

Notetaking

Why provide notetaking?

In one form or another, notetaking is the support service most widely used by students who are deaf or hard of hearing, surpassing even interpreting in frequency of use. Students request notetaking because it provides them access to course content in a way no other service can duplicate. However, notetaking is not a substitute for interpreting. In many cases, both services are necessary because of the physical impossibility of watching an interpreter or speechreading while simultaneously taking notes. In addition, for non-signing students, notes may be their only means of access.

Service providers

Volunteers

1. Most often student peers, usually classmates, who serve without compensation or for a small stipend or campus privilege.
2. May be drawn from student or civic organizations.
3. May be recruited by the deaf or hard-of-hearing student, by the instructor, or by another staff member.
4. May receive minimal training through campus workshops, etc.
5. Often provided with pressure sensitive paper in a special notebook. The volunteer retains the copy and gives the original to the student who is deaf or hard of hearing.
6. When regular paper is used, the notes are photocopied by designated personnel. The copies are then distributed to students being served and the originals returned to the notetaker. Turnaround time should be kept at or below 24 hours.
7. Because of the difficulty of quality control with volunteers, two or more volunteers in a single class may be necessary to achieve complete and accurate notes. High quality notes are necessary to student success.
8. Final notes generally resemble an individual student's personal notes with special emphasis on legibility, completeness, and accuracy. As a result, side comments, examples, and class discussions are often excluded.

Paid Notetakers

1. May be full or part-time staff members, often with high levels of training. Occasionally, students who did particularly well in the course in a previous semester and who have necessary organizational and keyboarding skills may be employed.
2. May be versed in a number of different technologies, including court reporting and special assistive technologies.
3. May or may not be fluent in sign language.
4. Usually attempt to provide an abbreviated classroom transcript, usually in real time. In other words, side comments, examples, and class discussion are included as the pace of the class, the skill of the notetaker, and availability of technology allow.
5. May require special seating and lighting.
6. May require early access to the classroom to allow time to set up equipment.
7. Require advance notice of field trips, etc., in order to make arrangements for the equipment.
8. Paid notetakers often "clean up" notes after class by rearranging them in outline form, highlighting important items, and checking spelling and facts. Occasionally, a paid notetaker may need to consult with an instructor for clarification.

Notetaking technology

Computer Assisted Notetaking (CAN)

1. The notetaker uses a laptop computer or desktop computer on a roll-around cart.
2. The notetaker may use any software with which he or she is comfortable.
3. Access to an electrical outlet is important in order to avoid the possibility of battery failure.
4. Often the student sits to the side and slightly behind the notetaker and reads the notes as they are taken. The notetaker and student are able to arrange appropriate seating without instructor's intervention in most circumstances.

5. When possible, one of the following set-up modes is preferable:
 - laptop to laptop
 - laptop to monitor
 An active matrix screen is essential when the notetaker and student must share a single laptop; because of obvious problems with visibility, this arrangement cannot be used with smaller laptop or notebook computers.
6. Requires a high level of word processing skill on the part of the notetaker.

C-Print™

1. A variety of CAN that uses special condensing software.
2. Because of its greater speed, allows a closer transcription of class proceedings.
3. Requires a high degree of special training on the part of the notetaker.
4. Seating requirements and computer configurations are similar to those necessary for standard CAN.

Real-Time Captioning

1. Similar to the real-time captioning seen on TV.
2. May be projected on a screen and made available to the entire class.
3. Requires special equipment and software.
4. Requires a highly trained specialist.

The instructor's role

In order to ensure high quality notes, the instructor's involvement is crucial.

Recruitment and quality control

1. Instructors should investigate their institution's expectations regarding faculty involvement in the recruitment of the student who is deaf or hard of hearing before attempting to recruit volunteer notetakers.

2. Instructors should ask to see the notes from time to time. The notes should be legible, clear, complete, and accurate. If the notes are weak in any of these areas, instructors should attempt to obtain an additional or replacement notetakers. Volunteers are seldom replaced but are often joined by a second and even a third volunteer.

Tips for facilitating better notes

(Most of these will benefit all students in the class.)

1. Instructors should be careful to speak clearly, to verbally label digressions and examples, and to use transitions to signal topic changes and relationships.
2. Instructors may choose either to leave important projected or chalkboard text, diagrams, and charts in view long enough for the notetaker to copy them or to provide handouts.
3. Instructors should write numbers and difficult or foreign names and vocabulary on the board or provide a classroom handout with a numbered list (for easier reference) of these items.
4. Instructors should write complete assignment designations on the board, including page and exercise numbers where applicable and due dates, or provide assignment sheets.
5. Instructors should provide a copy of all handouts to the notetaker. Syllabi, agendas, and assignment sheets are especially important.
6. For advanced courses, some instructors may find it convenient to provide a copy of their lecture notes to paid notetakers. These notes should not be copied or distributed without the instructor's permission.
7. Instructors should check to see if videotapes are closed captioned. If they are, a transcript of the captioning may be available and would be of great assistance to the notetaker.

For more information, contact:

Northeast Technical Assistance Center

Rochester Institute of Technology
 National Technical Institute for the Deaf
 52 Lomb Memorial Drive
 Rochester, NY 14623-5604

585-475-6433 (V/TTY)
 585-475-7660 (Fax)
 Email: netac@rit.edu
<http://netac.rit.edu>



This *NETAC Teacher Tipsheet* was compiled by Kim Brecklein, English Specialist, Tulsa Community College, Tulsa, Oklahoma.