



Prepped & Polished, LLC

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Hey guys. Adam S., here with Prepped & Polished South Natick, Massachusetts. Today, we're going to talk about an essential academic skill: Effective note-taking. The most important part of note-taking is the simplest, easiest thing you can do to boost your economic performance, and that is quite simply show up, be present in class. This is easy in high school and middle school when your parents make you go and you don't really have a lot of choice. By the time you get to college, no one tells you what to do and your teachers aren't going to chase after you. The easiest and probably the best thing you can do to boost your score is just to make sure that you show up.

Being present is more than just physically being there, it means making sure that you're there, prepared to learn. Make sure that you get up early enough, that you're awake and you've had something to eat. Make sure you get to class 5 to 10 minutes early to make sure that you have time to get setup, and that you're not rushing in when the teacher's already started talking. Make sure that you sit near the front so that you're away from the distractions of your classmates and you're able to hear everything the teacher says and see anything the teacher might write on the board. Make sure you do any homework or reading the night before the class. It's a lot easier to learn new material if you're already familiar with it.

The first step to effective note-taking is making sure that you're organized. I think 3-ring binders work great. Just use a different binder for each class. It's a good way to help you organize all your notes, all your handouts, and keep everything in one discrete place. Then when you start taking notes, make sure you date your notes so you can organize them when it comes time to study for the test. Label what the teacher's going to be talking about. If the teacher changes topics, change labels and come up with subtopics to help you keep track of where you are in the class. As you sit through class, listen to what the teacher's saying. If your teacher repeats something more than once or writes it up on the board, it's important. Chances are it's going to be on the test; make sure you write it down.

Also really important: If you don't understand something, ask questions. The only dumb question is the question that you don't ask. Teacher's there to help you understand the topics that you're going over, and the only way she or he knows that you don't understand something is if you ask for help. If a teacher isn't able to answer your question during class, approach them after class or show up early and approach them before class. Make sure you get the help that you need.



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If you're having trouble keeping up in class, there's a few different technologies you can utilize to improve your note-taking. First, if you can't keep up with what your teacher's saying and feel like you're missing out on some of what is being said and unable to write it down, try bringing a recorder to class. You can sit there and record everything the teacher says and then play it back later at your own pace. Additionally, computers can be a useful asset. If writing is too much of a challenge and you can't keep up, you can bring a computer and try typing your notes. Just make sure that you're actually typing notes and not looking up Facebook when you should be paying attention to what the teacher's saying. Additionally if you qualify for special accommodations, make sure you talk to your school's academic resource center to see what accommodations are available. It could be that you could get a copy of the teacher's notes, notes from an official note-taker, or recordings of the teacher's lectures. If you do qualify for note-taking, don't only rely on someone else's notes because you might not understand everything they write. Make sure you continue to take your own notes.

If you have friends in the same class as you, compare notes with them. Make sure you didn't miss something the teacher might have mentioned. Then really important, when you get home at night and sit down to do your homework, review your notes. Repetition is the key to learning new material.

Those are the basics of effective note-taking. To recap what we talked about: Number 1, show up, be present. Get to class on time and be prepared. Number 2 is stay organized. Use 3-ring binders and other tools to help organize your notes and use the tools that we talked about to identify relevant topics and write them down. If you're having trouble keeping up, ask for help. If you can't get help through asking, see if your school offers accommodations and use technology; computers, recorders can all really improve the quality of your note-taking. Finally, review. Repetition is the key to learning new material.

That's it for this time. Next time, we'll talk about how to use these notes and other materials to effectively study for a test. Talk to you then.