Notetaking captures significant information in a systematic way. It is a skill acquired through training and strengthened through practice. Research with deaf and hard of hearing students indicates that most view notetaking as a “very useful” support.

Why Notes?
As visual communicators, students who are deaf or hard of hearing access auditory information by focusing on interpreters, the speaker or real time captioning. Visual communication requires a high level of concentration; obtaining information visually during extended periods can be exhausting. It is extremely difficult for a student to watch an interpreter or computer screen while taking notes. Providing a notetaker allows the individual to focus on the content of the class. Having a trained notetaker assures the student that core concepts, key points, and supporting details will be accurately captured.

The eye is a muscle, while the ear’s primary element is its nerves. Utilizing a nerve requires no physical energy; muscles are subject to fatigue. It simply takes more physical energy to critically observe than to listen.

What it is, and Isn’t
While notetaking can be a stand-alone accommodation for some individuals, it does not take the place of other accommodations, such as interpreters and captioning. Notetaking is regarded as an “auxiliary aid” as defined by the Americans with Disabilities Act and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973.

Notetakers are not tutors, nor do they stand in when a student is absent.

Personal and Cognitive Characteristics of a Good Notetaker:

- Has excellent attendance and punctuality
- Is a good speller and writes legibly
- Has good listening skills
- Can stay on task over extended periods of time
- Has good organizational skills and enjoys thinking organizationally
- Has the ability to maintain confidentiality
- Has the ability to maintain a good rapport with the student and the professor

This Quick Tip was adapted from pepnet 2 (pn2) Fast Facts. Funded by the Research to Practice Division, Office of Special Education Programs, U.S. Department of Education (Cooperative Agreement #H326D110003).