Notetaking

Notetaking provides a framework within which we can think about, organise and recall relevant points and ideas. We take notes to help us remember information.

Your notes are your personal response to a lecture or a text, and it is to your advantage to make them as useful as possible.

LECTURE NOTES

Your style of notetaking in a lecture will vary according to the type of lecture. For example, notes from a History lecture will be quite different from those of a Chemistry one. You adapt to the style, subject and requirements of the lecturer. It is not necessary to record all that is said. Develop a technique:

- Head page with topic, subject, lecturer and date. Number sequential pages.
- Allow a wide margin and space between sections for writing inserts and comments later.
- Use one side of the paper only
- Work out the lecturer’s format. How does the lecture begin? Is there a blackboard plan? Diagrams to copy? Does s/he reiterate key points? Does s/he summarise at the end? All this helps you to structure your notes.
- Use abbreviations whenever possible.
- Be consistent to avoid confusion.
- Write by phrases rather than whole sentences. Don’t quote at length.
- Spend time at the end on detailed diagrams & graphs, rather than miss important notes.
- Revise your notes and underline or highlight key points as soon as possible.

This is very important.

If your lecturer is presenting you with arguments and ideas on a topic, your notes may include:

- The lecturer’s thesis
- Supporting and conflicting evidence
- Sources and references cited
- Questions raised in the lecture.

Sometimes personal comments beside the notes will help you later.

In cases where material needs to be learned and consolidated for tests or exams, students sometimes rewrite lecture notes. It is a matter of choice.

Avoid writing out large slabs of material by hand. **Photocopy or scan** these and mark them to highlight key points. Label clearly with topic, date and bibliographic details as applicable. Store with your other notes.
BE SELECTIVE IN YOUR RESEARCH NOTES

Analyse your assignment topic before making notes. You are rarely asked to write down all you can think of about a topic. Usually you are required to show that you can interpret and use information to answer a specific question.

You will save a lot of time if your approach to the question is well-directed from the start.

Here are some practical suggestions:

- Choose either index cards or A4 paper. Use one side only.
- Head page with topic and date.
- Record full bibliographic details for later use.
- Leave a margin and good spacing for later comments and highlighting.
- You can also use the margin for headings that will direct your revision.
- Use sub-headings and colour contrasts where appropriate.
- Note chapter and page as you progress.
- Whenever possible, use your own wording to reach an understanding of the reading.
- Keep your notes to a minimum.
- If you need to use an exact, or short quotation, copy it down accurately.
- Acknowledge all quotations in your paper.
- Organise and file your notes under subject and topic headings.
- Store carefully. Your notes are irreplaceable.
- Add your own thoughts and questions as well as relevant points from your lecture notes.
- Use your notes not only for essay writing, but also for revision.

Before examinations you should be able to adapt the ideas, issues and facts in your notes to prepare for alternative questions on a topic.

If your notes seem like random pieces of a jigsaw puzzle, put them under the headings of your main points. When you see where they all fit, they will make a lot more sense.

Of course, all this sounds good, but will you be tempted to put it into practice? If your method is working well - great! If it’s not, it’s time to change.

SEARCH THE eLIBRARY:

The eLibrary is available at www.kangan.edu.au/library

To find LLC resources on notetaking use these key terms to search:

- Listening - Note-taking - Note-taking handbooks

If you need extra help Ask a librarian! In person, over the phone 9279-2424 or via email LLC@kangan.edu.au