

I. What is Note-taking?

Note taking is, essentially, the practice of recording information captured from another source. It is a crucial part of the learning process. It helps students learn, retain, and recall information. Taking notes makes you think differently about the subject; it requires you to look at things in a different way. It also helps you focus during a lecture because you're actively listening and participating in class.

Taking notes allows you to review interesting points from what you are researching, reading or listening to. Writing notes in your own words makes everything clearer for the notetaker when going back to the material. This is a much better approach than relying on your own memory. And that's because verbatim note-taking can actually hurt conceptual thinking as it takes away the time needed to explain concepts through examples and diagrams instead of just writing down facts without any context.

II. Cognitive Benefits of Note-taking

Note-taking involves certain cognitive behavior; writing notes engages your brain in specific and beneficial ways that help you grasp and retain information. Note-taking can result in broader learning than simply mastering course content because it helps you to process

information and make connections between ideas, allowing you to apply your new knowledge to novel contexts.



III. Note-taking vs. Note-making

The terms "note-taking" and "note-making" are often used interchangeably, and in many contexts, they refer to the same activity. However, in some educational systems and settings, there can be subtle distinctions between the two.

1 Note-taking:

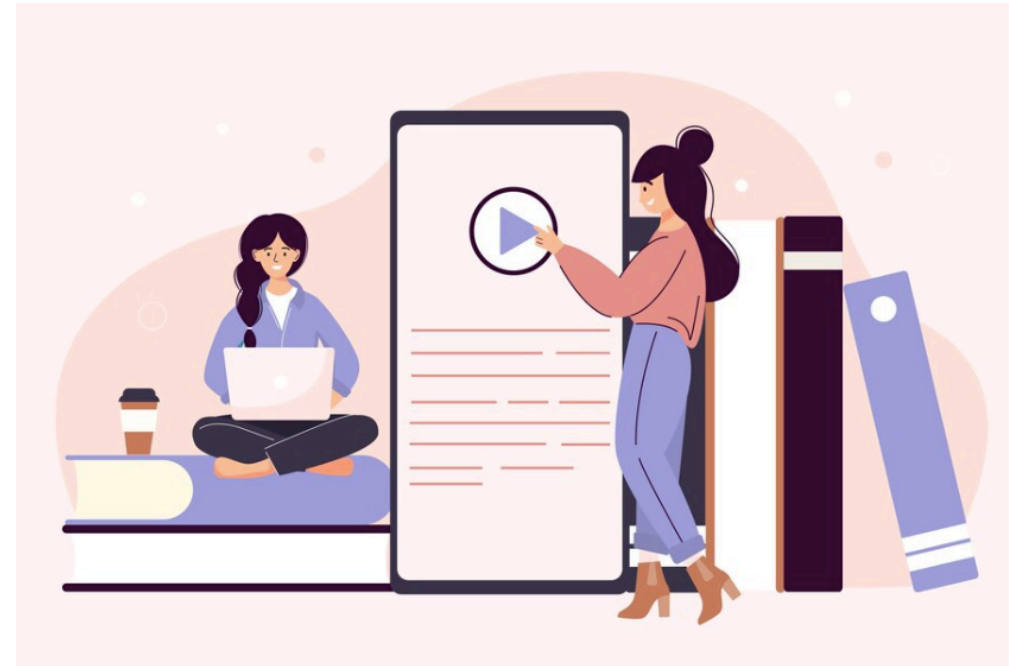
- **Definition:** Note-taking typically involves capturing information from a lecture, reading, or other sources. It's the process of recording key points, facts, or ideas to aid in comprehension and later review.
- **Purpose:** The primary purpose of note-taking is to document and organize information for personal use, making it easier to understand and remember.

2 Note-making:

- **Definition:** Note-making, on the other hand, can be seen as a more dynamic and engaging process. It goes beyond simply recording information and may involve synthesizing, analyzing, and creating connections between different pieces of information.
- **Purpose:** Note-making is often associated with a more active and critical approach to learning. It may include the creation of summaries, concept maps, or other visual

representations that help in understanding the material more deeply.

While these distinctions exist, it's essential to note that the terms are used interchangeably in various contexts, and the specific



definitions may vary based on educational systems and personal preferences. In practice, both note-taking and note-making involve capturing and processing information to support learning and understanding. Ultimately, the choice between note-taking and note-making depends on individual learning styles, the nature of the

material, and the educational objectives. Some students may naturally engage in more active and creative note-making processes, while others may focus on straightforward note-taking for clarity and organization.

IV. Understanding the Purpose of Note-taking

Before delving into specific techniques, it is crucial to understand why we take notes in the first place. Note-taking serves as a cognitive tool that aids in the processing and synthesis of information. It enhances our ability to:

- **Capture Key Information:** Identify and record the essential points of a lecture or reading material.
- **Organize Thoughts:** Create a structured representation of information, making it easier to follow and comprehend.



- **Facilitate Recall:** Act as a memory aid by providing cues for remembering information.

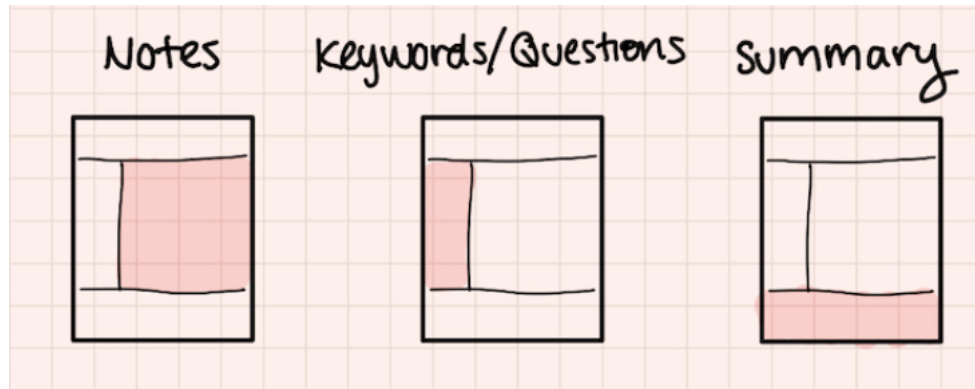
V. Different Styles of Note-taking

1 Linear Note-Taking: This traditional style involves creating a sequential list of information. It's effective for capturing information in a structured manner, making it easy to follow the flow of a lecture or reading.

2 Cornell Method: This method involves dividing a piece of paper into three sections: a space on the left for writing the main topics, a larger space on the right to write your notes, and a space at the bottom to summarize your notes. Review and clarify your notes as soon as possible after class. Summarize what you've written on the bottom of the page, and finally, study your notes.

Method: Rule your paper with a 5 cm margin on the left leaving a 15 cm area on the right in which to make notes. During class, take down information in the six-inch area. When the instructor moves to a new point, skip a few lines. After class, complete phrases and sentences as much as possible.

For every significant bit of information, write a cue in the left margin. To review, cover your notes with a card, leaving the cues exposed. Say



the cue out loud, then say as much as you can of the material underneath the card. When you have said as much as you can, move the card and see if what you said matches what is written. If you can say it, you know it.

Advantages: Organized and systematic for recording and reviewing notes. Easy format for pulling out major concept and ideas. Simple and efficient. Saves time and effort. "Do-it-right-in-the-first-place system."

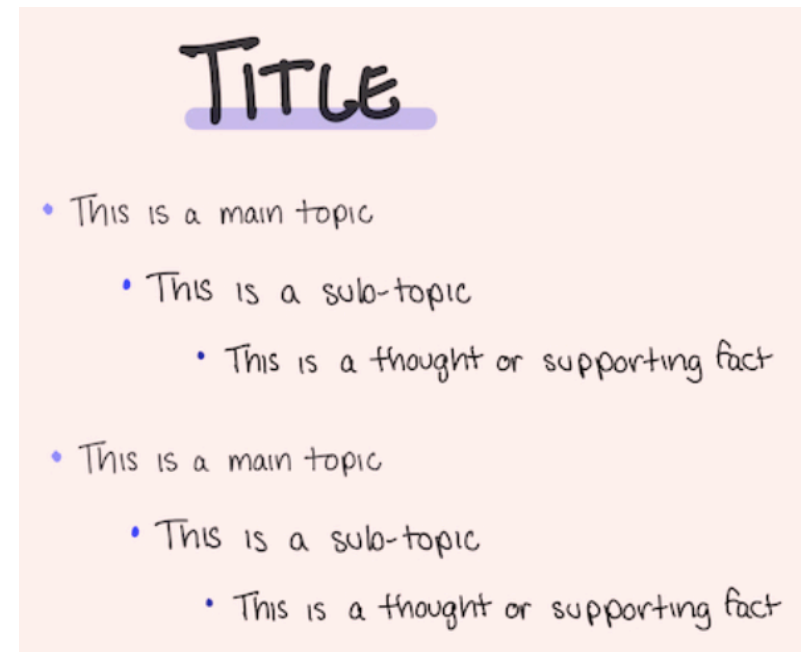
Disadvantages: None

When to Use? In any lecture situation.

3 The Outlining Method

Method: Listen and then write in points in an organized pattern based on space indentation. Place major points farthest to the left. Indent each

more specific point to the right. Levels of importance will be indicated by distance away from the major point. Indention can be as simple as or as complex as labeling the indentions with Roman numerals or decimals. Markings are not necessary as space relationships will indicate the major/minor points.



Advantages: Well-organized system if done right. Outlining records content as well as relationships. It also reduces editing and is easy to review by turning main points into questions.

Disadvantages: Requires more thought in class for accurate organization. This system may not show relationships by sequence when needed. It doesn't lend to diversity of a review attach for maximum learning and question application. This system cannot be used if the lecture is too fast.

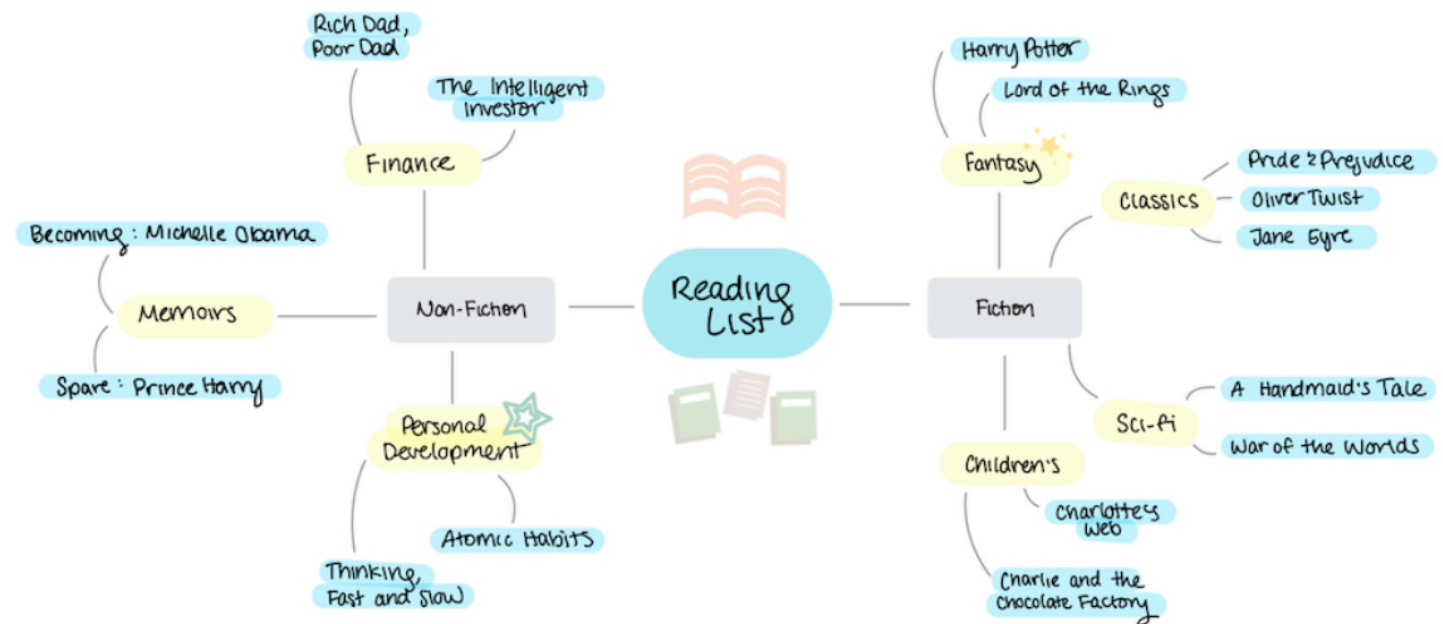
When to Use? The outline format can be used if the lecture is presented in outline organization. This may be either deductive (regular outline) or inductive (reverse outline where minor points start building to a major point). Use this format when there is enough time in the lecture to think about and make organization decisions when they are needed.

This format can be most effective when your note-taking skills are super and sharp and you can handle the outlining regardless of the note-taking situation.

4 Mind-Mapping: It is a method that uses comprehension/concentration skills and evolves in a note-taking form which relates each fact or idea to every other fact or idea. Mapping is a graphic representation of the content of a lecture. It is a method that maximizes active participation, affords

immediate knowledge as to its understanding, and emphasizes critical thinking.

Advantages: This format helps you to visually track your lecture regardless of conditions. Little thinking is needed and relationships can easily be seen. It is also easy to edit your notes by adding numbers, marks, and color coding. Review will call for you to restructure thought processes which will force you to check understanding. Review by covering lines for memory drill and relationships. Main points can be written on flash or note cards and pieced together into a table or larger structure at a later date.



Disadvantages: You may not hear changes in content from major points to facts.

When to Use? Use when the lecture content is heavy and well-organized. It may also be used effectively when you have a guest lecturer and have no idea how the lecture is going to be presented.

5 The Charting Method: Charting allows you to break up information into such categories as similarities and differences; dates, events, and impact; and pros and cons.

Method: Determine the categories to be covered in lecture. Set up your paper in advance by columns headed by these categories. As you listen to the lecture, record information (words, phrases, main ideas, etc.) into the appropriate category.

Advantages: Helps you track conversation and dialogues where you would normally be confused and lose out on relevant content. Reduces amount of writing necessary. Provides easy review mechanism for both memorization of facts and study of comparisons and relationships.

Disadvantages: Few disadvantages except learning how to use the system and locating the appropriate categories. You must be able to understand what's happening in the lecture.

Method	Description	When to use	Pros	Cons
Outline				
Cornell				
Boxing				
Charting				

When to Use? The test or exam will focus on both facts and relationships; the content is heavy and presented fast. You want to reduce the amount of time you spend editing and reviewing at test time. You want to get an overview of the whole course on one big paper sequence.

6 The Sentence Method: This method is when you record every new thought, fact, or topic on a separate line. It allows for the capturing of a comprehensive set of information.

Method: Write every new thought, fact or topic on a separate line, numbering as you progress.

Advantages: Slightly more organized than the paragraph. Gets more or all of the information. Thinking to tract content is still limited.

Disadvantages: Can't determine major/minor points from the numbered sequence. Difficult to edit without having to rewrite by clustering points which are related. Difficult to review unless editing cleans up relationship.

When to Use? Use when the lecture is somewhat organized, but heavy with content which comes fast. You can hear the different points, but you don't know how they fit together. The instructor tends to present in point fashion, but not in grouping such as "three related points."

Example: A revolution is any occurrence that affects other aspects of life, such as economic life, social life, and so forth. Therefore revolutions cause change. (see page 29 to 30 in your text about this.)

=> Sample Notes: Revolution – occurrence that affects other aspects of life: e.g., econ., socl. Etc. C.f. text, pp. 29-30 (*this point is further explained in VI-3*).

VI. Techniques for Effective Note-taking

1 Active Listening: The foundation of good note-taking lies in active listening. Stay engaged with the material, ask questions, and seek clarification to ensure you capture the most important points.

2 Highlighting and Color Coding: Use colors, highlighters, and different fonts to emphasize key points. This not only aids in organization but also makes your notes visually appealing and easier to review.

3 Abbreviations and Symbols: Develop a system of abbreviations and symbols to speed up your note-taking without sacrificing clarity. This personal shorthand will save time during lectures.

Imagine you heard the following in a lecture:

"The United Kingdom's population, at around sixty million, is similar to that of Italy, but Italy's population is now shrinking because its birth rate has fallen below its death rate. The UK's population is still growing, albeit very slowly – at a rate of 0.09% between 1995 and 2000."

Your notes could look like:

UK pop c60m ≈ I. BUT I. ↓ due BR < DR – cf. UK ↑ slow ie 0.09% 95 – 2K

This is much quicker to write down than trying to capture the whole sentence, and you haven't missed any key information. It is also easy to understand when you know what each symbol means.

USE THE FIRST FEW LETTERS OF THE WORD	
important	imp
information	Info
evaluation	eval
information	info
REMOVE ALL (OR MOST OF) THE VOWELS FROM THE WORD	
management	mngmt
marketing	mkt
development	dvpt
COMMON NOTE-TAKING SYMBOLS	
and, plus, with	& or +
the same as, results in	(=)
is approximately equal to, is similar to	≈
is less than, is smaller than and is greater than, is larger than	< and >
increase, rise, growth and decrease, fall, shrinkage	↑ and ↓
therefore, thus	⇒ or ∴
number	#
special, important, notable	*
COMMON GENERAL ABBREVIATIONS	
approximately, roughly, about	c.

for example	e.g.
in other words	i.e.
compared to	cf.
with and without	w/ and w/o
very	v.
extremely	vv.
and so on	etc.
a thousand	K or k
a million	m
against	vs.

VII. Digital Note-taking Tools

- **Digital Note-Taking Apps:** Explore tools like Evernote, OneNote, or Notion for a seamless and organized digital note-taking experience.
- **Tablets and Styluses:** Embrace technology by using tablets and styluses for a more interactive note-taking experience, especially for those who prefer handwritten notes.

VIII. Note-taking Tips

Among other tips offered by note-taking experts:

- ▶ Leave a space between entries so that you can fill in any missing information.
- ▶ Use a laptop and download information to add to your notes either during or after the lecture.
- ▶ Understand that there is a difference between taking notes on what you read (handouts in Moodle) and what you hear (in a lecture). If you are unsure what that might be, visit your teacher during office hours and ask them to elaborate.



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