

## Notetaking Time-Savers

Keeping up with a lecture while taking notes in class is difficult to impossible for learners who try to write down *every word*. Notetaking is more effective if learners practice a few simple Time Savers designed to make taking notes faster and easier.

To help you refine condensing and abbreviation skills, complete the exercise below. It may be slow at first but you will pick up speed as you practice.

### Time Saver #1: Don't Try to Record Every Word

“Today we are going to talk about Behavioral Learning Theories of which there are three. In general, Behavioral Theorists focus on observable behavior. One theory of learning based on behavior is Pavlovian Conditioning or Classical Conditioning. This involves a reflexive response associated with a new stimulus. For example, a reflexive response of a dog when he sees food is to salivate. In Classical Pavlovian Conditioning, we can teach a dog to salivate when a bell rings, a new stimulus, by teaching a dog to associate a ringing bell with food.

Another Behavioral Learning Theory is Observational Learning. This occurs when behavior is imitated by another. This behavior is easily seen in children as they imitate parental behavior whether it is desired behavior or not. For example, if children hear parents swear in a moment of anger, it is not unusual to hear children add those words to their burgeoning vocabulary.

A third Behavioral Learning Theory is called Operant Conditioning. This involves taking a voluntary response, desired behavior, and strengthen it using reinforcements. Potty training a child as an example. Parents will praise a child, offer candy or other rewards to encourage repeated toilet use.”

Learners can keep up with a lecture by eliminating unnecessary words. Below is an example of how the above lecture could be condensed, organized, and recorded:

3 Behav. Lrng theories

1. Pavlovian/Classical - assoc. Reflexive resp. w/ new stim.
  - a. Ex - dog salivates when hears bell = assoc. W/food
2. Observational - imitate others we see.
  - a. Ex - dad swears and son picks it up
3. Operant - volun. Resp. (desired behav.) strengthen w/ rein.
  - a. Ex - toilet training

It is easier and faster to write 50 words using abbreviations and short phrases than it is to write 196 whole words in complete sentences. Learners also have more time to listen and focus on understanding lectures.

## Time Saver #2: Record Words as They Sound Using as Few Letters as Possible

Record the words below **as they sound**. Omit unneeded vowels and consonants. Then, find 10 words from a course you are taking and abbreviate them below **as they sound**.

Word	Abbreviation	Word	Abbreviation
ready			
enough			
because			
height			
weight			
essay			
through			
compound			
freeze			
solvent			

### Time Saver #3: Use Common Shorter Forms

Record the words below using common shorter forms used by college students. Then, find 10 commonly used words from a course you are taking now and record those words below a **common shorter form**. If you cannot find a commonly used shorter form, create an abbreviation using Time Saver #1.

Word	Abbreviation	Word	Abbreviation
difference			
telephone			
principles			
deoxyribonucleic acid			
between			
system			
automobile			
double			
condition			
dihydrogen monoxide			
research			
general			
example			
hydrogen			

## Time Saver #4: Substitute Letters or Numbers for Syllables

Record the words listed below using letters or numbers in place of syllables instead of writing out the whole word. Then, find 10 commonly used words from a course you are taking now and record those words below using **numbers or letters in place of syllables**.

Word	Abbreviation	Word	Abbreviation
before			
forget			
carbonate			
create			
enthalpy			
equate			
saturate			
benign			
foreign			
infatuate			
wonderful			
estimate			
reinforce			
fortunate			
threonine			

## Time Saver #5: Use Standard Abbreviations

Record the words listed below using abbreviations considered standard in business, industry, or education instead of writing out the whole word. Then, fill in abbreviations for 10 commonly used words below from a course you are taking now **using standard abbreviations**.

Word	Abbreviation	Word	Abbreviation
pound			
department			
balance			
information			
including			
paid			
with or without			
English			
amount			
company			
reaction			
corporation			
experience			
reproduction			
gallons per minute			

## Time Saver #6: Use Common Symbols to Replace Words

Below, use common symbols to save time and effort in notetaking instead of writing out whole words. Then, find 10 commonly used words from a course you are taking now and record the symbols (existing symbols or your own) below for **using this rule**.

Word	Abbreviation	Word	Abbreviation
dollars, money, cost, price			
paragraph			
per cent			
per year			
always, ever, infinity			
oxygen			
water			
number			
with			
better			
worse			
thousand			
hundred			
and			
angle, right angle			

## Time Saver #7: Use the First Letter or First Few Letters Only

For specialized terms repeated frequently in lectures and textbooks, spell them out the 1st time you record it. Thereafter, use only the abbreviation to save time. Then, fill in abbreviations for the 10 commonly used words below in your major or for a course you are taking now **using this rule**.

Word	Abbreviation	Word	Abbreviation
notetaking			
capitalism			
metamorphic rocks			
digestion			
Behaviorism			
catabolic activator protein			
Krebs cycle			
mitosis			
government			
legislative			



## Time Saver #8: Take or Rewrite Notes Using as Few Words as Possible

Many words add little or nothing to notes if included. These words can be safely eliminated without losing the meaning of ideas when re-writing and reorganizing notes. To help you understand this, follow the directions for the 3 sentences below:

- a. **Cross out as many words as possible** in each sentence below without losing the meaning.
- b. Next, **cross out any remaining words for which abbreviations can be used** and write an abbreviation above the word.
- c. Finally, **re-write your new condensed sentence** and **write the total number of words** you now have.

1) "Write each of your class reports clearly, legibly and very concisely using only complete sentences and your best correct grammar to express your ideas." (24 words)

Condensed version \_\_\_\_\_ #of Words \_\_\_\_\_

2) "In the introduction to your class speech, the goal to keep in mind and strive for is to seek to win the good will, attention and interest of your listening audience." (31 words)

Condensed version \_\_\_\_\_ #of Words \_\_\_\_\_

3) "At the same time, the newly arrived religion of Christianity wisely encouraged adjustment to the lofty ideas and long established institutions of Rome." (23 words)

Condensed version \_\_\_\_\_ #of Words \_\_\_\_\_

Record three sentences from one of your textbooks. Below each of these sentences, rewrite it using abbreviations and necessary words **only**.

- 1. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- 2. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- 3. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Many students fear they will forget the meaning of abbreviations they use. While this is an understandable fear, it is not that common. One reason is that the context surrounding each abbreviation gives clues to its meaning.

To reduce the fear of forgetting, decipher the following sentences made almost totally from of someone else's **unfamiliar** abbreviations. If you can translate most or all of these abbreviations, there is little reason to fear

*Adapted from: Congos, Dennis H. (2011) Starting Out in Community College. Chicago, IL: McGraw-Hill*





that you will forget your own.

Expected registrar \$1m 4 hrs clses.

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T Inng tower wz blt @ a bd  $\angle 2$  us 4 mkng ptza.

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F i tld u 1x, I tld u a C xs, Fri. s qz day.

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During WW II, the GNP  $\uparrow$  3X over t previous C yrs.

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US corps  $\uparrow$  \$ by  $\frac{1}{2}$  drng t recessn despite t 4cst.

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Use the **8 Notetaking Time Savers** as you take notes from textbooks and lectures. As you use abbreviations more and more, you will spend less and less time writing notes and more time listening or reading for important ideas. Since abbreviations condense notes, there will be less written material to learn and remember.

Notes are personal in that only **you** need to understand them. Better students set up notetaking systems to improve their grades and if someone else can benefit by reading them, that's fine but *incidental*. Composing notes so everyone else can understand them wastes time and requires unnecessary effort.