



Note Taking While Reading

Well-organised notes can help you recall relevant material and find information again when you need it for assignment work or when studying for exams.

Hints for good note taking

Prepare beforehand

- Ask yourself questions such as, 'What do I know about the topic?' and 'How does it relate to the previous topic?' This will open up connections to your long term memory.
- Skim the text. Use the structure and presentation of the text to quickly identify the main points.
- Be aware of why you are making notes, e.g. developing a general understanding, revising for a test, looking for specific details to support an argument in an essay, as this will determine the type of notes you make.

Features of good notes

Good notes are purposeful, logical, brief and accurate. They are your record of your understanding of what you have read.

Good notes should have:

- key points and minor points;
- source material, relevant bibliographical details of a text—author, title, publisher, date of publication, page number/s;
- highlighting techniques, graphics, colours, underlining to pick out main points;
- white space, so that you can add to your notes later on:
 - to aid the transfer of information to your long term memory;
 - for revision.
- abbreviations and symbols:

- to show connections between key points and minor points; and
- to save you time.

Commonly used abbreviations

Abbreviations can assist you to make notes quicker. You should discover commonly used abbreviations or develop your own for any frequently used vocabulary that is specific to the courses you are studying.

Cornell system of note taking

This system of note taking helps you to focus on the main ideas and to separate them from the details in a clear and efficient manner.

Example

The following is an extract from the article Memory and Learning (RMIT Study and Learning Centre, 2009).

Long and short term memory

In order to develop effective academic skills, it is necessary to understand more about how the memory is structured, in particular the role of short-term memory and long-term memory. Short term memory is the part known as the conscious mind and is used for paying attention. Long-term memory is where information is stored. There are many things that come into the short-term memory which are not transferred to the long-term memory, as you can see in Diagram 1. In fact, the brain is designed to forget between 50% and 75% of the information that is not transferred to the long-term memory within 24 hours. Therefore, the brain carefully selects what is stored in the long-term memory.



To make notes using the Cornell system:

- ✓ make two columns;
- ✓ write **key words** on the left, **details** on right;
- ✓ use point form; and
- ✓ include **bibliographic information** at the top of the page.

Study and Learning Centre. (2009). <i>Memory and learning</i> . RMIT.	
p. 1 Structure of memory	Useful to understand memory
Short term	Short term = paying attention
Long term	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- info transferred into LT memory “... the brain is designed to forget between 50% and 75% of the information that is not transferred to the long term memory within 24 hours.” (p.1) <ul style="list-style-type: none">- info stored > brain selects

Occasionally, you might copy useful quotes. Take care to distinguish between your own words and any copied directly from the text. Indicate exactly what has been quoted by using quotation marks (repeating the page number or using a different colour may also be useful).

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