

HOW TO... Develop Your Note Taking Skills

Why take notes?

When you are writing an essay, preparing a presentation, or revising for an exam, using a set of notes will be invaluable. However, having your purpose in mind as far as possible at the start will help you to make more useful notes.

Even the words 'take notes' and 'make notes' indicate different approaches:

- ❖ when you **take** notes, you are taking someone else's words and writing them down;
- ❖ when you **make** notes, you are making the ideas your own for your own purpose.

Some of the purposes for taking or making notes are:

- ❖ to focus attention during class and help you learn in class – taking notes
- ❖ to remind you of important points from a talk – taking notes
- ❖ to summarise large amounts of material when studying and revising – making notes
- ❖ to help organise your thoughts when planning an essay or report – making notes
- ❖ to help link new knowledge to what you already know – making notes
- ❖ to summarise information from different sources when researching for an essay or assignment – making notes
- ❖ to help refresh your memory without having to read a book or text again – making notes.

Linear note taking

Linear notes summarise the information presented – whether from a lecture or a written source – in conventional written lines. It is the most common form of note taking.

When taking linear notes you should remember to:

- ❖ Date the notes
- ❖ Include source of notes if taking notes from a book or magazine, or the date of the lecture/talk
- ❖ Make them easy to read
- ❖ Create clear headings and sub-headings
- ❖ Use abbreviations wherever possible
- ❖ Number or underline main points
- ❖ Use phrases rather than whole sentences
- ❖ Use one line for each point – you can then add information in more easily

- ❖ Use arrows to indicate the next point
- ❖ Draw boxes around vital points
- ❖ Use different coloured pens for quotes
- ❖ Use wide margins so you can note key points later
- ❖ Leave spaces to allow yourself room to add in new ideas
- ❖ Put your own comments in square brackets [] to remind you this is what you thought rather than what you were told or read
- ❖ Put what you read into your own words

You don't need to use all of these suggestions – but using as many as possible will help organise your notes and help your studying more.

Forces in Creation	
1)	Introduction
a.	What is force?
b.	What is gravity?
2)	The Four Fundamental Forces of Creation.
a.	Gravitational force - attracts objects to each other. Weakest of the four forces.
b.	Electromagnetic force - force that exists between particles with an electrical charge.
c.	Weak force - governs some radioactive processes in atoms.
d.	Strong nuclear force - force that holds the center of the atom (nucleus) together.
3)	The Gravitational Force.
a.	Newton's Universal Law of Gravity.
1.	All objects with mass are attracted to one another by the gravitational force.
a.	all matter is attracted to all other matter
b.	applied to anything in the universe that has mass
2.	The gravitational force between two masses is directly proportional to the mass of each object.
a.	strength of the gravitational force between two objects increases as the mass of either object increases.
3.	The gravitational force between two masses is inversely proportional to the square of the distance between those two objects.
a.	when the distance is big, the force is small. When the distance is small, the force is big.
4)	Force and Circular Motion.
a.	Centripetal Force - Force that is always directed perpendicular to the velocity of an object. This makes an object move in a circle.
1.	Circular motion requires centripetal force.
2.	The larger the centripetal force, the faster an object can travel in a circle.
3.	The larger the centripetal force, the smaller the circle of motion.
5)	The Gravitational Force at Work in Our Solar System.
a.	Planets are attracted to the sun. This is a perpendicular force, therefore the planets revolve around the sun.
6)	Comets.
a.	A comet's orbit is elliptical.
b.	They are not visible until they are near the sun, then they get so hot that the ice turns into gas. That is when we can see them.

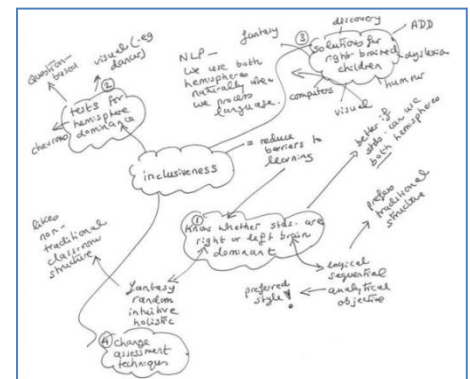
From Study Skills for All Ages Website

Visual/Pattern note taking

Visual or pattern notes – sometimes also known as Mind Maps or spider diagrams – summarise information in a visual way which often is easier to remember.

When taking visual notes you should remember to:

- ❖ Date the notes
- ❖ Include source of notes if taking notes from a book or magazine
- ❖ Make them easy to read
- ❖ Use headings and sub-headings
- ❖ Use diagrams or pictures
- ❖ Use arrows, circles, or lines to connect related points
- ❖ Emphasise words with underlining or capitals
- ❖ Leave gaps between different points – so you can add points later



From University of Warwick website

See the How to guide on Mind Maps for further information.

Tips for making notes when researching

- ❖ Read the text first time through without taking notes – use skimming techniques to get an idea of what is being said
- ❖ Read again and make notes – note down keywords, important points, key phrases for each paragraph to build up an outline of the author's points
- ❖ Insert your own comments using square brackets [] to indicate the ideas are yours – this helps later on when using your notes
- ❖ Note anything which is new to you

- ❖ Note anything which you want to research further e.g. a term you don't understand or want to investigate further – put a question mark at it to remind you to follow it up
- ❖ Make a note of anything which answers the questions you need to research
- ❖ At the end of a chapter, review your notes and link any parts which tie together – use arrows, numbers, or even a highlighter
- ❖ At the end of a chapter, write your own thoughts on what you've found so far to help get an idea of where your research is going and how far you've come in finding answers to your questions. It also helps your learning – get it into your head!

Organising Your Notes for Revision/Study

Re-reading your notes at regular intervals (the next day, next week, next month) will help you become more familiar with your topic and will also give you the opportunity to edit them, cross-reference the main ideas, compare and contrast different theories, and add further comments.

Organising your notes will also include:

- ❖ **filing them** – you need to establish some kind of system for storing your notes where you can find them. It is very easy to end up with a huge pile of notes which are so disorganised that you can't find anything. A lot of the time you have invested in making your notes will be wasted if you don't take the time to work out a simple and effective filing system. Folders which are clearly labelled are a great way to have your notes filed in one location. An index page at the front of your folder will help you to see quickly which notes are available in which folder in more detail. Once you have decided on a system, stick to it if it works.
- ❖ **classifying them** – notes could be classified under author, but you may find it more useful to classify them under subject. This way you can build up your own small library of materials for each subject you are studying. You can also classify your notes by date (so they will be in chronological order), or by assessment (so notes for your essay or project are all located together). Once you have decided on how you will classify your notes, stick to it if it works.
- ❖ **keeping them** – there will come a time when you will need to discard some of your notes. However, don't be too hasty. Being over-anxious to have a clear out can often lead to articles being thrown out that could come in useful at a later date. You will probably find yourself looking back to older notes in order to build on previous knowledge. It's probably safer and wiser to keep your notes for the whole length of the course. Remember to clearly label folders with topic, date, or year titles to ensure you know which year of your course they relate to.