Effective note-taking skills

Why do we take notes?

- To remember information from lecturers, talks, books, etc.
- To provide a framework within which we can think about, organise and recall relevant points and ideas.

Key questions to ask when making notes:

- What does this mean to me?
- How does this relate to what I know?
- How will I use it?
- What are the KEY ideas?
- What are the important points?

Is it useful to rewrite (type) notes after a lecture?

Rarely. It is more beneficial to re-read the notes taken in class THAT NIGHT and add notes from further reading (texts). Retention rate of the material if read within 24 hours is about 75%, after 48 hours retention drops to fifty percent or less.

What note-taking style is best?

- Most students develop a very individual style of note making, including abbreviations, diagrams, etc. No one style suits everyone.
- Generally, there are two common ways of taking notes and within these styles individuals will work out a way which suits them and the subject.
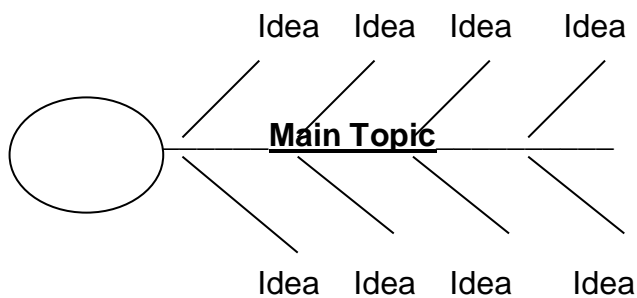
1. Linear Note-making

- Points are taken down one after another. The following are useful points to remember.
- Start the page with topic, subject and date.
  Place lecturer's initials next to subject (for questions later to lecturer).
- Leave a wide margin and space between sections for writing comments later.
- Work out the main points and mark these headings by underlining or using colour.
- Use one side of the paper only.
- Don't try to get down every word – use phrases, key words or abbreviations only. Keep abbreviations consistent.

Topic	Subject: Date: Initials of lecturer:
Key Points	Notes taken in lecture: Space for study notes:
Key Points	Notes from lecture:

2. Fishbone Note-making

▪ The main topic or idea is placed in the centre of the page and key points are written around, attached to the main idea (each bone on the fish is another idea)

Idea   Idea   Idea   Idea

Main Topic

Idea   Idea   Idea   Idea

3. Mind-mapping:

▪ Similar to Fishbone – main idea is placed in the centre of the page and key points are written in circles (clouds) around the main idea

Main Topic