

Taking Notes in Class

Unit: Study Skills

NGSS Standards/MA Curriculum Frameworks (2016): N/A

AP® Physics 1 Learning Objectives/Essential Knowledge (2024): N/A

Mastery Objective(s): (Students will be able to...)

- Take useful notes during a lecture/discussion.

Success Criteria:

- Notes contain key information.
- Notes indicate context/hierarchy.

Language Objectives:

- Highlight any words that are new to you.
- Highlight any words that sometimes have a different meaning from the scientific meaning.

Tier 2 Vocabulary: N/A

Notes:

Taking good notes during a lecture or discussion can be challenging. Unlike a textbook, which you can skim first to get an idea of the content, you can't pre-listen to a live lecture or discussion.

Preview the Content

Whenever possible, take notes from the textbook and/or these notes (as described in the section *Reading & Taking Notes from a Textbook*, starting on page 14) before discussing the same topic in class.*

Combine your Textbook Notes with your Class Notes

During the lecture/discussion, get out the notes you already took. Take your class notes for each topic on the same sheet of paper as your $\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$ page of textbook notes, starting below your horizontal line. This way, your notes will be organized by topic, and your class notes will be correlated with your textbook notes and the corresponding sections of the textbook.

* If your teacher doesn't assign reading before teaching about a topic, ask the teacher at the end of each class, "What will we be learning next time?" This way you can proactively take notes from the textbook in advance, to prepare your brain for the class discussion.

Use this space for summary and/or additional notes:

What to Write Down

You can't write every word the teacher says. And you can't rely on only writing what the teacher writes on the board, because the teacher might say important things without writing them down, and the teacher might use the board to give examples.

As with textbook notes, when a teacher introduces a topic, write down the name of the topic at the beginning, and treat it the same way you would treat a section heading in a textbook.

As with textbook notes, highlight vocabulary words/key terms and equations so you can find them easily.

Focus on relationships. Write arrows connecting things that are related, ideally in a different color from the notes themselves.

If the teacher writes down instructions or a procedure for doing something, that's one of the few times when you really want to write down everything.

If the teacher allows you to take a picture of notes on the board, remember that ***the picture is not a substitute for taking effective notes!*** The process of writing things down and organizing them is a large part of what helps you understand and remember them. If you take a picture, it is important that you transcribe the information in the picture into your notes (by hand) as soon afterwards as is practical, before you forget everything.

Review Your Notes at the Beginning of the Next Class

Each topic in class follows from the previous topic. While your classmates are still arriving and the teacher is getting ready to teach, get out your class notes from the previous day and your textbook notes on the new topic. Quickly skim both to refresh your memory. This will help your brain connect the new lecture/discussion to the previous one.

Keep a Binder

A binder can be helpful for keeping your notes organized. If you do this, it's usually easiest to organize everything by topic.

- Try to put everything in the binder immediately. Put assignments right after your notes on the same topic. This is useful when doing the assignments, because your notes will already be with them. It's useful when studying for a test, because the notes show you the information and the assignments show what kinds of questions your teacher asked about them.
- If your teacher hands back quizzes or tests, put those right after the last topic that was covered on the quiz or test.
- At the end of each unit, put in a divider so you can find where one unit ends and the next one begins.

Use this space for summary and/or additional notes:

Studying for Tests

When studying for tests:

- Review your notes to make sure you remember everything, focusing on key terms/vocabulary, key equations, concepts and relationships.
- If your teacher didn't give you practice problems, re-do some of the homework problems. *Don't just look at the problems and think, "Yes, I remember doing that."* Cover up your solutions and try to solve the problem without looking at your work or the answer.
- Make a study sheet for the test, even if you're not allowed to use it during the test. The process of organizing everything onto one sheet of paper will help you remember what is important and organize it in your brain.
- If the class has a mid-term and/or final exam, keep your study sheets for each test, and use them to study for the mid-term or final. This will save you a lot of time!
- If your teacher handed back quizzes and tests, keep those to study for the mid-term or final. Anything your teacher asked before is highly likely to show up again!
- Make sure you are familiar with the calculator that you will be using during the test. If you only ever use the calculator app on your phone, the calculator that you use during the test may require you to put in the values and operations in a different order, which may confuse you.

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