ACTIVELY ENGAGE IN LEARNING

IDEA #4

T A K I N G   N O T E S

Readings

Before reading for understanding and taking notes, preview the reading (see infographic).

- Whether in hard copy or digital, when reading for understanding, engage with the text by underlining or circling a few key words or concepts. Resist highlighting entire paragraphs.
- In the margins, write supplementary notes, questions, and connections to other ideas.
- Write notes in your own words. Paraphrasing forces cognitive processing, which is better for retaining the information. Paraphrasing helps when applying course material to new problems you'll see on tests, quizzes, and problem sets.

WHAT TYPES OF THINGS ARE IMPORTANT TO WRITE?

- Elaborate and justify "why" something is.
- Explain the process.
- Draw visual models or diagrams expressing the words (see video on dual coding).
- Record examples the instructor gives or those you think of on your own.
- Use abbreviations, symbols, and shortcuts so you can spend more time actively listening and thinking (as opposed to writing every spoken word). For example, use → to indicate "leads to" or "causes," Δ to indicate "change," or b/c in place of "because."
- Indicate connections to other concepts from this class, other classes, or your prior knowledge or experiences. Note the relationship between the concepts (e.g., cause and effect).
- Write questions you may have so you can address them later.
- Mark where something is unclear so you can follow up.

After completing the reading, write a short summary in your own words — elaborating helps you retain information.

- Create a concept map (see pages 126 and 134 of this resource) of the main concepts, terms and vocabulary, and the connections or relationships.
- Ask questions in discussion boards, emails, or virtual office hours.