Sit front and center
Location in the classroom has a big impact on the quality of notes that you take. Arriving on time for your lecture and finding a seat that has a clear view of the front of the class is the 1st step to taking good notes. When you sit at the front, you will be able to hear your professor clearly, see any visual aids, and will be away from distractions.

Record main points and examples
You’ll never have time to write every word your professor is saying, so focus on writing down the main points and concentrate on what’s being said. Keep in mind that you can fill in the blanks or elaborate on your notes after class using other course materials. It’s even better if you bring notes from the assigned readings to class with you to add to – this way you aren’t writing down content twice.

Put it in your own words
Taking good notes is not a matter of copying information down; it involves thinking about it first. If all you’re doing is transcribing, then you’re likely missing out on comprehending the information being presented. When you take notes in your own words, then you are required to think about what you’re learning which will help you comprehend it and commit it to memory.

Listen for cues
Be aware of changes in your profs voice and look for facial expressions or gestures that may suggest something is important. Be sure to listen for key ideas or concepts that are repeated throughout the lecture too; and always make note of them.

Be cautious using electronic notes
While a lot of students are opting to take notes by bringing their laptop or tablets to class; you should be sure to follow 2 guidelines. (1) Turn OFF your wireless connection - not doing so causes way too many distractions! (2) Make a back up - you don’t want to be left without any notes if your computer crashes!
Use the Cornell Method

Divide up the format of your notes using the following approach (see Figure 1). You’ll find that come review time, you’ll be better able to identify information when it’s in a consistent format.

Overcome the curve of forgetting

It’s human nature to forget, but reviewing your notes regularly can help you ensure that you retain as much of your lectures as possible. Ebbinghaus’ (1885) curve of forgetting shows this best (see Figure 2).

Stay organized

Keeping a binder for each class will ensure that you have access to all your notes in every lecture – this will be helpful because you’ll be able to make reference to them. Having notes in a binder will also make it easier to add in handouts, ppt printouts, etc too.

Use shorthand

The only person that needs to be able to understand your notes is you – so come up with a list of common words you’ll be constantly using as well as the abbreviations or symbols used to replace them. Remember that you can always expand your notes after class.

Share and compare

If you aren’t really sure, review the notes that you took with a classmate, TA, or prof (in their office hours of course!) to see if you captured the most important information. Sharing and comparing is a great way to make sure that your notes are up to par and will be helpful in preparing for assignments and/or exams.