



# Note taking

## Why take notes?

Notes make you concentrate on what you are learning. They force you to put ideas into your own words, aiding your understanding and helping you to remember the information in the future. Taking notes from books, journals or websites can be a more effective way to learn and understand than merely reading sources. Note taking is also useful in classes or lectures; allowing you to note down your own thoughts on topics or extra information which may not be in handouts.

## How to take notes

The important aspects of note taking are to extract the most relevant points from the information you are dealing with, being concise and making sure you understand what you are writing!

## What to write down?

When taking notes from written sources or in lectures, write down **key words**, **summarise** or **paraphrase** ideas, **draw diagrams** or use **bullet points** and write down in full any **quotes** you may wish to use in your written work.

## Preparing for lectures

Note taking in lectures is easier if you do a bit of preparation beforehand. Write down details of the speaker, date and title of the lecture. Prepare your page, working out how you will lay out your notes, drawing any margins or boxes that you need to organise your information.

## *During lectures*

- Use your own words where possible as you will find this easier to understand when reviewing your notes
- Don't panic if the lecturer is speaking too quickly, pause to listen then resume note taking when you are ready
- Make a note of things you don't understand so that you can look these up later
- Space your notes out so that you can add more information to a section later on
- Record facts and statistics accurately and mark quotes clearly. You may find it easier to record different types of information with different coloured pens

## *After lectures*

It is a good idea to review your notes from lectures as soon as possible when the information is fresh in your mind. You may wish to further summarise or reorganise information and maybe include some of your own ideas generated by what you heard in the lecture. Remember to look up anything you did not understand and any topics that you found particularly interesting and wish to investigate further.

## *Printed sources*

When taking notes from printed sources, always bear in mind the information you need to discover from the text. It can sometimes be useful to set yourself questions and try to answer them using information extracted from the source. Use your own words, summarising and paraphrasing rather than copying directly. Note down publication details and copy any quotes you will use in full (including page numbers). This will help you when compiling your bibliography.

Remember to review your notes every so often; this will make revision easier during exam periods and allows you to add any additional ideas or information you have discovered to your original notes.