

Taking Notes in Class

During each class session, a student takes notes of class activities and discussions. Advantages to this include:

- It promotes class community, the sense that what we say is being recorded as part of our common history; the shared stories that help us better understand one another.
- Reading class notes can jump-start class by reminding everyone where discussion left off. They also remind everyone of the key issues discussed and the arguments considered in the previous class.
- Some students pay better attention to class discussions and participate more freely because they know their own notes will be supplemented by an “official” version.
- It forces students to pay better attention to their classmates’ comments in order to record their ideas correctly.
- Students get to speak at the start of each class period, if only to read what a classmate said during the previous session.

Example of Class Note Taking

Class last Thursday, February 9, got off to a good start as everyone enjoyed Jason's witty notes and his ability to use our new vocabulary word, viz., in a sentence. We were all happy to hear that no study questions were due for the following week.

Fishman then started our discussion by directing the conversation to questions that Tricia had on Tuesday about Paley. Like Tricia, Scott didn't understand Paley or his whole argument. Mike Stevens nodded in agreement saying that he was "clueless the whole time."

Rebecca, seeming frustrated, asked Fishman about us discussing the readings before doing the study questions. Fishman explained that it is important for us to work our way through the readings ourselves. He wants us to "experience being puzzled." It was pretty evident from the class discussion that followed that we had all experienced being puzzled while reading Paley.

We then got out our books and Mike Stevens began reading some of Paley's confusing words. Evan tells us that Paley is trying to relate the watch to man and how man came into existence.

The reading wears Mike out, so Jake, being a good friend, roommate, and teammate, continues for him. B. L. expresses her confusion about Paley by saying that she had "no idea, clue, or anything."

We do finally see Paley's point when Mike Stevens tells us that he's trying to say that there is a God. Spence then adds that Paley believes that if you can't explain how things got here then there's no creator, and it's atheism.

Based on:

Fishman, Stephen M. "Student Writing in Philosophy: A Sketch of Five Techniques." *New Directions for Teaching and Learning*. 69 (Spring 1997): 58-59.