A LESSON IN NOTE TAKING
By Stephanie S. Marshall

When you go to college, you will be expected to get good grades. You will be responsible for attending classes and knowing the coursework. You could be tested daily or weekly on multiple chapters at a time. Some classes may have only a midterm and final exam. Either way, it’s important to take good notes — remembering everything can be next to impossible if you’re taking more than one class. To become a good note-taker in college, you should do the following:

- **Be prepared.** Read assignments before class. Go over the course syllabus your instructor provides.
- **Listen carefully.** Find a seat where you can hear the instructor clearly. If you sit in front of the class, you’ll be less likely nod off.
- **Pay attention.** Concentrate on what the instructor is saying. Ask questions and participate in class.
- **Stay organized.** Keep all your notes together in one place to find and review them more easily.

Be sure to record your name and phone number in your notebook, so if it is lost it can be returned to you. Label your notes by date and subject and leave blank pages to include additions later. During the lecture, summarize the main ideas in the margins of the page. Major subgroups should be indented on your outline. Remember that subtopics and major themes can show up on exams. Use abbreviations for common words to allow you to write more information in the shortest period of time. Some abbreviations are: with- w/, and-& example- ex, introduction- intro, continued- cont’d, definition- def and information- info. If certain words show up repeatedly during a lecture, create your own abbreviations. Here is a sample of a lecture and notes:

Bronx Community College is an institution rich with culture diversity and history. It is the first community college to be declared a United States National Historic Landmark. Founded on April 11, 1957, BCC opened its doors to students two years later. It is the former site to New York University’s uptown campus and first class consisted of 123 students. Today the student body is approximately 11,500.

You should compare notes after class with a classmate if you are missing information. Be sure to make friends in class in case you miss class or want to create a study group. Remember to meet with your instructor during office hours every semester. Review your notes regularly to keep the material fresh in your mind. When taking notes, think about the lecture critically and how it relates to you and your studies. Understanding the content thoroughly will help determine the grades you receive. Becoming a good note-taker will increase your success in college.

“If you want to make peace with your enemy, you have to work with your enemy. Then he becomes your partner.”

- NELSON MANDELA, ACTIVIST, SOUTH AFRICAN PRESIDENT, NOBEL LAUREATE (1918-2013)