Note taking in class

Hints for good note taking

Prepare beforehand
- If reading has been set, do it!
- Re-read your previous notes and remind yourself of its content.
- Ask yourself questions like “What do I know about the topic?”, “How does it relate to what was covered last week?”… etc
- Think about the subject of the class and what you know about it.
- Arrive on time.
- Sit near the front and collect any handouts.

Features of a class
Teachers use various strategies to indicate to students what is important.

Introductions and conclusions
Beginnings and endings are vital. The teacher outlines the important points, connects them with the previous and next classes as well as the framework of the whole subject.
It is important that you arrive on time!

Repetition and elaboration
Important points are repeated or illustrated with examples.

Linking expressions
Linking expressions direct listeners to new and important ideas:
- Contrast words – however, but, despite, on the other hand, conversely
- Concession words – although, even though, in the light of, given that
- Addition words – also, too, in addition, furthermore
- Emphasis words – importantly, specifically, especially, obviously
- Sequencing words – firstly, secondly, next, finally
- Summary words – in conclusion, to sum up, in summary
- Illustration words – for example, to illustrate, that is
- Reason and result words – consequently, because, therefore

Voice emphasis
Important ideas, words and phrases are emphasised. This is done by saying them more slowly and often more loudly. Gestures and movement may also be used for emphasis.
Note taking in a class

Example
The following is a sample of a “lecture” on memory and learning.
Below the notes is an example of a useful method of note taking – the Cornell method.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Long and short term memory</th>
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</thead>
</table>
| In order to develop **effective learning skills**, it is necessary to understand more about how the **memory is structured**, in particular the role of **short-term memory** and **long-term memory**. Short-term memory is the part known as the conscious mind and is used for **paying attention**. Long-term memory is where **information is stored**. There are many things that come into the short-term memory and are not transferred to the long-term memory (see diagram1). In fact the brain is designed to **forget between 50% and 75%** of the information that is not transferred to the long-term memory within 24 hours. Therefore, the **brain** carefully selects **what is stored** in the long-term memory.

(Havir, A. 2003, *Memory and Learning*, RMIT University, Australia)

Cornell system of note taking (one way to organise note taking)
Use two columns—one, a review or key words column on the left, the note taking or details column on the right—use point form.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Include topic and date of lecture.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Structure of memory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Short term</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Long term</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(occasionally you might copy useful quotes)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Long term ST</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>