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Note Taking in Teaching Literature

ABSTRACT

This study tackles the methods of note-taking and their usefulness for students who study literature, whether note-taking is used by university students or not, what is the most used method by university students in taking notes, and how useful this method is for students in remembering the information they recorded in the lecture. The aims of this paper are to state whether EFL university students use note taking methods in their studying of literature or not, and to show which methods are used more than others.

The sample of this study is 143 third and fourth year students at English department, college of education for Humanities, Tikrit university during the academic year 2020-2021. The data is gathered using a questionnaire to determine students' note taking methods.

Finally, the obtained data are analyzed statistically. In the light of these results, some conclusions, recommendations and suggestions for further studies are presented.

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تدوين الملاحظات وتدريس الأدب

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الخلاصة:

تتناول هذه الدراسة أساليب تدوين الملاحظات وفائدتها للطلبة الذين يدرسون الأدب، وبيان فيما إذا كان تدوين الملاحظات يستخدم من قبل طلبة الجامعة أم لا، وما هي الطريقة الأكثر استخداماً في تدوين الملاحظات، ومدى فائدتها في تذكر المعلومات المسجلة في المحاضرة. تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى

توضيح فيما إذا كان طلبة الجامعة دارسي اللغة الانجليزية لغة اجنبية يستخدمون أساليب تدوين الملاحظات عند دراسة الادب أم لا، وعرض الأساليب المستخدمة أكثر من غيرها. تكونت عينة الدراسة من ١٤٣ طالبا وطالبة من طلبة السنة الثالثة والرابعة في قسم اللغة الانجليزية في كلية التربية للعلوم الإنسانية جامعة تكريت خلال العام الدراسي ٢٠٢٠-٢٠٢١. وتم جمع البيانات باستخدام استبيان لتحديد أساليب تدوين الملاحظات لدى الطلبة. وأخيرا، تم تحليل البيانات التي تم الحصول عليها إحصائيا. وفي ضوء هذه النتائج تم تقديم بعض الاستنتاجات والتوصيات والمقترحات لمزيد من الدراسات.

الكلمات المفتاحية: تدوين الملاحظات، تدريس الأدب، طلبة الجامعة دارسي اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية

Section One

Introduction

1.1. Statement of the problem

Taking notes is the process of writing down information from many platforms and sources. Through note taking, the writer captures its core and relieves their mind of the need to remember everything. The notes may be the only documentation of the event if they are taken from a transient source, such as an oral discussion or a lecture.

Notes are taken on class lectures or discussions may serve as study aids, while notes taken during an interview may provide material for an essay, article or book. Walter Pauk and Ross J.Q Owens in their book, “ How to Study in College” state that “ taking notes doesn’t simply mean scribbling down or marking up the things that strike your fancy , it means using a proven system and the effectively recording information before typing everything together” (Makany et al, 2008, p. x)

Note-taking is like cooking pasta. It seems to be so simple at the beginning but mistakes can creep in easily. “You’ve cooked the pasta for too long, you didn’t use enough salt, or you didn’t add enough water. If you don’t take care, you risk ending up with an empty plate. A lot like note-taking during a lecture, a meeting, a study or session. If you make mistakes you may end up with completely unusable notes” (ibid).

Friedman (2014. P.3) states that “students’ notes, created in the class or while reviewing course material, are an important tool for learning. Many

students and instructors feel that note taking is an obvious and intuitive skill to have, yet few consider or encourage best practices”.

1.2. Aims of the study

This study aims to:

1. State whether EFL University Students use note taking practices in their studying literature or not.
2. Show which methods of note taking are used more than others.

1.3. Limits of the Study

This study is limited to EFL third and fourth year university students (morning studies) at Tikrit University, College of Education for Humanities during the year 2020/2021

1.4. Plan of the study

Some procedures have been followed in this study, they are as follows:

1. Writing a theoretical survey about note taking practices.
2. Constructing a questionnaire.
3. Distributing the questionnaire to the third and fourth year students of the morning study.
4. The results have been statistically analyzed.
5. Conclusions and recommendations have been drawn based on the findings of the study.

1.5. Definition of Basic Terms

1.5.1. Note-taking

Note-taking “is the practice of writing down or otherwise recording key points of information” (Makany et.al, 2008:p. x). Note-taking is “a method of recording information for future use” (Kavak, and Kirkgoz, 2022, p1469).

1.5.2 Teaching

Teaching is the process of conveying knowledge, skills, or attitudes to others through instruction, explanation, demonstration, or guidance, typically in a structured or formal setting such as a school or educational institution. B.O. Smith defines teaching as “Teaching is a system of actions intended to induce learning (Grasha, 2010)

Section Two

Theoretical background

2.1. Note-taking

Note taking has been recognized as an important activity which boosts learning in learning environments. Notes are necessary for remembering what has been heard or seen and can inspire reflection afterwards. According to Castello and Monereo (2005:266) “note-taking is the hegemonic study activity at university and the main ground for education interaction between teacher and students”. This observation has given rise to an increasing interest in studying students' note-taking and its impact on learning. Makany et al, (2008) state that there are six common note-taking mistakes

1. Writing without listening
2. Mistaking note-taking for highlighting text
3. Noting down everything
4. Not being topic specific
5. Not reviewing the notes
6. Not taking notes at all

2.2 Methods of Note-Taking

There are many methods to take note. In this paper, seven methods to take effective notes are presented:

1. Outline method: In this method, indentation is used to keep the information in a clear structure. When used correctly, the outline method produces well-organized notes, making it one of the most effective note-taking forms. This method can be applied in both deductive and inductive order.

Outline note taking is useful to keep clear relationships between topics, the information is organized logically and hierarchically, and the outlined notes are quick and easy to review before an exam (Tamm, 2023). The figure below illustrates how the outline method works:

Parasomnias	
A. Sleep terrors	
1. <i>Onset:</i>	Usually within 15–90 min of sleep
2. <i>Occurs:</i>	Stage 4 of NREM–REM sleep
3. <i>Duration:</i>	Up to 20 min per episode
4. <i>Alertness:</i>	Hard to awaken
5. <i>Recall:</i>	No recollection of content
6. <i>Causes:</i>	Illness, high fever
7. <i>Cures:</i>	Maturing central nervous system in children
B. Sleepwalking	
1. <i>Onset:</i>	Usually within 3–4 hr of sleep
2. <i>Occurs:</i>	NREM sleep
3. <i>Duration:</i>	Ranges from 5–30 min
4. <i>Alertness:</i>	Easily awakened
5. <i>Recall:</i>	Do not recall sleepwalking
6. <i>Causes:</i>	Mental stress and fatigue
7. <i>Cures:</i>	No known cure
C. Nightmares	
1. <i>Onset:</i>	Usually later in sleep cycle
2. <i>Occurs:</i>	Stages 3 and 4 of REM sleep
3. <i>Duration:</i>	No consistency
4. <i>Alertness:</i>	Hard to awaken
5. <i>Recall:</i>	Content is remembered
6. <i>Causes:</i>	Mental stress and individual's common fears (e.g., snakes)
7. <i>Cures:</i>	No known cure

Figure (1) The outline method (Katayama and Robison ,2000:4)

2. Cornell method: This method has been invented in the fifties of the previous century by Walter Paul –a professor at Cornell university. It is one of the effective methods for organizing and summarizing information. Each notebook page is divided into two unequal columns (cue and note columns) , with a third "summary" section across the bottom (Tamm, 2023)..

Students, write down their notes and abbreviated information in the wider right-hand column and the questions prompted by the material go on the left side as shown in the figure below:



Figure (2) The Cornell method (Wilensky,2022:n.p)

3. Mind Mapping Method: This method is also called “concept mapping” as it connects different concepts, thoughts, ideas, and facts through visualization.

This method begins with “a central topic in the middle of the page before branching into smaller subtopics, supporting topics, and more minor details” (Tamm, 2023). It provides learners especially visual learners with a graphical overview of lecture content. Figure (3) illustrates the mind mapping method:

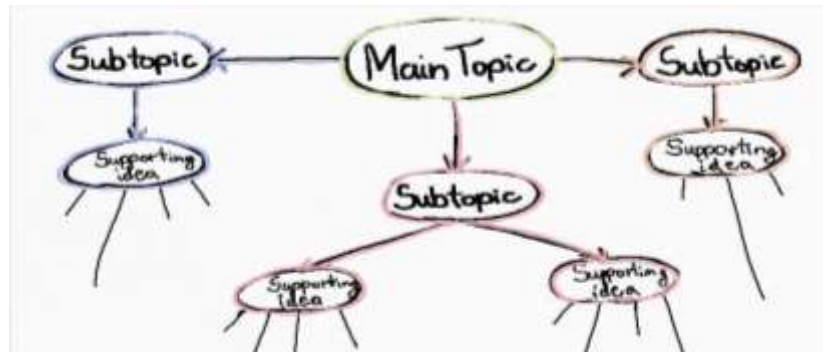
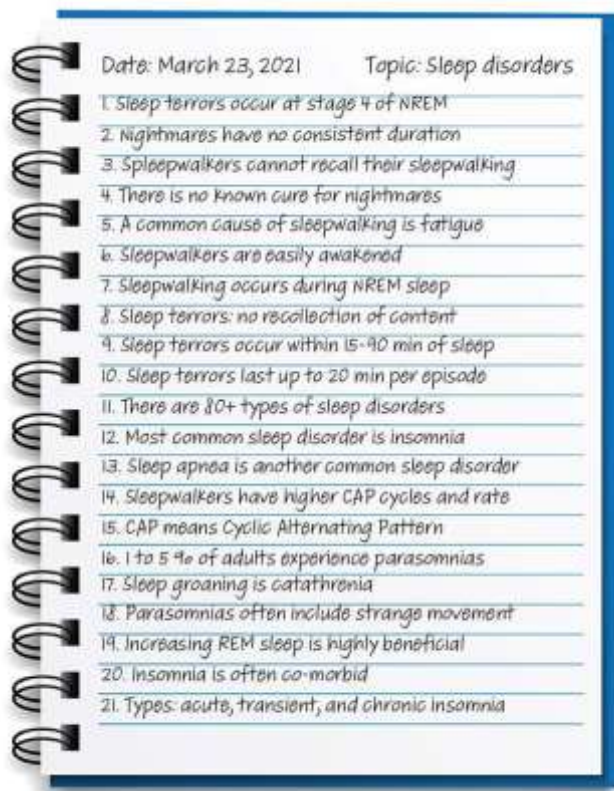


Figure (3) The Mind mapping method (Tamm, 2023)

4. Flow Notes Method: This method is similar to the mapping method, yet it focuses on the higher-level concepts and ideas and how they are related. The relationships are shown using arrows and lines. It is useful for those who don't like detailed explanations or the linear methods like the outline method and the sentence method (Tamm, 2023).

5. The sentence method: in this method the learner uses sentences separated by lines to record as much information as possible from the source. People with quick handwriting or typing skills are good at using this method, and it seems that it is the most common used note-taking method because of its simplicity. Sometimes the sentence method can be the only available choice for fast-paced, unstructured lessons you're unprepared for. After class, it's a good idea to edit notes made utilizing the sentence method (Tamm, 2023).



Figure(5) The sentence method (Tamm, 2023).

6. **Charting method:** It is also called “matrix note-taking,” here charts are used to classify information within rows and columns. In one hand, it is useful with subjects with factual or statistical information that can be categorized into tables. One the other hand, it’s not appropriate during live lectures, detailed topics, and subjects where the space relationships between content

Parasomnias	Onset	Occurs	Duration	Notes
Sleep terrors	Within 15-90 min of sleep	NREM-REM sleep stage 4	Up to 20 min	-
Sleepwalking	Within 3-4 hr of sleep	NREM sleep	5-30 min	-
Nightmares	Late in sleep cycle	REM sleep stages 3 & 4	No consistency	Duration has high variation patient-to-patient

Figure(6) The Charting method (ibid).

7. **Writing on slides:** Keeping the presentations visually simple and focusing on one main concept each slide might help the audience follow along more simply. Gardiner (n.d.) illustrates that PowerPoint slides can be a useful in taking class notes. The slides can be printed out and take notes on them; there is no need to apply it fully electronically. The notes are concerned mainly with the discussed material.

2.3 Note-taking and Teaching literature

Teaching literature is a significant source for EFL students to acquire different skills and abilities. Younis (1998: 21 cited in Alazzawi, 2009, p.1) claims that “literature demonstrates language in use as its best”. Note-taking is an essential component of classroom learning, practicing note taking through studying literature may facilitate learning and make the journey of reading the literary text more enjoyable. The notes are normally “short condensations of source material that are generated by writing them down while simultaneously listening, studying, or observing” Piolat et al. (2005, p. 29, cited in Kavak, and Kirkgoz, 2022, p1469)

Kobayashi (cited in Karimi, 2011p.807) states that “the act of taking notes facilitates attending to lecture, comprehension of the material to be learned and the subsequent recall”. Note-taking is a vital skill for understanding and analyzing literature efficiently. It enables readers to organize their thoughts, and recall important information. It is important to take notes on essential story details, character traits, and thematic components when reading literature. These notes help readers in remembering and analyzing the story later on. Furthermore, taking notes allows readers to draw connections between various parts of the text and recognize patterns or motifs.

There are a large number of note-taking methods that can be used when studying literature. It cannot be said that there is one best note taking method because some students prefer writing down their thoughts and observations in a notebook, while others may use digital note-taking tools or applications. Therefore each individual should choose the best method for them.

Kobayashi shows that “note-taking requires comprehension, selection of information and written production processes”. As a result in studying literature, it is important to focus on the major ideas and arguments presented in a literary text when taking notes. This includes taking notes on essential quotes, paraphrasing sections, and summarizing main points. Personal emotions and reflections on the text are also important, since they can serve to increase knowledge and engagement. Note-taking can also be used to analyze literary devices and techniques used in the text like identifying metaphorical language, symbolism, and foreshadowing. By identifying these features, readers might have a better understanding of the literature's complexities and overall significance.

It can be concluded that taking notes is an important ability to have when studying literature. It allows readers to engage with the text by organizing information and analyzing crucial parts. Readers can improve their understanding and appreciation of literature by taking effective notes. Literature and note taking are closely connected since both involve reading, interpreting, and remembering information. Note taking is an essential tool for studying and understanding literature since it assists in organizing and remembering crucial facts, themes, and analyses.

Section Three

Methodology

3.1 Population and Sample of the Study

Population simply means “the number of people in a city or town, region, country or world; population is usually determined by a process called census (a process of collecting, analyzing, compiling and publishing data)”. (Hartl, 2007:p.45).

The population in the present study includes 262 third and fourth year college students (male and female) who are studying in the morning studies in English Department, College of Education for Humanities, Tikrit University during the academic year 2020-2021.

The term sample refers to a proportion of individuals that is selected to be observed and analyzed so that the results can be generalized for the whole population (Hayes & Stratton, 2013:244).

The sample of study includes 143 third and fourth year college students (male and female) which present 53.96% of the population as indicated in the table below:

Table (1) The population and Sample of the study

College	Population	Sample	Percentage
College of Education for Humanities	262	143	53.96

3.2. Construction of the Questionnaire

The questionnaire deals with various aspects about note taking, it includes twenty-four items. All the items of questionnaire cover the seven methods of note-taking (see table 2)

Table (2) The Number of Items for each method

Note Taking Methods	No. of Items
The outline method	3,5,14,22
The Cornell method	12, 19, 20
Mind Mapping method	7, 8, 9 ,16, 18
Flow Notes method	13
The sentence method	1,4,6,2, 17, 23
Charting method	10, 11, 21
Writing method	15, 24

3.3 Validity

Validity is defined by Ravitch (2007:224) as “The extent to which a test does in fact measure or predict what it sets out to measure or predict, as well as the extent to which the interferences people make on the basis of test scores are appropriate and justifiable”.

Face validity is the extent to which a test is subjectively viewed as covering the concept it purports to measure. It refers to the transparency or relevance of a test as it appears to test participants. In other words, a test can be said to have face validity if it "looks like" it is going to measure what it is supposed to measure. For instance, if a test is prepared to measure whether students can perform multiplication, and the people to whom it is shown all agree that it looks like a good test of multiplication ability, this demonstrates face validity of the test. Face validity is often contrasted with content validity and construct validity.

Face validity means that the test "looks like" it will work, as opposed to "has been shown to work" (Holden, 2010: 638).

To ensure the face validity of the questionnaire to a jury members their notes are taken into consideration and some modification are applied to the items of the questionnaire (see table 3)

Table (3) Jury Members

Professor's name	Scientific Rank	Specification	college / University
Arwa. H. Aldoory (PhD)	Assist prof	Literature	College of Education for \ Humanities English department /Tikrit
Awfa H. Hussain (PhD)	Assist prof	Literature	College of Education for English \ Humanities department / Tikrit
Dunia Taher Hamid (PhD)	Assist prof	Methodology	College of Education for English \ Humanities department / Tikrit
Omar AL-Alkawi (PhD)	Assist prof	Methodology	College of Education for English \ Humanities department / Tikrit
Marwan Muzher Sahab	Assist prof	Methodology	College of Education for English \ Humanities department / Tikrit
Ibrahim Khalaf Al Saleh	instructor	Methodology	College of Education for English \ Humanities department / Tikrit

3.4 The Pilot Administration of the Questionnaire

The questionnaire has been Administered to 20 EFL students at the third and fourth year students/ morning studies on 4th of May through Google Form.

3.5 Reliability

Reliability refers to “ the degree of consistency that the instrument or procedure demonstrates: whatever it is measuring, it does so consistently.” (Best and Khan, 2006:289). The internal reliability is represented by Alpha Crombach formula is used to measure the reliability of the questionnaire, the coefficient is found to be 0.83.

3.6 The Final Administration of the Questionnaire

The questionnaire is administered on 123 students from the third and fourth year in the morning studies, on 10 th of May 2021 through Google form.

3.7 The Statistical Methods

The following statistical tools are used:

- 1- Cronbach's alpha it was used to calculate the stability of the search tools

$$\alpha = \frac{K}{K-1} \left(1 - \frac{\sum S_i^2}{S_T^2}\right)$$

Where

n = the total number of measurement

Sn = variation of scores for each of the paragraph

S2 = sum variance scores all paragraphs (Stevens, 2007: 160)

Section Four

Data Analysis and Discussion of Results

This section is devoted to statistical analysis and Discussion of the data obtained.

4.1 Data Analysis

The data is explained in the light of the study aims

4.1.1 The first aim “State whether EFL University Students use note taking practices in their studying literature or not”.

Its obvious through the table of percentages of the questionnaire results that the seventh question had obtained the highest approval rate as shown in the table below:

Table (4) Percentages of the Questionnaire Results

Statements	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree
١	٣٤	٥٨	٣٣	١٨
٢	٤٤	٦٨	٢٤	٧
٣	٣٩	٥٧	٤١	٦
٤	٢١	٥٨	٥٤	١٠
٥	١٨	٥٩	٤٣	٢٣
٦	٤٤	٦٥	٢٣	١١
٧	٦١	٥٢	١٧	١٣
٨	٢٨	٥٨	٤٧	١٠
٩	٤١	٦١	٣٠	١١
١٠	٢٤	٦٦	٣٩	١٤
١١	٤٧	٥٨	٣٠	٨
١٢	٣٥	٥٢	٤٧	٩
١٣	٢٧	٦٣	٤٤	٩
١٤	٤١	٥٨	٣٥	٩
١٥	٣٥	٥٩	٢٨	٢١
١٦	٤٣	٥٠	٣٥	١٥
١٧	٣١	٥٨	٣٥	١٩
١٨	٣٨	٥٨	٣٤	١٣
١٩	٣٩	٥٣	٤٤	٧
٢٠	٢٣	٥٨	٤٥	١٧
٢١	٣١	٦١	٣٥	١٦

٢٢	٣٥	٥٩	٣٢	١٧
٢٣	٤٨	٥٢	٣٤	٩
٢٤	٣٩	٥٧	٣٦	١١

Table (5)

Statements	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree
١	%١٥.٣٨	%٣٣.٥٦	%٢٢.٣٧	%١١.٨٨
٢	%٢٥.٨٧	%٤٤.٧٥	%١٠.٤٨	%٤.٨٩
٣	%٢٢.٣٧	%٣٦.٣٦	%٢٦.٥٧	%١.٣٩
٤	%٩.٠٩	%٣٧.٠٦	%٣٤.٩٦	%٤.٨٩
٥	%١٠.٤٨	%٣٥.٦٦	%٢٧.٩٧	%١٢.٥٨
٦	%٢٦.٥٧	%٤٢.٦٥	%٢٦.٥٧	%٤.٨٩
٧	%٣٧.٧٦	%٣١.٤٦	%١٠.٤٨	%٣.٤٩
٨	%١٤.٦٨	%٣٧.٧٦	%٢٧.٩٧	%٥.٥٩
٩	%٢٧.٠٧	%٤٠.٥٥	%١٦.٠٨	%٦.٢٩
١٠	%١١.٨٨	%٤٣.٣٥	%٢٣.٠٧	%٢.٧٩
١١	%٢٩.٣٧	%٣٧.٠٦	١٧.٤٨	%٢.٠٩
١٢	%١٨.٨٨	%٣٢.٨٦	%٢٧.٩٧	%٦.٢٩
١٣	١٤.٦٨	%٤١	%٢٧.٢٧	%٢.٧٩
١٤	%٢٥.٨٧	%٣٧.٠٦	%٢١.٦٧	%٣.٤٩
١٥	%٢٠.٢٧	%٣٧.٠٦	%١٣.٩٨	١٠.٤٨
١٦	%٢٧.٢٧	%٣١.٤٦	%٢٠.٩٧	%٦.٢٩
١٧	%١٨.٨٨	%٣٤.٩٦	%٢٠.٩٧	%٩.٠٩

١٨	%٢٢.٣٧	%٣٧.٧٦	%٢٠.٢٧	%٦.٩٩
١٩	%٢٤.٤٧	%٣٤.٢٦	%٢٣.٧٧	%٣.٤٩
٢٠	%١٢.٥٨	%٣٥.٦٦	%٢٦.٥٧	%١١.١٨
٢١	%١٦.٠٨	%٣٨.٤٦	%٢٣.٧٧	%٩.٠٩
٢٢	%٢٠.٩٧	%٣٧.٧٦	%١٨.٨٨	%٨.٣٩
٢٣	%٢٦.٥٧	%٣٤.٢٦	%٢٣.٣٧	%٤.٨٩
٢٤	%٢٣.٠٧	%٣٧.٠٦	%٢٠.٩٧	%٤.٨٩

4.1.2 The second aim “Show which methods of note taking are used more than others.

Through the students’ answers and the discussion of the results , it has been found that the third method (mind mapping) is the most used method. It has been also found that the fourth method (flow notes) is the least used one among university students (see table 6)

Table (6) The Items of each Method

Taking methods-Note	Statements	Percentages
1. The Outline Method	٢٢+١٤+٥+٣	%٨٩.٤٣
2. The Cornell Method	٢٠+١٩+١٢	%٦٢.٦٠
3. Mind Mapping	١٨+١٦+٩+٨+٧	%١٤٧.١٥
4. Method Flow Notes	١٣	%١٧.٠٧
5. The Sentence Method	٢٣+١٧+٢+٦+٤+١	%١٤٢.٢٧
6. Charting Method	٢١+١١+١٠	%٦٦.٦٦
7. Writing on Slides	٢٤+١٥	٥١.٢١

4.2 Discussion of the Results

The results show that the third method (mind mapping) is the most used method and the fourth method (Flow notes) is the least used method by university students in note taking.

Mind mapping method for note taking is used more than other methods according to the students' answers in the questionnaire. The results show mind mapping is easier to be used by the students through studying literature. This method is a useful way for students to remember the information they recorded in the lecture.

Section Five

Conclusion and Recommendations

5.1 Conclusion

The results of the questionnaire indicate that English department students use note-taking methods, and the most used method among them is the third method of note-taking (Mind Mapping). This method is a useful way for students to remember the information they recorded during the lecture.

5.2 Recommendations

We recommend university students to use note-taking methods that are useful to them in retrieving the information they recorded in the lecture and to use the method that is most useful for them. Moreover; it is preferred that the university instructors advise their students and teach them how to take notes.

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The Questionnaire

Statements	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree
1. Writing every word the instructor says in note taking.				
2.Review your notes on the same day in note taking.				
3.Test yourself on the content of your notes.				
5.think that you know lecture content better than you actually.				
7.Taking notes in your own words means you will actively think about lecture content.				
8.Make connections between current in note taking and previously discussed				

course concepts.				
9.Connect with another member of the class and create an interactive discussion about note taking in the lecture.				
10.Take well-organized notes in outline Form.				
11.Take notes in complete thoughts, but abbreviate, reduce, and simplify.				
12.Separate and label the notes for each Class.				
13..Include pictures, diagrams and other Visuals.				
14.Take notes on discussion.				
15.Start taking notes when the professor starts talking.				
16.Separate facts from opinion and add your own ideas.				
17.Taking notes during class time is often not enough to retain information.				
18. Visually representing information - by using bubbles, lines, boxes, or other visual markers to represent relationships, sequence, and importance - can also be an effective note-taking tool.				
19.Record During the lecture, use the note taking column record the lecture using short sentences.				
20.Cover the note taking column with a sheet of paper.				
21.After class, formulate questions based on the notes in the note taking column.				
22.Reflect on the material by asking yourself questions, in note taking				
23.Spend at least ten minutes every week reviewing all your previous notes in note taking.				
24.Visit your professor during office hours with questions. and ask if you missed any important.				