Effective note-taking and note-making are keys to understanding ideas and writing good essays, reports and exams.

Lecture note-taking strategies
1. Get to the lecture on time so you don’t miss the outline many lecturers give at the beginning.
2. Do the pre-reading suggested in the unit outline. If you come prepared, the lecture will make more sense, and lead to better notes.
3. Have a purpose for taking notes and be selective about what you write down.
4. Listen for clues e.g. "The main point is …", "I want to emphasize …" "Most importantly…".
5. Listen for links and connections to other lectures, assignment questions, everyday life (practical applications).
6. Record any questions or ideas the lecture triggers.
7. Develop your own abbreviations.

It is better to leave the lecture having understood it than to have a sheaf of notes but no real idea of what the lecture was about.

Note-taking & note-making while reading
1. Have a purpose for reading. Know what you want to find out.
2. Record all the relevant bibliographic information, including page numbers.
3. Be selective about what you write down. Check if it is aligned to your purpose.
4. Summarise or paraphrase the texts but check that you have kept the original meaning.
5. Write down any questions or points you need to clarify.
6. Keep an eye out for explanations or examples you can use in future essays or reports.
7. Note similarities and differences between different authors’ perspectives.
8. Map out relationships between ideas. Use diagrams or mind maps if they help.

After the lecture
1. Review your notes and follow up on any points you missed out on or that need clarifying.
2. Make connections, summarize, confirm the main argument, expand, make diagrams.
3. Compare notes with your peers.
4. Discuss any differences of interpretation.

Note-taking tip
Quality is better than quantity.
Note-making happens after a lecture & while reading. It’s the beginning of your critical engagement with the topics and issues you are studying.

It involves:
- identifying & annotating main points and themes
- integrating new ideas with previous knowledge and experience
- formulating questions
- recording your own thoughts and perspectives
- noting what you need to clarify or follow up
- discussing your ideas and any questions you have with other students

Check your note-taking and note-making progress
From time to time review the effectiveness of your notes.
- Do they do what you want them to do?
- Do you use them as you had planned?
- Are they too detailed or not detailed enough?
- Are there gaps you need to fill in?
- Can you still understand them a month after you wrote them?
- Could you use them to revise for exams?

Final points
- The more organised your note-taking is, the better.
- Keep your notes in date sequence.
- Use separate folders for each unit/ essay topic.
- For each lecture, note
  - the title of the lecture
  - the date
  - the lecturer’s name

Study and time management tip
Always record the relevant bibliographic information from books, journal articles, websites, etc. before you start taking notes.

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