

Note-taking

This module covers concepts such as:

- Key note-taking strategies
- Note-taking before, during and after lectures
- Importance of Active Learning



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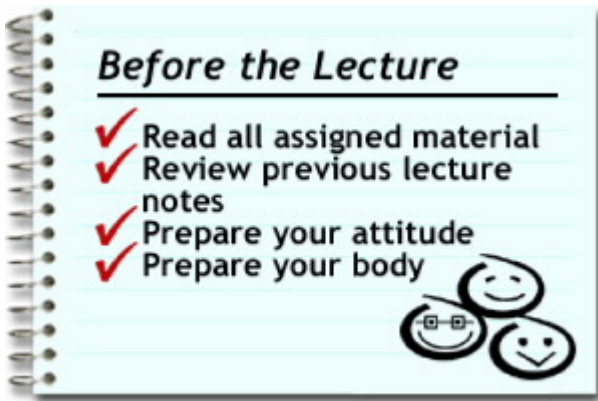
Note-taking

The note-taking process, like the learning process, involves more than just what happens in lectures. It is a process that requires you to do things **before, during and after lectures**.

This module provides you with some helpful strategies to improve your note-taking skills in lectures and from your reading.

Before the Lecture

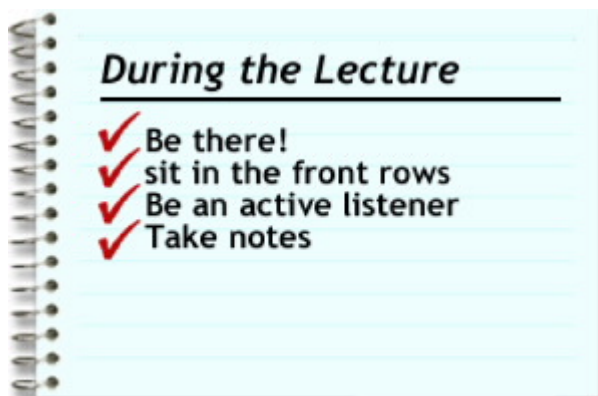
We always learn more efficiently when we can relate new information to our prior knowledge; that is why it is important to be armed with as much background information as you can,



before you go to the lecture.

You are going to attend the lecture anyway, so you may as well go and extract as much value out of it as possible. Be positive. Tell yourself you will get something valuable out of it. Remember that you are in control of your own learning. Learning isn't something that is "done to you".

Some mild exercise before a lecture (a brisk walk) will increase blood and oxygen circulation and help your brain function efficiently. A 10km run may be going a bit far!



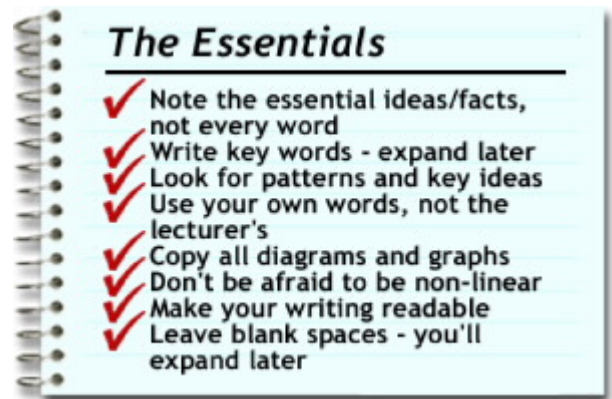
During the lecture

"Being there" sure is helpful and once there, getting involved is essential.

By sitting in the front rows, you see, hear, participate and concentrate better. This will help you become an active learner in the lecture and will assist you to take better notes.

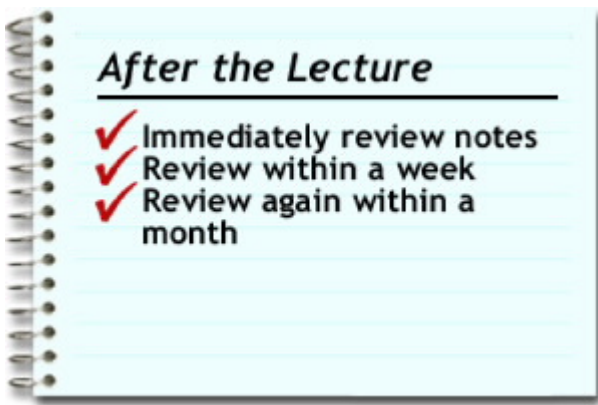
Have that cup of coffee and a chat *after* the lecture.

Try Activity 1 ✓



There are 8 essential points relating to successful note-taking in lectures.

1. **Note essential ideas/facts, not every word.** By avoiding writing every word uttered by the lecturer, you will REDUCE the amount of material and restrict yourself to essential facts and ideas;
2. **Write key words - expand later.** Using key words allows you to expand on them in your first REVIEW;
3. **Look for patterns and key ideas.** Looking for key words, patterns and ideas will help to REDUCE the material;
4. **Use your own words - not the lecturer's.** By writing notes in your own words, you are forcing yourself to be an ACTIVE learner;
5. **Don't be afraid to be non-linear.** Non-linear (mind maps) also encourage you to link concepts and be an ACTIVE and VISUAL learner;
6. **Take notice when diagrams or charts are presented.** Anything which a lecturer takes the time to write up on the board or produce as a diagram, graph or handout, should be regarded as important (may possibly be in the exam!);
7. **Make your writing legible.** You need to be able to read your own notes;
8. **Leave blank spaces - you'll expand later.** This is especially useful when REVIEWING.



After the lecture

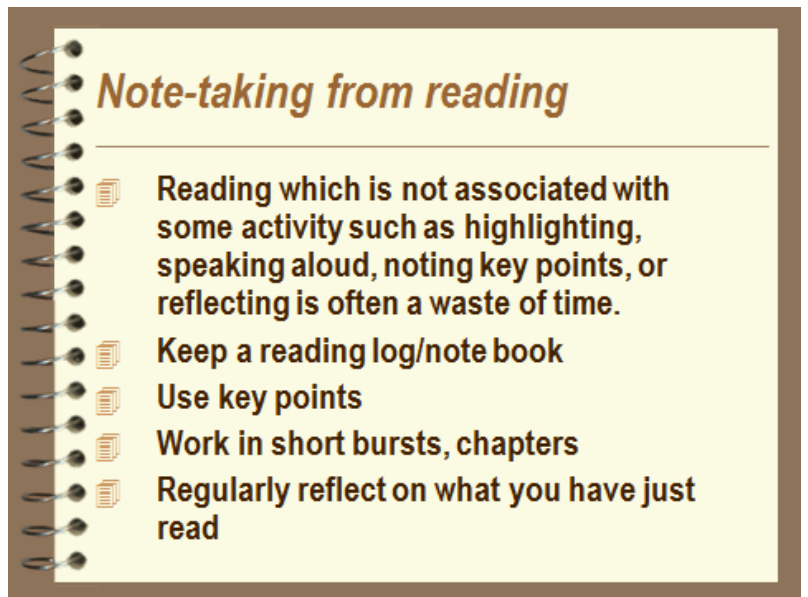
The first step is to review your notes as soon as possible after the lecture. This is the time you fill in those gaps, expand on key words and ideas and highlight areas of uncertainty and areas of importance.

You should further consolidate those ideas in your notes about a week after the lecture. This is the time to quickly test yourself on some of the key areas. This weekly review also serves as pre-reading for the next lecture. It activates your prior knowledge before being exposed to new material.

A monthly review is important to your long term retention of the material. Rehearse important points, amplify points which have become clearer and, again, test yourself.

All of these reviews can be done in 10 - 20 minutes per subject. The value of those 10 -20 minutes is equal to hours of re-learning and cramming later in the semester.

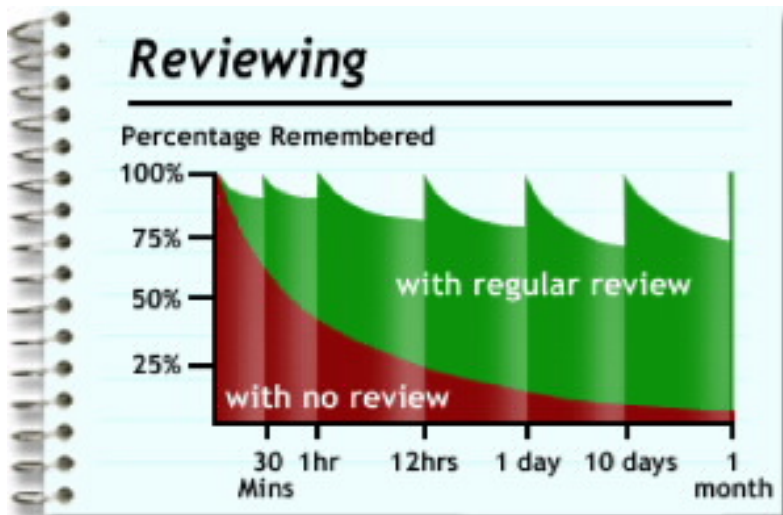
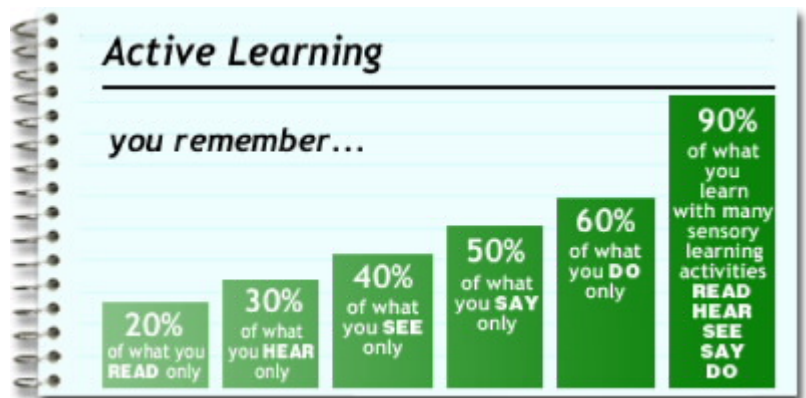
This graph clearly demonstrates that short reviews will help you retain the lecture information. With no reviews, you virtually have to re-learn the material after about a month.



Much of what we have discovered about note-taking in lectures also applies to note-taking when you are reading.

This time, however, you do not have a lecturer guiding you and providing you with diagrams, questions or tutorials.

You now have to be more disciplined and generate these aspects of active learning yourself.



It is essential to be an active learner (read, hear, see, say and do) if you want to remember as much as possible.

This applies to the entire learning process.

Your Turn

Activity 1

The purpose of this activity is to take notes from the first 10 minutes of the lecture by David McCandless (TED, 2010) using three different note-taking styles.

Before viewing the lecture, have a look at the samples of two popular note-taking systems we have provided. Now play the first 10 minutes of the lecture and try each of the styles in turn.

Style 1: The Cornell System

In this system, the left hand side of the page is where you re-write the key points of the lecture after taking your main notes in the right hand part of the page.

Style 2: The Mind Mapping System

As with the above system, blank spaces should be left to add things at the completion of the lecture.

Style 3: Your own note-taking style

- Which style do you think works best for you?
- How would you use these notes when you review your lecture notes?
- Would you need to re-write the notes?
- What do you think are the most important things to consider when taking notes? (the examples of the Cornell and Mind Mapping styles will give you some clues!)

Style 1: The Cornell System

| | |
|---|--|
| <p>My Key Ideas</p> <p>(Completed after the lecture)</p> <p>8 Points</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Essentials • Expand Later • Patterns • Own Words • Diagrams/Graphs • Non-Linear • Readable • Blank - Expand <p>Active Learning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Writing • Questioning • Doing <p>Reducing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce to understandable amount of own words <p>Review</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most important • Helps memory • Immediately, 1 week, 1 month | <p>Mini Lesson Notes</p> <p style="text-align: center;">AIM</p> <p>10 minute lesson compare note taking styles Slide shows 8 points for note taking get handout</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Only get essential ideas REDUCE 2 Expand key ideas later REVIEW » immediate » 1week » 1month 3 Patterns? - look for ACTIVE / REDUCE 4 Own words / not lecturers ACTIVE 5 Diagrams/graphs give EXAM CLUE 6 Non-linear eg. brain concept mapping ACTIVE / VISUAL 7 Readable REVIEW 8 Blank spaces/margin to expand later REVIEW |
|---|--|

Style 2: Mind Mapping System

