

# NOTE-TAKING

**Effective note-taking** and **note-making** will help you understand, evaluate and organise ideas and information to draw on for your essays, reports and exams.

## Note-taking in lectures

1. Listen before you write - allow time to process ideas and information first.
2. Be selective: write down the key points, any new terms and new/important information.
3. Listen for cues from the lecturer, such as: "The main point is ...", "I want to emphasise ...", "Most importantly..."
4. Make a note of any questions you have and anything you did not understand, to follow up afterwards.
5. Develop your own shorthand: use abbreviations, symbols, numbers, bullet points, arrows, etc.
6. Listen for links and connections to other lectures, assignment questions and practical applications.

**Did you know?** Lectures are usually recorded so you will have another chance to listen and add to your notes if necessary. The lecture slides will also be available in your LMS.

## After the lecture

- Review your notes and follow up on any points you missed or that need clarifying.
- Summarise your notes in your own words, highlight key information and create diagrams or mind maps/concept maps.

**TIP:** Leave room on your note page for questions and for your summary. Try using a format like the one below - or write on one page, leaving a blank page to summarise your notes later.

Questions	Notes
???	
Summary	

## Making notes on your reading

1. Have a purpose for reading. Know what you want to find out.
2. Record all the relevant bibliographical information, including page numbers.
3. Be selective about what you write down; check if it is relevant.
4. Summarise or paraphrase the texts - but make sure 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/concept maps to show how ideas are connected.

## Reviewing and revising your notes will help you to:

- identify the main points and themes,
- integrate new ideas with previous knowledge and experience,
- formulate new questions,
- record your own thoughts and perspectives,
- note what you need to clarify, check or follow up, and
- discuss your ideas and any questions you have with other students.

## How effective are your notes?

Use this checklist to help you review:

- √ Do they do what you want them to do?
- √ Do you use them as you had planned?
- √ Do they have too much detail, or not enough detail?
- √ 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?

If the answer to any of these questions is no, revise your notes; for example, add any missing information.

## Organising your notes

The more organised your notes are, the easier you will find it to review and revise them, and the more useful they will be.

### Some good habits:

- Keep your notes in date sequence.
- Use separate folders for each unit/topic/assignment.
- Colour code your notes: develop your own system.
- For each lecture, note:
  - the title of the lecture,
  - the date, and
  - the lecturer's name.
- For your reading, note:
  - the author/s' name/s,
  - the article/book title,
  - publication details,
  - page number/s, and
  - the date.

**TIP:** Always record the relevant bibliographical information from books, journal articles, websites, etc. **before** you start taking notes.

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