SKILLS FOR SUCCESS

Notetaking

How do I take good lecture notes?
1. Review any assignments or readings before class. It will make it easier to understand which information is important and which is not.
2. Don’t write down everything that you see or hear. Focus on the important information.
3. Use keywords or very short sentences.
4. Be accurate. Use your own words, but be careful not to change the speaker’s meaning.
5. Think before you take notes. Consider how and why you will use this information to study later.
6. Have a consistent system of symbols and abbreviations. Leave lots of white space on the page for future thoughts and new understanding.
7. Don’t worry about missing a point here or there. No one can write down everything.
8. Leave time after class to fill in any clarification or elaboration. You will forget quickly, so do this right away.

How do I know what to write down?
Instructors usually give clues as to what is important to write down. Some clues are:
1. Material written on the board
2. Repetition
3. Emphasis (tone of voice or length of time)
4. Reviews given at the start of class
5. Summaries given at the end of class
6. Word signals (therefore, there are two sides to the debate, etc.)

What symbols could I use to simplify my notes?

>    is more than  w/    with
<    is less than  w/o    without
=    is equal to  b/c    because
≈    is approximate to  /    per, out of
≠    is not equal to  +    and
i.e.    example  ex.    example

Δ    to change to
→    leading to, causing
←    as a result of
↑    to increase, go up
↓    to decrease, go down
@    at
How do I write good annotations when I read?

1. Think of these notes as a personal response to the author’s ideas.
2. Develop a system of highlighting and annotations -- and stick to it!
3. Be selective. Look for ideas or concepts that will help you accomplish the assignment.

How do I know what is important?

1. Important points to which you react (emotionally or intellectually)
2. Places where you need further information
3. Places where the author reveals his or her reasons for writing
4. Ideas you disagree or agree with
5. Inconsistencies or fallacies

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**Figure 2. Annotation of “The Story of an Hour” by Kate Chopin**

She knew that she would weep again when she saw the kind, tender
hands folded in death; the face that had never looked save with love
upon her, fixed and gray and dead. But she saw beyond that bitter
moment a long procession of years to come that would belong to her
absolutely. And she opened and spread her arms out to them in welcome.
There would be no one to live for her during those coming years; she
would live for herself. There would be no powerful will bending hers is
that blind persistence with which men and women believe they have a
right to impose a private will upon a fellow creature. A kind intention
or a cruel intention made the act seem no less a crime as she looked
upon it in that brief moment of illumination.

And yet she had loved him, sometimes. Often she had not. What did
it matter? What could love, the unsolved mystery, count in face of
this pervasion of self-assertion which she suddenly recognized as the
strongest impulsion of her being!

“Free! Body and soul free!” she kept whispering.

“Josephine was kneeling before the closed door with her lips to the key-
hole, imploiting for admission. “Louise, open the door! I beg; open the
door—you will make yourself ill. What are you doing, Louise? For
heaven’s sake open the door.”

“Go away. I am not making myself ill.” No; she was drinking in a
very elixir of life through that open window.

Her fancy was running riot along these days ahead of her. Spring days,
and summer days, and all sorts of days that would be her own. She
breathed a quick prayer that life might be long. It was only yesterday
she had thought with a shudder that life might be long.

She arose at length and opened the door to her sister’s importunities.

There was a fervent triumph in her eyes, and she carried herself un-
wittingly like a goddess of Victory. She clasped her sister’s waist, and
together they descended the stairs. Richards stood waiting for them at the
bottom.

Some one was opening the front door with a latchkey. It was Brently
Mallard who entered, a little travel-stained, composedly carrying his
grasp-pack and umbrella. He had been far from the scene of accident, and
did not even know there had been one. He stood amused at Josephine’s
piercing cry; at Richards’ quick motion to screen him from the view of
his wife.

But Richards was too late.

When the doctors came they said she had died of heart disease—of
joy that kills. but chances are, after her realization of
this new sort of ‘freedom,’ she most likely wouldn’t
have been especially thrilled to see him.

* “Often times she had not.”
I think we’re all guilty of this at times. Even our closer relatives, best of
friends, and trustworthy companions will get on our nerves. Unfortunately,
distract and hate are facts of life. Opinions will differ, and actions will upset
us. But ultimately, I find that forgiveness gets the better of me.*