

Library Helpsheet



Notetaking

Why take notes?

When you are writing an essay, preparing a presentation or revising for an exam, using a set of notes will be invaluable. However, having your purpose in mind as far as possible at the start will help you make more useful notes.

Even the words **take notes** and **makes notes** indicate different approaches:

- When you **take notes**, you are writing down someone else's words e.g. teacher
- When you **make notes**, you are writing down your own ideas e.g. from books, articles.

Some of the **purposes** for taking and making notes are:

- To help learn what the teacher is saying in class – taking notes
- To remind you of important points from a talk – taking notes
- To summarise information when you are studying – making notes
- To help plan an essay or report – making notes
- To summarise information from different resources when you are researching for an essay or report – making notes
- To help refresh your memory of a topic – making notes



How do I take notes?

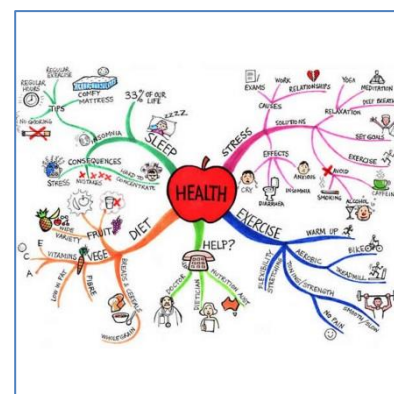
There are 2 main ways to take and make notes – visual notes (such as mind maps) or linear notes (such as Cornell notes).

Visual notetaking

Visual notetaking (also called pattern notes or mind maps) summarise information in a visual way which can often make it easier to remember.

Remember to:

- Date your notes
- Put what you read into your **own words**
- Build the “picture” using headings and sub-headings
- Include the source you used to make the notes if using a book, magazine or website
- Make them easy to read
- Use diagrams or pictures
- Use arrows, circles, and lines to connect related points
- Leave space so you can add to the notes



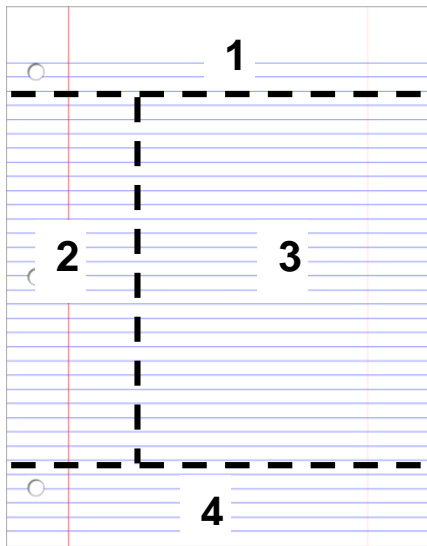
Tony Buzan Organisation

Linear notetaking

Linear notes are written in lines and are the most common way of taking notes. Remember to:

- Date your notes and write the topic at the top
- Put what you read into your own words
- Include the source you used to make the notes if using a book, magazine or website
- Make them easy to read
- Use phrases rather than whole sentences
- Use one line for each point – gives you space to add in any information later
- Use wide margins to give you space to add information later
- Use abbreviations

Create Cornell Notes



- 1 Write the date and topic at the top
- 2 Write down questions/ broad topics
- 3 Write bullet point answers to summarise this information. the questions on the left
- 4 Summarise the most important information and ideas

Tips

- Create clear heading and sub-headings
 - Use different colours to indicate headings, quotes, vital pieces of information
 - Number or underline main points
 - Use arrows to link points
- Draw boxes around vital points
 - Put your own thoughts and ideas in square brackets [] to remind you this is what you thought rather than what you read or heard

Tips for making notes when researching

- Read through once without making notes using **skimming technique** to get the idea of what the text is about
- Read again and make notes – note keywords, important points, key phrases
- Make a note of anything which answers your essay question
- Note anything which is new to you
- Note anything which you need to follow up – put a question mark next to the note to remind you to follow it up

Organising your notes for revision/study

Re-reading your notes at regular intervals (weekly or monthly) will help you become more familiar with your topic and will also give you the opportunity to edit them, link ideas, and add new ideas.



Organising your notes will also include:

- **Classifying them** – there are several ways to do this:
 - By subject – this builds up a library of notes for a particular topic
 - By date – when you made the notes in chronological order
 - By essay, project or assessment – notes are together for each essay
 - Once you have decided on a way of classifying your notes – stick to it!
- **Filing them** – you need to establish some kind of system for storing your notes which makes them easy to find. The time you have invested in making notes will be wasted if you can't find them!
 - Folders are a great way to store your notes if they are clearly labelled
 - All notes related to the one topic are then in one place
 - Use an index page at the front to list the general contents
 - When you decide on a system, stick to it
- **Keeping them** – don't be too quick in throwing out your notes. Keep notes for each year until you will no longer be studying the subject e.g. keep all English notes until you have completed National 4 & 5 or Higher.