WHAT ARE THE BASIC PRINCIPLES OF NOTE TAKING?
Effective note taking begins with effective listening. Since you should try to comprehend the professor’s lecture, you should not try to write down everything he or she says. Supplement the professor’s lectures with additional information gathered from textbooks, the library, or reliable internet sources. If some of the terms or concepts introduced in a lecture confuse you, seek clarification from the instructor or consult a specialized dictionary of terms available in university library reference sections. Remember that the process of note taking is not complete when you leave the classroom; you should continue to review and reflect upon the concepts discussed in class. Reviewing lecture material immediately after class will help you learn the material so that when exams approach, you can review a second time instead of familiarizing yourself with facts and concepts that are virtually new to you. To speed the pace of note taking, learn to use symbols and/or devise your own shorthand. Most importantly, keep your mind on the big picture; note general themes or the overall argument of the lecture.

STRATEGIES FOR EFFECTIVE NOTE TAKING

I. Make preparations

A. Get to class a few minutes early.
B. Take out a new sheet of paper.
C. Put the date, subject, and the day’s lecture topic at the top of the page.
D. Draw a line down the page about three inches from the left.
E. During class, take notes only on the right side of the margin; leave the left side blank.
F. Take notes on only the right side of the paper.
G. Make sure you have enough paper for the entire lecture.
H. Put the date, subject, and lecture topic on the top of each new sheet. For each new sheet, continue to draw a line and write only on the right hand side of the paper.

II. Write down all key terms

A. Concentrate on noting down general themes, key concepts, major events and figures; do not note examples or details.
B. Underline key terms of the lecture: names of people or places, significant dates, titles of key books or movements, important theories, formulae, and concepts.
C. Compile an ongoing list of each new key term introduced in lecture.
D. Copy any term or phrase your professor writes on the board.
E. If the professor repeats a phrase or idea, it is likely to be important; note emphasis by the use of underlining in your notes.
F. Professors convey meaning by gestures, facial expressions, and body language; observe your professor’s demeanor and presentation and try to depict a pattern of emphasis.

III. Include in your notes brief definitions of key terms

A. Write brief explanations and definitions next to key terms
B. Jot down a few words or phrases that will help you to remember the meaning of key terms.
C. Develop a shorthand that will enable you to take down more material faster and with less effort.
   1. Avoid complete sentences.
   2. Omit unnecessary words such as articles (a, an, the).
   3. Don't worry about spelling and punctuation.
4. Keep descriptions, examples, and anecdotes brief.
5. Abbreviate repeated key terms.
6. Use signs and symbols for commonly used words.
7. Use charts and diagrams, especially if you learning style is visual or spatial.

TAKING NOTES on TEXTBOOKS

I. Make preparations
   A. Keep your books and notes together in one permanent place.
   B. Take out a new sheet of paper and head it with the author and title of the text and the chapter number; on the left hand corner of each page note the page numbers upon which the notes are based; in the right hand corner number the pages of notes sequentially.
   C. Divide the sheet of paper in two: on the left hand side list key names, dates, movements, works, events, and concepts in the order they are presented in the chapter; on the right hand side of the page offer a definition or explanation.
   D. As you take notes, observe carefully the subheadings that divide the chapter; use them to help you to understand the chapter's main points.

III. Write down all key terms
   A. Underline any term that is repeated frequently in the text.
   B. Do not note examples or details; instead, try to supply your own examples to illustrate key concepts.
   C. Maintain a Master List containing all new terms taken from all the chapters you have read.

IV. Review and synthesize material you have noted down
   A. After you have completed your notes on a chapter, re-read them; if your notes contain any terms or ideas you do not understand, clarify by returning to the text, consulting a specialized dictionary, or asking your instructor.
   B. Use a simple diagram that helps you keep track of how various concepts in the chapter are connected.
   C. Identify in your own words the main topic, subtopics, and overall argument of the chapter.
   D. As you take notes, remember that all the information you note should fit under the main heading of the chapter.
   E. As you review your notes, think about how subsidiary points (often indicated by subheadings) are related to the main topic of the chapter.

V. Note general themes
   A. After you have taken notes on each chapter, see if by re-reading your notes you can identify the most important themes of the chapter.
   B. As you review your notes, ask yourself questions: what were the key concepts of the chapter? What significant people, events, movements, terms, or concepts did the chapter introduce?
   C. Test yourself frequently on the information recorded in your notes: cover up the right hand side of the page or fold it back and define and explain in your own words the terms on your Master List.