Note taking
Study Guide

Note taking helps you concentrate and helps you remember. Good note taking saves time when it comes to essay writing and exam revision. As a student you will take 2 types of notes: **lecture notes** and **reading and research notes**. Be clear about why you are making these notes and their purpose - what you will use them for.

Why take lecture notes?

- to summarise the main points and have a permanent record of what was covered
- to help learn and remember information
- to increase your understanding of the lecture
- to re-read and refresh your memory or as a starting point for an essay or assignment
- to form the basis of revision for exams

Why take notes from your readings and research?

- to gain background information, check definitions, new terminology
- to record ideas and arguments of others which can be used in your essays
- to help learn and remember
- to help identify gaps or to avoid duplicating your efforts
- to find a specific piece of information or answer to a particular question
- to refer to for exam revision

How to take notes

- label each page with date, number, topic, lecturer's name etc.
- keep notes brief, write phrases, not whole sentences
- leave out simple words (**the**, **and**, **with**) to save time
- keep notes clear
- be consistent with abbreviations - so you can always understand them
- use keywords when possible (i.e. your topic)
- put notes into your own words - but make sure the meaning is the same
- put quotation marks around anything you have "quoted"
- record only what is relevant to the topic or question you are trying to answer
- make sure names, dates, technical terms etc. are accurately recorded
- record all bibliographic and reference details as you go along – if taken from the web, be sure to copy and paste the link details. If working at a computer, have a Word document open to copy and paste this information as you go.
- for lecture notes, work out the lecturer's format – many lecturers use the same style or format for each lecture

  - key points may be identified and repeated
  - handouts/notes may be available with the key points to which you add your notes or areas of interest
  - copy complicated diagrams at the end of the lecture to avoid missing points

Reading and research notes

It is important to understand what you read and why you are reading it. You may not need to read the whole book to get the information you need.

Why read?

- to overview a text
- to gain detailed understanding of a topic/subject
- to find an answer to a specific question
- to gather information for an assignment/exam
- to prepare for a discussion/tutorial

How to read a text

Preview each book/article/text before commencing reading:

- check **publication date** – is it still relevant or would the information be out of date now?
- check **place of publication** – do you need local or international information?
- read the **chapter headings** and **sub headings** on the **contents** page
- read the **conclusions** at the end of individual chapters and the text
- look up your **key words** in the index
- check to see if there is a **glossary** – particularly in technical readings
- flip through to get a feel for the quality of the diagrams, photos, etc.

Read critically

- check the author's credibility
- what is significant about this text?
- what claims are being made?
- how logical are the ideas?
- how valid are the conclusions?

If texts/books are too complex

- try to find a text which explains unfamiliar/challenging or complex ideas more simply
- use school texts to get simple explanations of the basics to enable you to understand the more complicated ideas
- use dictionaries/glossaries to look up unfamiliar/specialised words
- substitute your own words for unfamiliar language or jargon
- focus on the main message and don't get bogged down in other words
- focus on key sections – introduction, conclusions/chapter summaries

Know where to begin and where to stop

Remember to use search strategies:

- What do I need to know?
- What do I already know?
- What is the assignment asking me to answer?

Most importantly, have a system for reading and note taking that works for you.

If you need further help with note taking and reading please speak to your Campus Learning Support Staff or Student Services Officer

For more information try these websites:

Monash University - https://www.monash.edu/rlo/study-skills/reading-and-note-taking

Open Colleges - http://www.opencolleges.edu.au/informed/features/how-to-take-notes-strategies/

University of NSW - https://student.unsw.edu.au/effective-reading-and-note-taking