

Notetaking Policies

Students with a variety of disabilities may need assistance with notetaking in order to fully access the course content. A student may qualify for notetaking accommodations if their disability limits their ability to process the instructor's presentation either auditorily or visually, remain attentive to in-class instruction, and/or write notes on traditional pen and paper. Accommodations for notetaking are not intended to take the place of the student attending class. Students whose disability presents a barrier to consistently attending class should discuss their situation with Disability Resources staff.

The below general descriptions of notetaking accommodations give an overview of options, but this is not an exhaustive list. Students may be approved for more than one of the below notetaking options if appropriate, depending on their disability and program of study. They should discuss their notetaking needs with Disability Resources staff so that appropriate notetaking tools can be determined.

Audio-Recording of Class Sessions:

A common and effective notetaking accommodation is to allow a student to audio-record class sessions. This may be done with a traditional recording device such as a digital voice recorder, or with a tool such as an app or smartpen which records the audio while simultaneously allowing the student to take hand-written notes. The preferred audio-recording device is determined by the student. And with only rare exceptions, the student is solely responsible for recording their class sessions. Note that video-recording of class sessions is not permitted except in very unique situations. A student wishing to video-record a class session as an accommodation must first discuss this request with Disability Resources.

If a student is granted the accommodation of audio-recording class sessions, they must digitally acknowledge and sign the following agreement:

- I understand that the Carnegie Mellon University Office of Disability Resources has granted me an accommodation to audio-record class sessions. I hereby agree that I will use the Recordings solely for my own educational purposes. I further agree that I will not copy, reproduce, distribute or otherwise make available the Recordings to any other individual or entity, except as necessary to my own education.
- I understand that when requested by the professor, some or all of the Recordings may be created by the Carnegie Mellon University Media Services department and that any Recordings created by Media Services will be made available to me over the internet via

streaming audio. For Recordings provided to me through Media Services' streaming audio service, I agree that I will not download, re-record, copy, capture or otherwise make a duplicate of the Recordings. I also understand that any Recordings maintained by Media Services will be deleted after the conclusion of the applicable course.

- I understand that the Recordings are intended to act as a supplement to my course notes and the Recordings are not a substitute for my attendance in class. I understand that Recordings may not be made for class sessions that I do not attend or I may be denied access to Recordings of class sessions I do not attend.

Peer Notetaking:

For some students with disabilities that present barriers to notetaking, it may be determined that the best notetaking option is to access a peer's notes. The Office of Disability Resources has a volunteer peer notetaking program, where other students in the class volunteer to electronically share their notes with the student with a disability. This is done via upload to the Disability Resources online portal. Volunteer peer notetakers are never given the name of the student(s) they are taking notes for, and notetakers themselves may opt to remain anonymous as well if they wish.

Disability Resources makes every effort to match students requesting peer notetakers with volunteers. We do this through sending emails to high-achieving students in the class, working with the professor to locate a volunteer, and seeking recommendations from the student with a disability themselves. Students with the Peer Notetaking accommodation may also arrange informally to get notes from a peer. If Disability Resources and the Student are unsuccessful in locating a peer notetaker volunteer, the student should contact Disability Resources to discuss other options for notetaking support that will meet the student's needs.

Peer Notetaking Procedures:

1. Students approved for access to a peer notetaker as an accommodation should first notify their faculty of their accommodation via our online portal.
2. Once faculty are notified of the accommodation, if the student would like Disability Resources' assistance in finding a peer notetaker, they should confirm this request, again through the online portal on the student's main My Dashboard page. Clicking the Confirm link will prompt Disability Resources staff to begin the notetaker recruitment process. Disability Resources staff will not attempt to recruit a peer notetaker unless the student confirms their request for a peer notetaker for a given class through the online portal.
3. Students will receive an email when a peer notetaker has been located.

4. The peer notetaker will receive notification of their notetaking assignment and a link to upload their notes.
5. Each time the peer notetaker uploads notes, the student with the notetaking accommodation will receive an email notifying them that notes are available for download.

Use of Laptops/Tablets:

Another effective notetaking tool for many students is allowing them to take notes using a laptop or tablet instead of using traditional pen and paper. Students who are approved for this accommodation should discuss specifics with their instructor, especially if the instructor has a policy disallowing electronic devices in the classroom for reasons of distractibility. Students approved to use a laptop or tablet for notetaking should use their device for only this purpose during class and should take reasonable measures to minimize any distractions their device may cause.

Taking Pictures of the Board:

A common notetaking accommodation, which may be paired with other notetaking accommodations, is permission to take pictures of the board. This may be especially helpful in classes with graphs, diagrams, or other material which may be difficult to capture on a laptop or audio-recording device. Students with this accommodation should endeavor to sit close to the board and should take reasonable steps to minimize any distractions caused by their photographing the board.

Slides in Advance:

This accommodation is especially helpful for students with auditory or visual processing impairments or other disabilities that may make it difficult for them to interpret the instructor's slides while at the same time processing auditory information. Students with this accommodation should work closely with their instructors to determine when slides will be made available to the student. Students should contact Disability Resources if they are having difficulty obtaining slides in advance or if they require slides in an alternative format.