### Note Note taking strategies

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**11. Introduction**

              Many times note taking is one of the most difficult things for a student to do effectively. It can be difficult for students to know what to write down, what important or pertinent information is, or how to structure their notes so they are easy to study from in the future. By taking the time to understand why we take notes, how best to do so, and how to use them, we are able to improve our ability to make them truly useful. Notes taken during reading or lectures can be one of the strongest tools a student has in their academic experience.  **Before attempting to take notes, consider the following questions:**

  What is effective note taking?

  How can I take good notes in class or from written texts?

  Is it different for each?

  What is the overall goal of my note taking?

  How do I study and what should I include in my notes to help this process?

  How the class that I am taking is taught and how should I take notes based on this?

**2.      Why do we take notes?**

To summarize

To highlight important information

Most importantly, to review and study from later

**3.      Note-taking strategies**

         Effective note-taking from lectures and readings is an essential skill for university study. Good note-taking allows a permanent record of relevant points that you can integrate with your own writing, and that can be used for exam revision. Taking reliable, accurate notes also reduces the risk of plagiarism. It helps you distinguish where your ideas came from and how you think about those ideas.**Effective note-taking requires**

  recognising the main ideas

  identifying the information relevant to your task

  having a system of note-taking that works for you

  reducing the information to note and diagram format

  where possible, putting the information in your own words

  recording the source of the information

**4.      Reading Note-taking Strategies**

**1)      Be Selective and Systematic**

As you take notes from a written source, keep in mind that not all of the text will be relevant to your needs. Think about your purpose:

  Are you reading for a general understanding of a topic or concept?

  Are you reading for some specific information that may relate to the topic of an assignment?

Before you start to take notes, skim the text. Then highlight or mark the main points and any relevant information you may need to take notes from. Finally—keeping in mind your purpose for reading—read the relevant sections of the text carefully and take separate notes as you read.

**2)      Identify the Purpose and Function of a Text**

Whether you need to make notes on a whole text or just part of it, identifying the main purpose and function of a text is invaluable for clarifying your note-taking purposes and saving time.

  Read the title and the abstract or preface (if there is one).

Read the introduction or

first paragraph.

  Skim the text to read topic headings and notice how the text is organised.

  Read graphic material and predict its purpose in the text.

Your aim is to identify potentially useful information by getting an initial overview of the text (chapter, article, pages etc.) that  you are reading. Ask yourself: Will this text give me the information I require and where might it be located in the text?

**3)      Identify How Information is organised**

Most texts use a range of organising principles to develop ideas. Organising principles tend to sequence information into a logical hierarchy. Some organising principles might be:

  past ideas to present ideas

   the steps or stages of a process or event

  most important point to least important point

  well known ideas to least known ideas

  simple ideas to complex ideas

  general ideas to specific ideas

  the largest parts to the smallest parts of something

  problems and solutions

**4)      Include Your Thoughts**

When taking notes for an assignment it is also helpful to record your thoughts at the time. Record your thoughts in a separate column or margin and in a different colour to the notes you took from the text. Rule up your notebook into two columns before you begin. Note down:

  Any ideas you have for your assignment as you read.

  How you think you could use this information in your assignment.

**5.      Listening Note-taking Strategies**

Many of the strategies for reading note-taking also apply to listening note-taking. However, unlike reading, you can’t stop a lecture and review as you listen (unless you listen to a taped lecture). Therefore preparation prior to listening can greatly improve comprehension. When you take notes:

  Have a clear purpose.

  Recognise main ideas.

  Select what is relevant. You do not need to write down everything that is said.

  Have a system for recording information that works for you

**1)      Reasons for taking lecture notes.**

  Making yourself take notes forces you to listen carefully and test your understanding of the material.

  When you are reviewing, notes provide a gauge to what is important in the text.

  Personal notes are usually easier to remember than the text.

  The writing down of important points helps you to remember then even before you have studied the material formally.

**2)      Clues instructors usually give to what is important to take down**

Some of the more common clues are:

  Material written on the blackboard.

  Repetition

  Emphasis

1. Emphasis can be judged by tone of voice and gesture.

2. Emphasis can be judged by the amount of time the instructor spends on points and the number of examples he or she uses.

  Word signals (e.g. "There are **two points of view** on . . . " "The **third**reason is . . . " " In **conclusion**. . . ")

  Summaries given at the end of class.

  Reviews given at the beginning of class.

**3)** **Helpful tips**

Each student should develop his or her own method of taking notes, but most students find the following suggestions helpful:

  **Make your notes brief.**

1. Never use a sentence where you can use a phrase.  Never use a phrase where you can use a word.

2. Use abbreviations and symbols, but be consistent.

  **Put most notes in your own words.  However, the following should be noted exactly:**

1. Formulas                                     2. Definitions                              3. Specific facts

  **Use outline form and/or a numbering system**.  Indention helps you distinguish major from minor points.

  **If you miss a statement, write key words, skip a few spaces, and get the information later.**

  **Don't try to use every space on the page**.  Leave room for coordinating your notes with the text after the lecture.   (You may want to list key terms in the margin or make a summary of the contents of the page.)

  **Date your notes.**  Perhaps number the pages.

**4)      Lecture Survival Tips**

**Strategies to Increase Comprehension and Improve Note-Taking**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| ***Before the Lecture*** | ***During the Lecture*** | ***After the Lecture*** |
|           Revise the previous  lecture or tutorial  Pre-read about the topic            Check the pronunciation  of any new words  or discipline-specific  language in the  prereadings.            Rule up pages according to your note-taking  system. This saves time in  the lecture. |           Be on time and sit near the front            Distinguish between main points, elaboration,  examples, repetition,‘waffle’, restatements and new  points by:            Listening for structural cues (signpost/transition  words, introduction, body and summary stages)            Looking for non verbal cues (facial expression ,  hand and body signals)            Looking for visual cues (copy the content of any  visual aids, note references to names and sources)            Listening for phonological cues ( voice change in  volume, speed, emotion and emphasis) which often indicates important information |           Revise lecture notes  within 24 hours. Tidy up  Your handwriting  And fill in any missing bits.            Reviewing makes  remembering lectures  much easier.            Write a short summary  of the lecture (1 paragraph) in your own  words            Attach any handouts to  your lecture notes. |

**Use Symbols and Abbreviations**

The use of symbols and abbreviations is useful for note taking in lectures, when speed is essential. When you use symbols and abbreviations, develop a system; use commonly used or personal symbols and abbreviations. However, you also need to be familiar with the symbols or abbreviations frequently used in your particular field of study (e.g. chemical symbols or Greek alphabet). It’s important to be consistent when using symbols and abbreviations so you will remember what they represent and be able to use them with ease.

**Abbreviations**

These can be classified into three categories:

**1.      Common**

Many are derived from Latin.

c.f. (confer) = compare

 i.e. (id est) = that is

e.g (exempla grate) = for example

 NB (nota benne) =note well

no. (numero) = number

etc. (et cetera)= and so on

**2.                         Discipline-Specific**

In chemistry:

Au for gold, Mg for magnesium

In the case of quantities and concepts, these are represented by Greek letters in many fields.

A or a (alpha) B or b (beta)

**3.      Personal**

Here you can shorten any word that is commonly used in lectures.

diff =different

Gov= government

NEC = necessary

**Acronyms**

Some abbreviations are so well known and widely used that they have become an Acronym—an abbreviation pronounced as a word. Forexample, the word ‘laser’ was originally an abbreviation for ‘Light Amplification by Stimulation Emission of Radiation’. It now is a noun in its own right.

**Use Concept Maps and Diagrams**

You can also set down information in a concept map or diagram. This presents the information in a visual form and is unlike the traditional linear form of note-taking. Information can be added to the concept map in any sequence.

Concept maps can easily become cluttered, so use both facing pages of an open A4 note book. This will give you an A3 size page to set out your concept map and allow plenty of space for adding ideas and symbols.

         Begin in the middle of the page and add ideas on branches that radiate from the central idea or from previous branches.

         Arrows and words can be used to show links between parts of the concept map.

         Colour and symbols are important parts of concept maps, helping illustrate ideas and triggering your own thoughts