

The Academic Resource Center  
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## How to Take Effective Notes

Clear, concise notes are an important part of the learning process. Keeping good notes is more than just writing down what the professor says. Notes are your resource to help integrate the lecture with textbook material. Without good notes to consult, you are missing an important tool in understanding the material and studying for the test.

### Listen Effectively

When you prepare to take notes, you need to be physically and mentally ready. Make sure you are calm, comfortable and alert. Listen actively to what is being said. Look for general ideas and themes in the lecture. Resist distractions of others whispering or the beautiful weather outside. During this time, your mind should be focused on the professor and the material being presented.

### Note Taking Style

There are many options for how to take notes. Take notes in whatever style works best for you. A few typical styles are covered on this sheet but, ultimately, you should make the final decision of how your notes will look.

The **Cornell Method** requires that you leave a margin on the left side and at the bottom of the page (about 2"). Use the main section of the page to record your class notes. Use the left column as a recall space. Write key phrases and ideas here that pertain to the notes on the right. When you study, you can block the right side of the paper and use the left column to quiz yourself on phrases and ideas. The bottom space on the page should be used to summarize the notes on the page. Use phrases and short statements to demonstrate the main themes of the page.

<b>Questions / Key Phrases</b>	<b>Note Taking Area</b> Use whatever style works best for you!
<i>What is the extent of grasslands?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Grass covers ¼ of the earth – 6,000 kinds</li> <li>- Grass provides food for people and animals</li> </ul>
<i>What four purposes are served by grass?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Grass retards erosion, provides beauty around homes and parks, provides tools, paper, flour, etc.</li> </ul>
<b>Summary Section</b>	
Grass covers ¼ of the earth and is a food source for both man and animals. Grass produces wheat, rye, corn, rice, oats, barley, etc. Grass is the basis for producing meat, milk, cheeses, etc.	

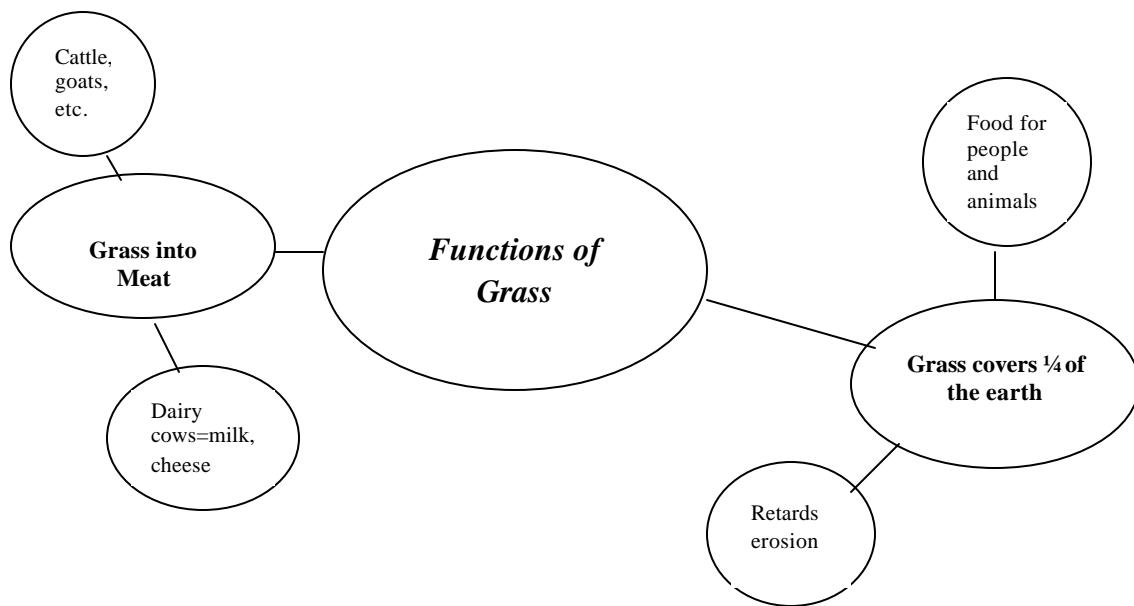
The **Outline Method** is usually too cumbersome to keep up with during a lecture. Some students choose a **Modified Outline Method**. This method maintains the outline

structure without the numbering system. Begin with main topics on the far left side of the paper. Indent sub-topics under the appropriate main topic and details under the sub-topics. This method of note taking is often used because the structure makes studying easy.

- I. Main Idea
  - A. Subtopic 1
    - 1. Detail
    - 2. Detail
  - B. Subtopic 2
    - 1. Detail
    - 2. Detail

- Functions and attributes of grass
- Grass covers ¼ of the earth
    - food for people and animals
    - retards erosion
  - Grass into meat
    - cattle, sheep, goats, etc.
    - dairy cows = milk, cheese

The **Mind Mapping Method** is often helpful for visual learners. This style of note taking allows you to visualize and remember a picture of how the information links together. Start with the main topic in a large circle in the middle of your paper. From the main topic, draw lines connecting sub-topic in smaller circles. Continue this process with details or other necessary information. Use this method to make a map of the information and how it links with other themes.



Regardless of what method you use, there are a few things to remember. Make note of what is written on the board; that usually means it's important. Record the lecture in your own words. Adopt a system of abbreviations and symbols that works for you. Listen for verbal cues given by the professor like "this is important," or "in summary."

**What to do With Your Notes**

Review your notes as soon as possible after class. If necessary, rewrite sections that are unclear while the information is fresh in your mind. This is also a good time to identify major themes that you may have missed during the lecture. Review your notes as often as possible, especially before and after class. This practice will create a sense of continuity to what you are studying.