



Introduction

Note taking is an active way to make a record of an event such as a class. This will increase your understanding and allow you to pick out the most important points and themes. This tutorial will get you thinking about:

- Why do we take notes?
- The process used to make notes both in class and whilst reading.
- How to make notes using the Cornell Method.
- Top tips to apply to your own note taking.
- Tools used for making notes.

Why we take notes

- Why take notes
 - To aid memory.
 - Active writing.
 - Active listening.
 - To organise thinking.
 - Key ideas.
 - Key concepts.
 - Provide a record.
 - Lecture.
 - Reading.
 - Meeting.
 - To follow up.
 - Action points.
 - References.
 - Consolidate ideas.
 - Revision.
 - Make connections.
 - Keep a copy.

The note taking process

Note taking is a process and requires different approaches for different situations. It isn't just about what you do when you are in class or when you're reading. Successful note taking requires preparation beforehand and follow up activities afterwards.

Complete a drag and drop quiz to get to know how to make notes whilst in class and whilst reading.



Stages of note taking – class

Before – prepare by completing any reading and familiarise yourself with assignments required. If possible, get a copy of the class slides or handout.

- Correct – Well done! You have a good understanding of how to get started.
- Incorrect – Guess again. Try again. Think about how you could prepare before a class – maybe with some reading.

During – apply a technique (such as the Cornell method); note the session objectives, the summary and references, and keywords to follow up.

- Correct – Well done! You know how to take notes during a class!
- Incorrect – Guess again. Try again. Think about how you would make notes during your class.

After – follow up any references, organise and review notes.

- Correct – Well done! You are familiar with the steps to take after you've taken your notes.
- Incorrect – Guess again. Try again. Think about what you could do after your notes have been taken – maybe follow up references?

Stages of note taking – when reading

Before – think about the information you need. Do you require an overview, case studies, definitions, ideas or evidence? This will influence what you need to read and improve your motivation.

- Correct – Well done! You have a good understanding of how to get started.
- Incorrect – Try again. Think about how you could prepare before a class – maybe with some reading.

During – Apply different techniques whilst reading. Scanning at first, then critical in-depth reading and annotating for key information.

- Correct – Well done! You know how to take notes whilst reading.
- Incorrect – Try again. Think about how you would make notes during whilst you read.

After – Make sure you keep a full note of the references for what you are reading. Organise, and review notes. This may lead to follow ups.

- Correct – Well done! You are familiar with the steps taken after you've made notes.
- Incorrect – Try again. Think about what you could do after your notes have been taken – maybe following up the references.



Top tips for note taking

- Be concise – use bullet points and abbreviations.
- Paraphrase (Paraphrasing is when you use your own words to express someone else's ideas (written or spoken)); this will help you to process the information.
- Space material out so it is easier to understand.
- Use pictures and colours to increase memory and engagement.
- Try using the Cornell method.
- Annotate lecture slides if available - this helps you to focus on capturing your thoughts about the content.
- Afterwards read through your notes and fill in any gaps.
- Store your notes somewhere safe – consider keeping a copy in the cloud.
- Use the note taking process to help you make connections between information.

The Cornell Method

This is the Cornell method of note taking.

Cue column – After your class or reading, pick out the keywords from the further notes section and put them in this column. This will help you make links and organise your information.

Further notes – During your class or reading, make notes in this column using the tips suggested and your own technique.

Summary – Finally, cover the further notes and summarise the keywords (from the cue column) in this bottom section and reflect on the material identifying gaps and further reading.

References

301: Student Skills and Development Centre. (©2018). Note taking [Online]. *301: Student Skills and Development Centre*. [Viewed 16th March 2018]. Available from:

<https://www.sheffield.ac.uk/ssid/301/study-skills/university-study/note-taking-in-lectures>

Cornell University: The Learning Strategies Center. (n.d.). The Cornell Note-taking system [Online]. *Cornell University: The Learning Strategies Center*. [Viewed 16 March 2018]. Available from

<http://lsc.cornell.edu/notes.html>



Try it yourself!

Watch this video and try make notes of your own. You may want to use the Cornell method for note taking. You can download the Cornell method template (links to http://www.librarydevelopment.group.shef.ac.uk/preentry/note_taking/cornell_note_taking_template.pdf) and use it to make your notes. You can then look at an example model answer (Links to http://www.librarydevelopment.group.shef.ac.uk/preentry/note_taking/cornell_method_example.pdf)

The video to use is Beware online “Filter Bubbles”, by Eli Pariser owned by TED https://www.ted.com/talks/eli_pariser_beware_online_filter_bubbles Licenced under CC BY – NC – ND 4.0 International.

Tools for note taking

Google Drive (links to <https://www.google.com/drive/>) – A collaborative cloud based app and online tool. Stores and synchronises across devices to enable collaboration on word process, spreadsheet and presentation functions. Visit Google Drive (Links to <https://www.google.com/drive/>) for more information

Evernote (links to <https://evernote.com>) – An app and web based tool for note taking, organising, making lists, and archiving. To compile formatted text, weblinks, images, voice memos and handwritten memos. Visit [Evernote](https://evernote.com) (Links to <https://evernote.com>) for more information.

Google Keep (links to <https://www.google.com/keep/>) – Is another useful collaborative app to use across devices to save notes, photos and audio. Visit [Google Keep](https://www.google.com/keep/) (<https://www.google.com/keep/>) for more information.

References

301: Student Skills and Development Centre. (©2018). Note taking [Online]. 301: Student Skills and Development Centre. [Viewed 16th March 2018]. Available from: <https://www.sheffield.ac.uk/ssid/301/study-skills/university-study/note-taking-in-lectures>

Cornell University: The Learning Strategies Center. (n.d.). The Cornell Note-taking system [Online]. Cornell University: The Learning Strategies Center. [Viewed 16 March 2018]. Available from <http://lsc.cornell.edu/notes.html>

Cottrell, S., (2013). The study skills handbook. 4th ed. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Evernote Corporation., (©2018). Evernote Vertical [digital image]. [Accessed 10 April 2018]. Available from <https://evernote.com/press>

Godfrey, J., (2014). Reading and making notes. 2nd ed. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Google Inc., (n.d.). Drive [digital image]. [Viewed 5 April 2018]. Available from <https://www.blog.google/press/>





The
University
Of
Sheffield.

The
University
Library.

Note Taking.

Discovering

Understanding

Questioning

Referencing

Creating

Communicating

Pariser, E., (2011). Beware online “filter bubbles” [Online]. TED. [Viewed 28 March 2018]. Available from https://www.ted.com/talks/eli_pariser_beware_online_filter_bubbles

YeriLee., (2015). [Highlighter-coloring-fluorescent] [digital image]. [Viewed 11 April 2018]. Available from <https://pixabay.com/en/highlighter-coloring-fluorescent-1103715/>

You have reached the end of this resource.

Why not look at some related resources:

Take an online tutorial: [Developing your ideas with mind mapping](https://digitalmedia.sheffield.ac.uk/media/Developing+your+ideas+with+mind+mapping/1_7g22wl8a) (Links to https://digitalmedia.sheffield.ac.uk/media/Developing+your+ideas+with+mind+mapping/1_7g22wl8a)

Take an online tutorial: [Academic Writing](http://www.librarydevelopment.group.shef.ac.uk/preentry/academic_writing/academic_writing%20-%20Storyline%20output/story_html5.html) (Links to: http://www.librarydevelopment.group.shef.ac.uk/preentry/academic_writing/academic_writing%20-%20Storyline%20output/story_html5.html)

Compliments the tutorial: http://www.librarydevelopment.group.shef.ac.uk/preentry/note_taking/note_taking%20-%20Storyline%20output/story_html5.html

Resource last reviewed April 2018

Review due: April 2019



Except otherwise noted, this work by The University Of Sheffield Library is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License. To view a copy of this license, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/>.