

# Take Better Notes in Middle and High School

From: [eduguide.org](http://eduguide.org)

Efficient note taking is one of the most important study skills you need to succeed in school. These studying tips will help you get more out of lectures and class handouts, help you study more efficiently at home, and prepare for tests.

Here's how to get started:

- Pick one note-taking strategy to try in class. - The following list contains some proven strategies, but don't try them all at once. Pick one to try this week, then add new tips as you incorporate the previous ones into your study routine.
  - **If it's on the board, write it down.** Teachers use the board and projectors to present important information. If they emphasize a point by writing it on the board or using a projector, it's important enough to go into your notebook.
  - **Take notes in the margins of your handouts.** Don't rewrite information that's already been prepared for you in a handout but add notes to yourself and clarifications the teacher offers in the margins.
  - **Write down definitions and examples.** Pay special attention to definitions and examples that your teacher uses to illustrate and explain new concepts.
  - **Don't try to write down everything the teacher says.** You'll never keep up. Just aim for the main concepts. Write down words the teacher emphasizes, key questions, and important points.
  - **Pay extra attention at the beginning and end of class.** Teachers usually introduce the lesson at the start of the class. If you keep the agenda in mind as the class continues, you'll follow the lesson more easily. Teachers often review important concepts at the end of class. During this review, be sure you've got the important concepts in your notes.

**Tip:** When you pick a strategy, write it down and put it somewhere you will see it as a reminder, like your planner or calendar, in the inside of a binder, or on the cover of a notebook.

- Pick one new note-taking strategy to try when I am doing homework. - Pick one new note-taking strategy to try when I am doing homework. The following list contains some proven strategies, but don't try all of them at once. Pick one to try this week, then add new tips as you incorporate the previous ones into your study routine.
  - **Make up symbols and abbreviations.** This can be fun, plus you'll save time when you use your own shorthand system for taking notes. [Abbreviations in Note Taking](#) from the University of North Dakota can help you get a start.
  - **Review your notes.** Students who review their notes the same day they take them—even for just five minutes—remember more than students who don't look at their class notes until they're studying for a test.
  - **Keep track of dates.** Put the date on every page. If your binder pops open and your notes spill out, the dates will help you get the pages back in order. Dates can also help you remember exactly when you learned something.

Review the tips listed. Are you already using any of the tips? How well do they work for you? Are there any strategies listed that you think would work better than what you are doing now?

**Tip:** Write down the strategy and put it somewhere you will see it as a reminder, like in your planner or calendar, in the inside of a binder, or on the cover of a notebook. Then use the technique in one or more of your classes until you feel comfortable using it.

- Review my notes with a parent. - After a few days, share your notes with a parent. Explain what you did and whether you thought the technique was useful. Ask your parent if she sees any areas where you could improve. Together, select another strategy to try for another week.
- Use my notes to study for a test. - The best class notes in the world are worthless if you don't use them to prepare for tests. Set a time every day to review your notes, either at the beginning or end of your homework time. Students who review their notes the same day they take them—even for just five minutes—remember more than students who don't look at their class notes until they're studying for a test.  
**Tip:** Review your notes even if there *isn't* a test that week. By reviewing often, you will feel better prepared when a test is scheduled.