

Upper School English
On Keeping a Notebook

Learning to keep excellent notes when material isn't pre-outlined for you is an excellent skill you will use from now through college and beyond. The notebook assignment requires some attention, but everyone should be able to complete this assignment satisfactorily, and the creation of the notebook is an occasion to think through and review material. A pleasant, easy-to-follow notebook will also lend itself to being studied for papers, tests, and exams.

1. **Write the date on everything:** notes, handouts. If you write your name on your handouts, lost materials are more easily returned to your cubby if they get separated from you.
2. Leave a blank page, as needed, so that you can **tape, glue, or staple in handouts**. You should insert your handouts and look over notes nightly, so that you keep it all complete and orderly. Everything in the notebook should be in chronological order. You can always make flags for items that turn out to be evergreen (vocabulary, literary terms) and the writing unit will be in the front of your notebook, since it is first. Some students enjoy color coding different kinds of assignments and generally making the notebook a work of art.
3. Be sure you have **notes for each class meeting**. Leave blank pages and copy or photocopy or photograph and print any materials you are missing for any reason. Strive to have the whole notebook clearly labeled and in chronological order.
4. The barest minimum is for you to **write down anything written on the board**. Beyond that, your note-taking is for **keeping a record of the class**. Much of the learning comes from small group discussions and other non-linear sources. Even if you know something, you may wish to write it down so that you know to think of it in the context we are discussing it.
5. Consider using **Cornell Notes** as a way to keep your listening active and focused. If you have ever taken notes in class automatically and without thinking about what you are writing, Cornell Notes may be especially for you.
6. Annotate local ideas and passages in your books, but **keep track of the overall discussion in your notebook** so that you have a good sense of the bigger picture and the focus of the overall lesson.
7. I will **collect notebooks weekly** until I feel everyone is keeping an excellent notebook. After that, we'll talk about what is needed or desired.

