

NOTE TAKING

Taking notes is important for two main reasons: it helps you concentrate, and taking notes helps deepen your understanding. Also, taking good notes, together with correct citation of your work, helps remove plagiarism. To have good notes, and for them to be of long-term value, think of your taking notes as something that happens in three parts: initial note taking, clarifying and expanding your notes and transforming your notes. It is the transforming stage that will help move new knowledge from your short-term memory to your long-term memory.

So, note taking starts from day one... you need to be organised and find a note taking system/s that suits you, and you actively have to take notes before, during and after lectures, tutorials, discussions, presentations and meetings. For notes to be of real value, there are some basic things you can do:

Make a plan....	What to do
<p>1. In general, to take good notes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be sure to do any pre-reading in preparation for your lecture/tutorial/lab, etc. • Watch the speaker as much as you can • Find a note taking technique that works for you! Some note taking methods are the Cornell, the note card or index card, the mind map and other mapping methods, the outline and charting—Google can find these and others for you, and you can choose the one you think is best • Use a large notebook! This leaves you with wide margins to add things to; also, do not crowd your lines together • Use a pen! Notes in pencil will smear and are hard to read • Transform your notes in some way: find a tool (electronic or mechanical) that suits you and stick to it!
<p>2. Know what to note</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Don't take too many notes—do more listening than writing (another reason to prepare before the lecture/tutorial/lab) • If points are repeated, underline them to show they were stressed—don't write them more than once • Focus on what the author / speaker is talking about: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) concentrate on the ideas/argument the speaker is developing b) report the main idea c) add as much detail as necessary to help explain the theory, concept, idea, practice or approach d) show the relationship between the main ideas (so that the overall meaning is clear & the information has the best possible chance of being retained) • Listen for the signals the lecturer sends out during the lecture. For example, 'If there's one thing to take away from the lecture today...' , 'Now you can see why...' or something as simple as 'Firstly...' or 'To summarise...'
<p>3. Know how to note</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To avoid confusion, logically organise your notes • Date your notes for reference when you are preparing for your assessments, quizzes and exams (note the subject, date or week and whether lecture, tutorial, lab.). For example: AB2020_08/08/17 _wk 3–lect 1–pt a • use symbols and abbreviations to help you get things down quickly and record the most information with the least effort

4. Know when to note	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Don't wait until you have all the information on a topic/unit of work– start taking notes as soon as possible!
5. Regularly review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review your notes as soon after class as you possibly can to fix the writing you can't read very well (and clarify anything that was missed or only partially recorded or understood) Allocate time each day and week to work on expanding your notes, as well as building the relationships between ideas and consulting other material to develop /clarify the concepts – concept maps are helpful Re-read your notes as a way to help you remember the key theories/concepts, facts, practices and approaches
6. Transform your notes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reconstruct your notes using another format (another opportunity to review, i.e. from handwritten to electronic)

Useful note taking strategies...

1. Use Symbols:

Symbol	Meaning	Symbol	Meaning
:=	is defined as	<<	much less than
=>	logical implication/implies		or
→	leads to, causes (showing result)	∴	therefore, so, as a consequence
←	caused by, because of (showing reason)	∵	because, since, for
↑	increase, more, incline, up	""	ditto (from 'dictus'): same thing again
↓	decrease, less, decline, down	& or +	and
=	equal to, is, is the same as	#	number
≠	not equal to, is not, is the opposite of	@	at
≈	approximately	'	minutes/feet
>	greater than	"	seconds/inches
>>	much greater than	♂	man, male
<	less than	♀	woman, female

Note. Adapted from *Note-taking abbreviations: Writing centre learning guide* (pp.2-3), by Writing Centre. 2014. The University of Adelaide. <https://www.adelaide.edu.au/writingcentre/docs/learningguide-notetakingabbreviations.pdf>

Also develop your own personal symbols/abbreviations:

Here are a few simple symbols I really like (taken from Japanese Kanji):

- I. 中 = middle
- II. 川 = water
- III. 人 = people
- IV. 田 = rice field (but you could devise your own meaning, e.g. paddock, transect, group or groupwork)
- V. 日 = day

2. Use Abbreviations:

Abbreviation	Meaning	Abbreviation	Meaning
e.g.	(exempli gratia): for example	eqn	equation
i.e.	(id est): that is, in other words	poss	possible; possibly; possibility
etc.	etcetera, and so on, so forth	no.	number
n/a	not applicable, not available	prob	problem; problematic
approx	approximate(ly) (the symbol is ≈)	viz	namely
diff	different, difficult	cf.	compare(d) to
imp	important	part	participant/s
max	maximum; maximise	NB	(nota bene): note well (remember!)
min	minimum; minimise	w/	with
res	research	w/- or w/o	without
c	(circa): with, about	et al.	(et alii): and others

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Other ways to abbreviate:

- omit vowels (bkgd= background)
- use the beginning of words with the final letter (inter'l = international)
- use the beginning of words only (subj =subject; meth=method/s; pro= process; pol= pollution)
- the 'ing' form is very common, so this could be recorded simply as a 'g' at the end of a word (chk'g = choking)

Useful apps for note taking

- [Evernote](#) taking notes, clipping web pages & recording audio
- [Microsoft OneNote](#) organising thoughts, to-do lists, & projects
- [Google Keep](#) collecting images, drafting documents, and creating checklists
- [Simplenote](#) simple notes, & keeping them organised across all devices
- [Zoho Notebook](#) visually organising multiple note formats
- [Apple Notes](#) quickly taking notes on Apple devices
- [Quip](#) combining notes with documents and spreadsheets
- [Dropbox Paper](#) discussing projects inside Dropbox
- [Box notes](#) simple notes in box folders
- [Bear](#) organising notes, minimalist markdown editor

Best handwriting apps

- [Paper](#) combining sketches, images and text notes
- [Penultimate](#) adding written notes and drawings to Evernote
- [Squid](#) free-form writing & document notation

Best companion apps for notes

- [WordFlowy](#) lets you write notes in lists (that's all but you can zoom in on important stuff)
- [Jotbox](#) for recording quick audio (good for capturing your thoughts on the go)
- [Jot](#) turns each new tab into a canvas for note taking (simple)

References

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