

Learning Tip:

How to Take Notes

Dr. Gary Au
au@math.usask.ca

University of Saskatchewan

How to Take Notes

- ▶ Notes are primarily study materials for future you.
- ▶ Consider using the Cornell notes template, which divides each page into three areas:
 1. **Cues**: A narrow left-hand column for keywords, questions, or main ideas.
 - ▶ Used for prompts that help you recall the information.
 - ▶ Can be pre-filled before lecture by skimming course notes/textbook.
 2. **Notes**: A larger right-hand column where you write your notes.
 - ▶ Capture key ideas, explanations, and example setups.
 - ▶ Filled during lecture.
 3. **Summary**: A space at the bottom summarizing the notes.
 - ▶ Filled in (ideally immediately) after class.

How to Take Notes

- ▶ Aim for **structure**, not a transcript:
 - ▶ definitions, key results, and “when to use this”;
 - ▶ example **statements and setups**, not full solutions.
- ▶ Use abbreviations and symbols to save time.
- ▶ After class (10 min), while the lecture is still fresh:
 - ▶ write a 3–5 line summary: “What was the point today?”
 - ▶ fill gaps in your notes;
 - ▶ (optional) write 1–2 cue questions (e.g., “When do we use this?”, “What’s the key step?”) for spaced retrieval practice later.