

SLS1122: Strategies for Academic Success

Note Taking Tips for Math

1. Write down the "title" of the lesson. If you don't know, ask the instructor.
2. Write down the math problem and each step in the solution using math symbols. Next to each step write down "in your own words" exactly what you are doing.
3. Write down a "question mark" next to anything you don't understand. Ask the instructor to explain the parts where you have written your "question marks". Don't just "let it go" thinking that you will figure it out later. Many times, it doesn't happen.
4. When you get home, before you start your homework, "highlight in color" the titles you have written in your notes. The highlighted information will help to give you the "big picture" of what you are doing.
5. Remember, do all homework problems, not just some of them!

From mathpower.com, Ellen Freedman

Three-Column Method

The three-column method of note taking involves dividing the paper into three columns and recording different types of information in each column. It is similar to the **Cornell method**. The main differences between the two methods are that, with the three-column method, key words, ideas, and explanations are recorded while taking notes.

Name of Lesson		Course Name Name Date
Key Words/Rules	Examples/Problems	Explanations/Descriptions

Adding Fractions		MAT1020 Mike Hall 7/01/08
Key Words/Rules	Examples/Problems	Explanations/Descriptions

Like the Cornell method, the three-column method allows for easy scanning of notes to locate certain pieces of information. Notes taken using the three-column method may be used as **study guides** for exam or quiz preparation.

Directions for using the three-column format are as follows:

- **Divide Paper**
 - Use loose leaf notebook paper and write on one side of the page only.
 - Divide the paper vertically into three columns by drawing lines from top to bottom.
- **Documentation**
 - Write the following information at the top of each page: Name of lesson, student name, course, date, and page number.
- **Record Key Words, Ideas and formulas**
 - Record all key words, ideas, and formulas used in the math problems in the left-hand column.
 - Information in this column must be very brief.
- **Record the math problems in the middle column**
 - Make sure to write down each step of the problem.
 - Write down a question mark (?) next to any step you don't understand. Make sure to ask the instructor about these steps as soon as you can!
- **Record Descriptions or Discussions**
 - For each step of the math problems, write down, in your own words, the corresponding description or explanation next to it in the right-hand column.
- **Review and Clarify**
 - As soon after class as possible, review the notes in the right column and clarify any ambiguous information.
 - Compare the information with the book and/or other students' notes.
- **Study**
 - Use all three columns of the notes to prepare for quizzes and exams.
- **Modify**
 - Add extra columns if necessary, depending on the material.
 - For example, you may want to add an extra column for recording relevant information from the textbook at a later date.

Adapted from <http://www.pearsonhighered.com/alanbass/assets/downloads/BassSucceedinMathPresentation-my.doc>