



Unit 4

Taking Notes in Class

Activities

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Activity 4-1: Listening for Signal Words and Statements

Teachers typically speak about four times faster than you can write. This means that even if you want to, you cannot write in your notes everything that your teacher says. As your teacher lectures, you need to make decisions about the information that is most important to write in your notes.

During classes, your teachers will use words and statements to alert you that what they are about to say is important to write in your notes. These words and statements are called **signal words** and **signal statements**.

Here are some signal words and signal statements that may be used by your teachers. Keep in mind that there are many others.

Make sure that you know...

The most important point...

Moreover...

Most importantly...

The basic concept...

Next...

A central issue...

Furthermore...

It is significant...

In summary...

Therefore...

In conclusion...

Overall...

A major development...

Remember that...

Similarly...

The important idea...

Consequently...

The major outcome...

Finally...

It should be noted...

However...



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Activity 4-1: Listening for Signal Words and Statements (continued)

Read the following class lecture about the Industrial Revolution. Underline each signal word and signal statement as you read.

In the 1700s, most people in America were farmers. However, most goods were made at home by hand or in small shops. It was not until the early 1800s that goods began to be produced in factories. Furthermore, new forms of transportation allowed goods to be moved faster than ever before. The main idea here is that new inventions brought changes to manufacturing. These changes were called the Industrial Revolution. A major development occurred in 1790 when Samuel Slater opened the first cotton-spinning mill in the United States. Next, Eli Whitney invented the cotton gin, whose wire teeth cleaned cotton very quickly. The major outcome of Whitney's 1793 invention was that cotton soon became the nation's largest export. You should also note that Whitney went on to develop a system of mass production for making guns. Overall, keep in mind that new ways of manufacturing goods greatly increased the productivity of the United States. More developments soon occurred. In 1814, Frances Cabot Lowell built a mill near Boston that not just spun cotton, but also wove cloth. This was significant because New England soon became the center of a booming textile industry. Also important is the impact that the Industrial Revolution had on farming. Inventions such as Cyrus McCormick's reaper and John Deere's steel plow made it much easier for farmers to work the thick soil found on the prairies and plains of the midwest. In conclusion, the Industrial Revolution transformed America.

Think of some other signal words and statements you have heard your teachers use. Write them here.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____



Activity 4-2: Commonly Used Abbreviations

When taking notes in classes, it is important to write quickly so that you can include all the important information. A good way to increase your notetaking speed is to use **abbreviations**. Abbreviations are shortened versions of words. When using abbreviations to increase your notetaking speed, do not include a period at the end of the abbreviation.

There are many words that have a commonly used abbreviation. For example, *chronology* is commonly abbreviated as *chron*, and *territory* as *terr*.

Here are some commonly used abbreviations. Write the entire word next to each abbreviation.

- | | |
|----------------|----------------|
| 1. capt _____ | 2. tbsp _____ |
| 3. dept _____ | 4. pl _____ |
| 5. oz _____ | 6. ave _____ |
| 7. anon _____ | 8. sgt _____ |
| 9. max _____ | 10. vol _____ |
| 11. chem _____ | 12. div _____ |
| 13. econ _____ | 14. yd _____ |
| 15. fig _____ | 16. wt _____ |
| 17. jr _____ | 18. univ _____ |
| 19. govt _____ | 20. inc _____ |
| 21. lb _____ | 22. lat _____ |
| 23. sq _____ | 24. abbr _____ |

Write some other common abbreviations and the words they abbreviate.

Abbreviation	Word
25. _____	_____
26. _____	_____
27. _____	_____
28. _____	_____



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Activity 4-3: Forming Abbreviations

Activity 4-3: Forming Abbreviations

In Activity 4-2, you learned that many words have common abbreviations. You can create your own abbreviations for words that do not have common abbreviations, or whose common abbreviations you do not know.

When you write your own abbreviation for a word in your notes, you must be able to later identify the entire word from the abbreviation you wrote. To do this, you should consider the context in which the abbreviated word appears. For example, suppose that during a lecture in your social studies class, you write the abbreviation “dyn” for the word “dynasty.” The abbreviation “dyn” could just as easily represent the words dynamic, dynamite, and dynamo. Because the lecture you took notes from was about a series of rulers of China who belonged to the same family, you will recognize the word as dynasty. The other words would not fit the context.

Here are three ways you can abbreviate words. Keep in mind that many words do not have to be abbreviated, or are difficult to abbreviate. You will have difficulty reading and reviewing your notes if you use too many abbreviations.

For long words whose beginning is easy to pronounce, write just the beginning of the word. Here are some examples.

<u>Word</u>	<u>Abbreviation</u>
federal	fed
liberal	lib
electron	elec
illuminate	illum

For shorter words that do not begin with a vowel, leave out the vowel or vowels. Here are some examples.

<u>Word</u>	<u>Abbreviation</u>
larva	lrv
culture	cltr
zone	zn
jungle	jngl



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Activity 4-3: Forming Abbreviations (continued)

For one-syllable words that do not end with a vowel, write just the first and last letter. Here are some examples.

<u>Word</u>	<u>Abbreviation</u>
dock	dk
gulf	gf
quark	qk
smog	sg

Write an abbreviation for each of the following words. For each word, use the way of abbreviating that you think works best for the word.

- volt _____
- model _____
- scavenger _____
- spore _____
- radar _____
- temperature _____
- tyranny _____
- system _____
- unanimous _____
- plateau _____
- league _____
- domestic _____
- blockade _____
- metaphor _____
- hurricane _____



Activity 4-4: Using Symbols

You can also increase your notetaking speed by replacing words or terms with **symbols**. Here are some common symbols and the words or terms they represent.

=	equals	#	number	\$	dollar
÷	division	&	and	-	minus
@	at	?	question	c/o	in care of
w/o	without	+	plus	✓	check
%	percent	≠	not equal to	¢	cents
>	greater than	<	less than	°	degrees

Look at this sentence.

I have 25 cents in my pocket.

You can substitute the symbol ¢ for cents.

I have 25¢ in my pocket.

Now look at this sentence.

I am not going to class without a good question to ask my teacher.

You can substitute the symbol w/o for without and the symbol ? for question.

I am not going to class w/o a good ? to ask my teacher.

Notice that many of the symbols relate to mathematics. In some cases, you can use a mathematical symbol for other purposes. For example, look at the following sentence.

Studying for 3 hours at the beach is not equal to studying for 1 hour at the library.

You can substitute the symbol ≠ for “not equal to.”

Studying for 3 hours at the beach is ≠ studying for 1 hour at the library.



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Activity 4-4: Using Symbols (continued)

Read each sentence that follows. Then rewrite each sentence using one or more of the symbols shown on the previous page. You can use the same symbol more than once.

1. When you see a question mark at the end of a sentence, you know that it is an interrogative sentence.

2. Yesterday's high temperature of 82 degrees was 16 degrees greater than today's high temperature of 66 degrees.

3. I am sure that 16 plus 32 equals 64 minus 16.

4. There are a number of reasons why you should send a package in care of a particular person.

5. I still have difficulty doing division and figuring out a percent.

For each of the following, write a sentence that uses both symbols.

6. $\sqrt{\quad}$ c/o

7. $>$ %

8. \$ ¢

9. @ =

10. # ?



Activity 4-5: Using The Fewest Words

Another way to increase your notetaking speed is to write **the fewest words** needed to include the most important information. You can do this by writing short sentences or phrases in place of long sentences.

Suppose your teacher said the following long sentence.

You may be surprised to learn that the atmosphere exerts more than one thousand newtons of force on the top of your head.

Using what you have already learned about abbreviations in Activity 4-3 and symbols in Activity 4-4, you can write the sentence as follows:

atmos exerts > 1000 newtons of force on head

Rewrite each of the following sentences using the fewest words needed to include the important information. Use abbreviations and symbols as appropriate.

1. Air is a very good insulator because it slows down conduction to reduce heat loss from buildings in the winter and also because it keeps heat out of buildings in the summer.

2. The electrical energy produced by power plants here in America and throughout the world is transmitted through power lines at very high voltages that are greater than the voltage that can be used safely in homes.

3. The amount of uranium needed to generate a very large amount of electricity is less than the amount of coal, oil, or gas that is needed.

4. The Doppler effect is a change in sound frequency caused by motion of the sound source, motion of the listener, or both the motion of the sound source and the motion of the listener.

5. The Statue of Liberty, a national monument and a symbol of freedom in America, was a gift of friendship from the people of France to the people of the United States.



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Activity 4-6: Two-Column Notetaking Format

Activity 4-6: Two-Column Notetaking Format

When your teacher begins a lecture, he or she will usually start by identifying the *topic*. The topic is what the lecture is about. During the lecture, your teacher will present one or more *main ideas* about the topic. A main idea is a major idea about a topic. Each main idea may have one or more *supporting details*. A supporting detail provides specific information about a main idea. As you take notes, you must decide which information is most important to record. Some ideas expressed by your teacher may be interesting but not essential to include in your notes.

The two-column notetaking format shown below will help you to write the most important information presented by your teacher.

Class _____ Date _____

Page Number _____ Topic _____

Main Ideas	Supporting Details



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Activity 4-6: Two-Column Notetaking Format (continued)

Here is how to take notes during class using the two-column notetaking format. The notes you take in class are your *first notes*. Remember to listen for signal words and statements to be sure you include all of the important information. Use abbreviated words, symbols, and shortened sentences or phrases to write quickly.

1. Record the name of the class you are taking notes for, the date of the class session, and the page number of the notes for that class session. Many times you will have more than one page of notes for the session.
2. Write the topic of the lecture once your teacher identifies it.
3. Each time your teacher provides a main idea, write it in the Main Ideas column. Number each main idea beginning with 1.
4. Next to each main idea, write in the Supporting Details column any supporting details your teacher provides about that main idea. Number each supporting detail for a main idea beginning with 1.
5. Place a question mark at the end of a main idea or supporting detail that you write but do not fully understand.
6. Underline a word you write but whose meaning you do not know or are unsure about.

Answer these questions.

1. What is a main idea?

2. What is a supporting detail?

3. What should you do to write notes quickly?

4. What should you do if you do not know the meaning of a word that you write in your notes?

5. What should you do when you write a word your teacher used whose meaning you do not know or are unsure about?



Activity 4-7: First Notes

First Notes are the notes you take while in class. Your first notes may include abbreviations and symbols, shortened sentences, questions to be answered, and words whose meanings you need to learn. You will learn how to rewrite your first notes in Activity 4-8.

Read the following lecture given by a teacher about deserts.

Today I'm going to tell you about deserts. A desert is a dry area of land which has few plants or animals. Most deserts are hot, get very little rain, and are sandy or rocky. It's important to know that more than a fifth of the world's land is desert. Even when deserts get rain, the water quickly evaporates from the heat or sinks into the dry ground. The highest temperature ever recorded in a desert was in Death Valley in California. A temperature of 134 degrees Fahrenheit was recorded there in 1913. The Atacama Desert in Chile is the driest place in the world. Keep in mind that not all deserts are hot. The Gobi Desert in central Asia is far north of the equator and can get quite cold. Its temperature can drop to minus 40 degrees Fahrenheit in winter. The biggest problem faced by desert plants and animals is how to survive the lack of water. Plants typically survive the lack of water in deserts by using their long, spreading roots to reach any available water. Their spines or small leaves help prevent them from losing water through evaporation. But what about animals? Some animals, like camels, can live for many days without water. Other animals can burrow deep into the ground to find water. Desert animals also have to deal with high heat. The most important way they can do this is to avoid the heat of day and come out in the open only at night. Lack of water and excessive heat are not problems in fertile parts of a desert called an oasis. An oasis is found where an aquifer or an underground stream comes to the surface. Where there is an oasis you will find more plants and animals. Here's something to keep in mind as we worry about global warming. Some areas of Earth may become too dry for farming. When this happens, deserts can spread. Oh, just one more thing you should know. The word desert is spelled d e s e r t. Don't confuse this with the word dessert, which is spelled d e s s e r t. Speaking of dessert, it's time for your lunch period.



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Activity 4-7: First Notes (continued)

Examine the following first notes a student took in class from the lecture about deserts.

Class _____ Geography _____ Date _____ 11/5 _____

Page Number _____ 1 _____ Topic _____ Deserts _____

Main Ideas

Supporting Details

<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. dsrt dry area of land 2. > 1/5 of wrld is dsrt 3. not all dsrts hot 4. plnts & anim have prob bcse of lack of wtr 5. anims must deal wth hi heat 6. in <u>oasis</u> wtr & ht not probs 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. few plnts & anim 2. hot 3. little rain 4. sandy or rocky 1. gobi -40° in wntr bcse far N of equat 1. plnts use lng rts to get wtr 2. spines & sm lvs stop wtr evap? 3. some anim like camels can lve for days w/o wtr 4. some anim burrow into grnd for wtr 1. avoid ht of day 2. come out at night 1. oasis fnd by <u>aquifer</u> or undrgrnd strm 2. <u>fertele</u> 3. more plnts & anims there
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Unit 4: Taking Notes in Class

Activity 4-7: First Notes (continued)

Use the first notes the student took to answer the following questions.

1. What was the lecture about?

2. Next to each of the following abbreviations used by the student, write the entire word.

plnts _____ wrld _____

3. Write two symbols used by the student. Next to each symbol, write what the symbol stands for.

4. Rewrite each of the following as a complete sentence without using abbreviations or symbols.

> 1/5 of wrld is dsrt

gobi -40° in wntr bcse far N of equat

5. What are two words whose meanings the student did not know?

6. Which supporting detail was the student uncertain about?

7. How many main ideas were there?

8. How many supporting details were there for the fourth main idea?

9. Were one or more supporting details provided for each main idea?



Activity 4-8: Rewritten Notes

As soon as possible after class, rewrite your first notes into **Rewritten Notes**. You can do this by hand or by using your computer. Your rewritten notes should be complete, accurate, and legible.

Rewriting your notes can be helpful to you in several ways.

- You will have an opportunity to correct any errors you might have in your first notes.
- As you rewrite your notes, you will be reviewing what you wrote. This will help you to remember the information in your notes.
- You will be left with a clear set of notes that will make it easier for you to study for a test.

Here is what to do when you rewrite your first notes.

- Replace each abbreviation with the entire word.
- Replace each symbol with the word or term the symbol represents.
- Expand short sentences and phrases into full sentences.
- Use your textbooks and reference sources to clarify any main idea or supporting detail at the end of which you placed a question mark. Incorporate what you learn about the main idea or supporting detail.
- Use the glossary of your textbook or an online or print dictionary to learn the meaning of any word next to which you placed a question mark. Incorporate what you learn about the meaning of the word.
- Correct any errors in grammar, punctuation, and spelling.

Examine the student's rewritten notes about deserts on the following page.



Unit 4: Taking Notes in Class

Activity 4-8: Rewritten Notes (continued)

Class Geography Date 11/5

Page Number 1 Topic Deserts

Main Ideas

Supporting Details

<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. A desert is a dry area of land.2. More than one fifth of the world is desert.3. Not all deserts are hot.4. Plants and animals have problems living in a desert because of the lack of water.5. Animals must also deal with the high heat.6. Water and heat are not problems in an oasis. An oasis is a place in a desert where trees, shrubs, and other plants can grow because there is a supply of water.	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. It has few plants and animals.2. It is hot.3. It gets little rain.4. It is sandy or rocky. <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. The Gobi Desert can get as cold as -40°F in the winter because it is far north of the equator. The further the distance from the equator, the colder the climate.1. Plants use their long roots to get to water below the ground2. The spines and small leaves on plants stop water from evaporating on the plants.3. Some animals like camels can live for days without water.4. Some animals burrow into the ground to get water.<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. They avoid the heat of the day.2. They come out only at night.1. An oasis can be found by an aquifer or an underground stream. An aquifer is an underground bed or layer that yields water for wells and springs.2. An oasis is fertile, which means that plants can easily grow there.3. There are more plants and animals in an oasis than in other parts of a desert.
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Unit 4: Taking Notes in Class

Activity 4-8: Rewritten Notes (continued)

Use the rewritten notes to answer these questions.

1. Here are two abbreviations the student wrote in the first notes. Next to each abbreviation, write the entire word as written by the student in the rewritten notes.

dsrt _____ grnd _____

2. Here are two misspelled words from the first notes. Write the correct spelling of each of these words as shown in the rewritten notes.

fertele _____ aquifur _____

3. What did the student find to be the explanation of why the Gobi Desert is cold?

4. Identify two characteristics of a desert.

5. What is the function of the long roots of desert plants?

6. How much of Earth consists of deserts?

7. What animal can live for quite some time without water?

8. Write the meanings the student found for each of these words.

oasis _____

aquifer _____

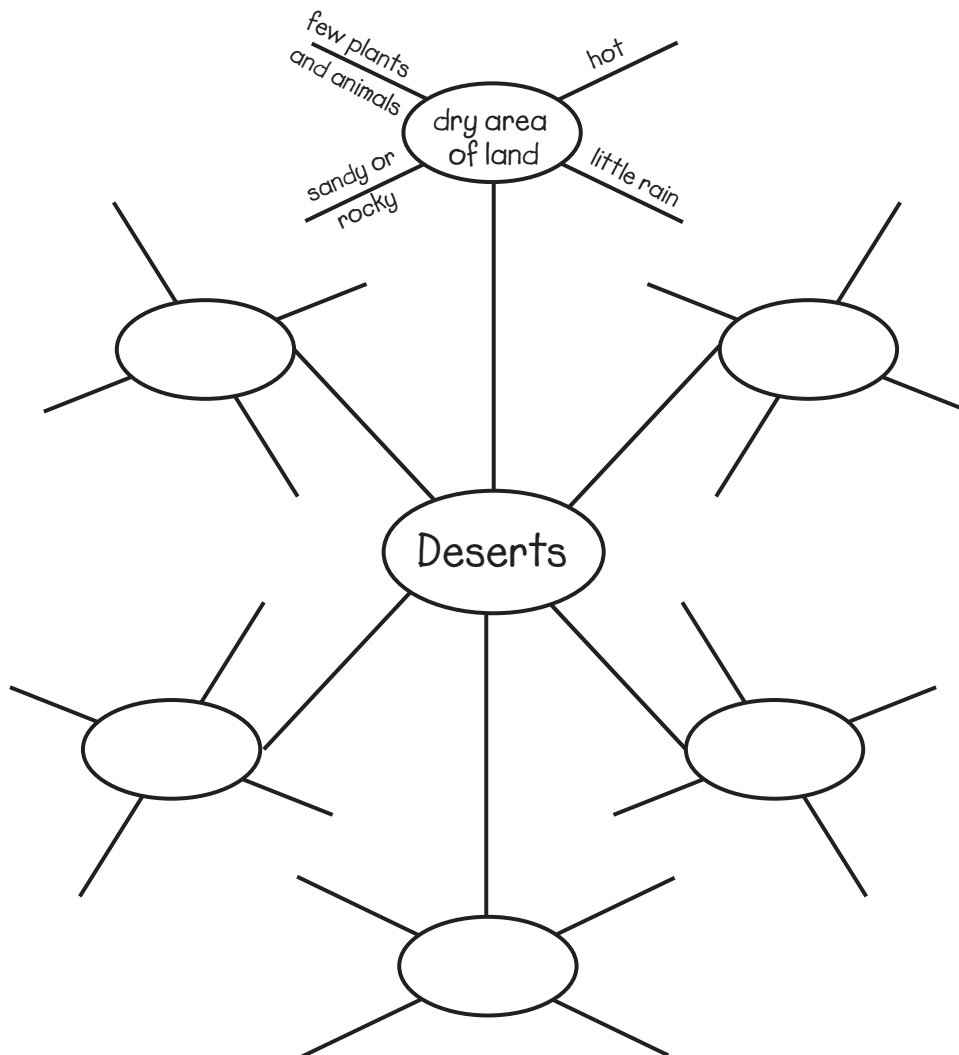


Activity 4-9: Graphic Organizer for Rewritten Notes

Once you have rewritten your notes, create a **Graphic Organizer** for your rewritten notes. A graphic organizer provides a visual picture of information that allows you to easily see the relationships between facts, terms, and ideas. It is an excellent tool when you want to quickly review your notes.

Here is a partially completed graphic organizer for the rewritten notes in Activity 4-8. You will see that the topic is written inside the center oval. The first main idea is written in one of the ovals that is attached to the center oval. Each supporting detail for that main idea is written on a line that is attached to that main idea oval.

Use the rewritten notes in Activity 4-8 to complete the graphic organizer. You may not need to use all of the ovals and lines provided.





Activity 4-10: What I Have Learned

Answer the following.

1. What are three ways to write notes quickly?

2. What are three ways to form abbreviations?

3. Why do teachers use signal words and statements when they lecture?

4. Identify two signal words or statements often used by teachers.

5. What is a main idea?

6. When writing first notes, what should you do when you write a word whose meaning you do not know?

7. When writing first notes, what should you do if you write a main idea you are unsure about?

8. When rewriting your first notes, what should you do for any symbols you used?

9. Why should you create a graphic organizer for your rewritten notes?
