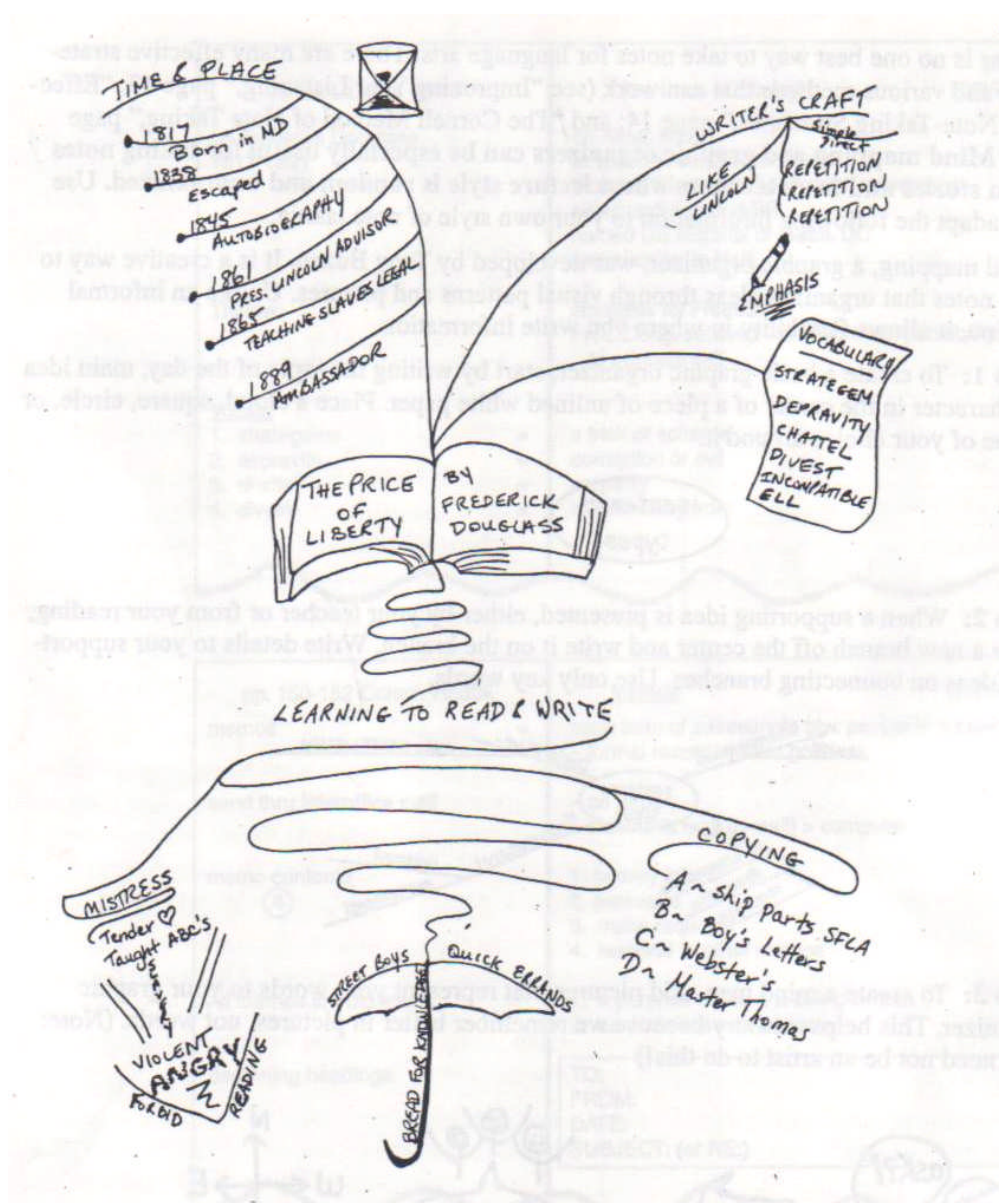


Step 3: To create a mind map, add pictures that represent your words to your graphic organizer. This helps memory because remember better in pictures, not words. Note: you need not be an artist.



Step 4: Color or highlight your mind map or graphic organizer as another way to review. It also makes your notes easier to read and study from.

Step 5: If you prefer to study from an informal outline as in the Cornell Method, go ahead and create one from your graphic organizer or mind map.



Think about the following when you look at the above Mind Map.

1. Which ideas are the most important? How can you tell?
2. Which ideas are less important? How can you tell?
3. What do you like about these notes? What do you dislike? Why?
4. What do you think might be the best way for you to take notes on the current novel? Would it be a Mind Map or could it be the Cornell Method? You decide and start taking notes!