TIPS FROM THE DEAN: 
HOW TO TAKE GOOD NOTES

Taking good notes can be the key to success in class! Here are some tips, in case you’ve been thinking you need to improve your note-taking skills.

1) Pay attention in class (put away the phone—and your email, Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, Snapchat accounts and concentrate on the professor). It helps to sit in the front, and remember, professors can tell when you are checking your phone. We see everything from the front of the room (trust me!)

2) Take notes by hand! Studies show that note-taking by hand is much more effective than taking notes on a computer or iPad. Why? You can’t write down—everything—the professor says if you are taking notes by hand. You are forced to listen actively and distill what you are hearing down to the most important concepts.

3) Date and number your pages...especially if you use loose-leaf paper.

4) Write down key phrases, and the key examples used to explain those key concepts.

5) Develop a system. Can’t write fast enough? Develop your own short hand! Use arrows, circle, underlining, traditional outlining—whatever works—to help you emphasize the most important points, and link concepts and ideas from lecture to lecture.

6) Hear a word you aren’t sure how to spell, or what it means? Write it down, the best you can, and leave some space after it. After lecture (not during!), look it up, correct the spelling, and write down the definition.

7) After lecture, make sure to summarize the key points. What were the main points the professor wanted you to take away from the class? Write them on an index card or separate piece of paper. You can review them easily and you’ll be getting some exam prep done early.

8) Don’t hesitate to ask a question in class! If you didn’t understand something, chances are other students have questions too. Or, if you don’t want to ask questions in a large lecture, follow up and ask afterwards. Professors and teaching assistants—want— to help you. Make use of office hours and bring specific questions with you.