BEFORE CLASS, DO YOU

_______ have extra pens and sufficient paper or notebook space?
_______ have a fully-charged battery if you’re taking notes on a laptop?
_______ staple the course syllabus in your notebook and refer to it often?
_______ arrive early to get a good seat and review your notes from the previous classes?
_______ sit near the front and away from the door to minimize distractions?
_______ try to sit near the center of a row so you can see both ends of the board?
_______ take off your coat so you’re not too warm?
_______ keep all your notes together in a spiral notebook or on loose-leaf paper in a binder?
_______ use a separate notebook for each class so if you lose a notebook you won’t lose all your notes?
_______ read all assigned material BEFORE class so you can listen and participate more actively?
_______ review your notes from the previous class so you can understand relationships?
_______ use 8-1/2 x 11 paper?
_______ draw a 2” margin on the left-hand side of each page or leave the backs of each page blank, and after class use this space for editing or summarizing your notes or for writing questions based on the notes?

DURING CLASS, DO YOU

_______ always date your notes?
_______ number each page if you’re taking notes on loose-leaf paper?
_______ write legibly, and streamline your handwriting? (Although recopying notes can be an effective study strategy, if you don’t have time your original notes must be readable.)
_______ observe the instructor’s style and notice changes in voice or body language?
_______ copy all material on the board?
_______ listen for key phrases such as “The most important aspects ...” or “Four of the most commonly identified causes...”?
_______ record all examples, to increase your understanding of terms or concepts?
_______ occasionally look over the last few lines of notes to fill in gaps or rewrite illegible words?
_______ use signals (such as ?, ×, or ☹ ) to indicate when you’re confused?
_______ leave plenty of blank spaces, especially if the lecture moves rapidly, and then fill in soon after class?
Taking Notes in College Lectures: A Checklist

_______ develop abbreviations that you’ll recognize later?
_______ use numerals instead of writing out numbers?
_______ omit letters in long words or write only the beginnings of long words? ("govmt" instead of “government,” “mgmt” instead of “management,” and “repre” instead of “represent”)
_______ notice how much time the instructor spends on an idea? (The more time spent on an idea, the more important it is, thus the more prominence it may have on the test.)
_______ indent, to distinguish main ideas from details and examples?
_______ continue to take notes during class discussions?
_______ avoid trying to write down every word an instructor says? Instead, do you listen and then rephrase succinctly yet accurately?
_______ look at the instructor and maintain eye contact?
_______ ask questions when you’re confused?
_______ date handouts and keep them with the day’s notes?
_______ take notes right up to the very end of class?
_______ continue to take notes during films, videos, guest speakers, and class discussions?
_______ politely ask your instructor to slow down if you can’t keep up?
_______ if your instructor distributes a copy of PowerPoint slides, do you write additional notes in the spaces provided?

AFTER CLASS, DO YOU
_______ think about the content of the lecture after you leave the class?
_______ edit your notes in the 2” margin or on the backs of pages soon after class (preferably within 24 hours)?
_______ fill in any gaps in your notes very soon after class?
_______ highlight, circle, or mark important ideas and new terms?
_______ review your notes frequently, perhaps even daily, for difficult classes? (Research shows that many shorter study sessions over time result in greater retention than last-minute cramming.)
_______ write possible test questions as you review your notes, then close your notes and see if you can answer them?
_______ get acquainted with other students in the class and exchange contact information?