

# Note-Taking, Study Skills, Time Management Skills, and Test-Taking Strategies

## Note-Taking

**Take good class notes.** In order to succeed in a class, you often need to take good notes. A professor's lecture often provides you with key information for the course. Staying organized while taking notes is just as important as note-taking itself because if you have good notes to study from you will be more likely to do well. There are several strategies that will help you stay organized and take good notes.

**Use the Cornell method.** Leave a 2.5-inch margin on the left side of your paper, using the remaining space on the right to take notes. Skip a few lines in between each point your professor makes. After class, write study questions in the 2.5-inch margin on the left. This will be useful when you review or study for an exam: cover your notes with an additional sheet of paper, leaving only your study questions uncovered. Answer your study questions to the best of your ability. The following is an example of the Cornell method used in a science class:

Class:	Date:
Leave 2.5" margin on left for questions to study from later	Leave approximately 6" here for notes. Do not worry about complete sentences, spelling, or grammar. Just write enough to spark your memory later.
What are the 5 phases in mitosis?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Interphase</li><li>2. Prophase</li><li>3. Metaphase</li><li>4. Anaphase</li><li>5. Telophase</li></ol>
What happens in interphase?	Chromatin Spreads into indistinct mass
What happens in prophase?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Chromosomes condense into sets of chromatids.</li><li>2. Nucleolus and nuclear envelope disappear.</li><li>3. Spindle microtubules appear.</li></ol>
Summary: In your own words, recount the information you took down.	

## Other Methods of Note-Taking

Use abbreviations and shorthand to condense the amount of time it takes to write down information. This will ensure that you are able to write more quickly and thus take down more information. Another strategy is to organize your notes into an outline or a bulleted list, which will help you stay organized.

## Study Skills

It is important to establish good study skills and habits. Doing so will help you retain more material, be more prepared for tests and papers, and stay caught up in your classes.

**Have a positive attitude.** Your attitude can affect how well you learn and retain information. You can shut out information if you consider it boring or if you don't like the subject. To avoid this, set learning goals before you begin to study.

**Find a good location for studying.** A lot of time can be wasted by distractions. There are many quiet, comfortable study areas on campus, including the library. Designating a location for studying will help you keep your mind focused on studying.

**Join a study group.** Meet with classmates and discuss what you are doing in class. You will be very helpful to each other, especially if you work with each other's strengths and weaknesses.

**Review your work.** This is one of the best ways to study for a test, especially if you have taken good notes in class. Do some activities that will help you recall the information, such as creating a study guide with questions and answers. Another useful review method is to repeat the information until you overlearn it. Involve multiple senses: read it aloud, write it down, and say it in your own words. This will increase your likelihood of remembering the information. Even if you've already learned something, go over it one more time.

**Keep your memory fresh.** If you wait to review the information until the night before your test, you will have forgotten a great deal of the material and will have to study longer. Reviewing the information on a regular basis after you have learned it will decrease your study time and help you remember material much more easily.

## Use the SQ4R Method

- **SURVEY** the chapter before you begin to read it (focus on titles, graphs, charts).
- Turn the information into **QUESTIONS**. Read all QUESTIONS in the chapter.
- **READ** the chapter looking for the answers to the questions you developed. Reread any sections that aren't clear.
- **RECITE** the information in your own words; test yourself and how much you remember and can explain to another person.
- **RELATE** the information to something you already know. RELATING the information to information you already know greatly increases your chance of remembering it.
- **REVIEW** the information by skimming the chapter or your notes periodically.

# Use Your Memory

Use elaboration strategies such as summarizing, questioning, and using visual organizers. This will help you process information in a way that assists and ensures understanding. As a result, your brain will be able to file and retrieve information more easily.

**Visualize.** For many people, a mental picture is clearer and easier to remember than words. For each major concept you want to remember, create a mental picture and then look at it carefully for a few seconds. Once you've seen it clearly, you'll probably be able to recall it.

**Relax!** Don't forget to spend time with family and friends or doing something you enjoy. It is important to take occasional breaks from studying. If you don't relax, then your schoolwork will seem more challenging.

## Time Management Skills

**Plan your time.** A lot of students have other responsibilities outside of school, including jobs and families. Be sure to set aside a few hours per day for schoolwork so that you don't fall behind in your classes. It is a good idea to keep a calendar for assignments and a daily "To Do" list.

**Create flash cards.** These will allow you to review or study anywhere, at any time. Carry your flash cards around and study between classes, while on the train or a bus, or at a friend's house. Making the flash cards will help reinforce information, and review will help you remember it. This process will make studying for a test easier.

**Keep on top of the work in progress.** Be sure to do all assignments and readings when they are given to you (and make up what you missed if you were away). Be prepared from the very first day of class!

**Beat procrastination.** The key to controlling and ultimately combating this destructive habit is to recognize when you start procrastinating, understand why it happens, and take active steps to better manage your time and outcomes. Break the project into a set of smaller, more manageable tasks. You may find it helpful to create an outline or a map like the one below.

**Set goals.** Decide what you want to achieve in your classes. Is a good grade important to you? Do you want to improve certain skills? Make a plan to reach these goals. Setting deadlines and reasonable tasks are good ideas.

**Be realistic about the times you can study.** Many college students study at night because that's the only time they could study while attending high school. However, college students have chunks of non-class time during the day. If possible, retrain yourself to utilize this new time as best as possible. Know yourself and the times you are most awake.

# Test-Taking Strategies

**Know exam terms.** See the Academic Success Center for a handout detailing words commonly used on a test, such as *compare*, *analyze*, and *examine*. Learning precisely what these words mean will ensure that you always know exactly what a test question is asking.

**Budget your time.** When you first receive your test, do a quick survey of the entire test so that you know how to efficiently use your time.

**If you don't know an answer, skip the question.** Go on with the rest of the test and come back to it later (if possible). Other parts of the test may have information that will help you with that question.

**If you have time left when you are finished, look over your test.** Make sure that you have answered all of the questions. Only change an answer if you misread or misinterpreted the question. Watch out for careless mistakes, and proofread any essay and/or short answer questions.

**Analyze past tests.** Look for patterns.

- What kinds of questions were most difficult and why?
- Was there any difficulty understanding what was being asked?
- Make a list of things such as, which information is most important to know, or sections of material that may need more time dedicated to them.

## Use campus resources.

**There are a number of places for you to turn if you need help academically:**

**Talk to your professor.** Whenever you have a question about a class or the work you are doing, ask your professor. They are the best people to turn to for further explanation and answers.

**The Academic Success Center**, located at all three Campuses (Newtown – Library 121), can offer a student help with Writing, Reading, AESL, Study Skills, Math, Computer Science, Spanish, Economics, Accounting, Chemistry, Biology, and Nursing classes.

**The Library** houses a number of books, magazines, and articles that a student may find useful. The Library staff offers help with research projects, reference guidance, and online access to CD-ROM databases and CD-ROMs.

**Academic Advisors** will help you to set goals, plan your education, and make decisions for your time at Bucks. Advisors can also help you become familiar with other campus resources.

**The Accessibility Office** can assist you in securing access to an equal education at Bucks for students with disabilities. If you need special assistance, please contact their offices in Rollins, Rooms 11, 12, & 14.

**Student Planning Counselors** aid you with transfer planning, career and major exploration, job search, understanding college policy and procedures, setting and working toward educational and life goals, and responding effectively when personal issues—such as family crises or depression—interfere with academics.