



Principles of Good Note-Taking

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University for the Common Good

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1. Note Taking in general

Do:

- Keep notes brief!
- Use your own words!
- Write phrases - not sentences!
- Use:
 - your own abbreviations = &/+%
 - BLOCK CAPITALS in bold or highlight!
 - headings and underline
- Number points 1, 2, 3, 4, 5.....
- Make the page interesting - with colour and drawings (rectangles etc.)
- Organise your notes in ring binders with dividers/or plastic boxes with labels

Don't:

- Copy chunks and phrases of books/journals
- Write out lecture notes again to make them neater

Tidy messy notes by:

- Draw a circles/squares around sections of notes in different colours to make them stand out
- Use a ruler to underline headings
- Try and divide page up between sections
- Draw a ring round floating bits of information
- Link stray information by colour or arrows
- Write out a summary sheet in **your own words** for later revision

2. Note taking in lectures

Start each lecture note with the **subject/title, lecturer's name and date & your name.**

Read lecture notes through as soon as possible. Clarify by annotating. Check any missing bits with lecturer or colleague.

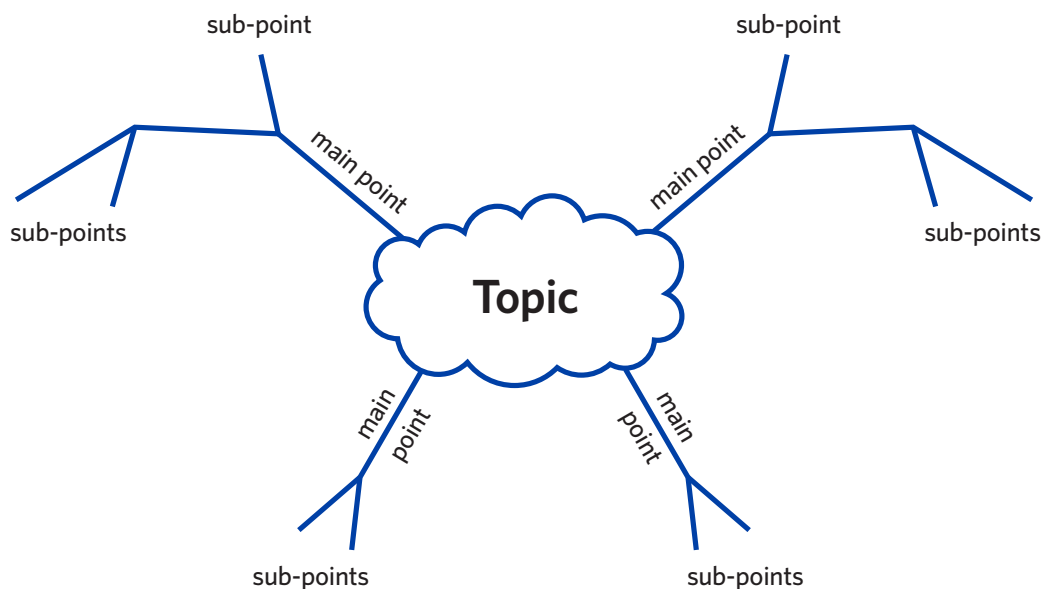
2.1. Two Common Note Taking Techniques

1. Two Column Method: divide the page in 2 columns by drawing a line so you have a smaller column of the left and a bigger one on the right. Make notes of the general area/key words on the left and additional information/details on the right. That way, you can scan the page and identify important points more easily.

E.g.:

Types of buildings	Depends on intended use
Agricultural	e.g. barn, greenhouse characteristics...
Commercial	e.g. warehouse, shopping mall characteristics ...

2. Visual aids, e.g. graphs, diagrammes, mind maps: Mind maps especially help you visualise different main ideas and connections between these, e.g.:



NB: If you struggle to keep up note taking during a lecture or talk, ask your lecturer permission to record on your phone (or other devices) the lecture. That way you can go over the lecture again and take notes in your own time.

3. Note Taking from Books and Journals

- When making notes from a chapter of a book or journal, **read the first few and the concluding paragraphs** (and summary/abstract if provided) to get a flavour of the topic.
- When taking notes **always first include the source of the information**, i.e. author, year, journal etc. Be precise! When using an Internet source, copy and paste the url for future reference.
- **Take notes strategically**. That means, let your reading and note taking be guided by questions. See hand-outs for suggestions below.
- To check and organise your note you could use Mindgenius and Read and Write Gold which are all available of GCU computers.

4. Note Taking Softwares

It is becoming increasingly common to use a note taking software like

Microsoft OneNote (PC and Mac)

- Allows you to gather information (handwritten notes, sound clips, screen shots, pictures, diagrammes etc.) in pages organised into sections within notebooks.
- www.onenote.com

Notational Velocity (Mac OS X)

- Allows you to make simple notes and search them
- <http://notational.net>

Note Taking from Texts _____

Author/Year/Title	1.	2.	3.	4.
What is the main viewpoint in the article/chapter				
Where is the evidence in text or from calculations to support this view				
What are the Conclusions and/or Recommendations				
Areas of agreement/ disagreement from other texts				

Note Taking from Research _____

Author(s): Year/Title	Research aim	Findings	Conclusions	Methodology Research tool , sample size and selection criteria Data collection etc.	Critical comments Limitations Validity

Note Taking From Texts on Theories Underpinning Topic

Topic.....

Source	1.	2.	3.	4.
Theorist and date in chronological order				
What theory proposes. Key principles				
What theory proposes. Key principles				
What theory proposes. Key principles				
What theory proposes. Key principles				