

Review

After you have completed your note taking activity, it is important to review your notes. This is especially important if you want to remember material for an essay, tutorial, coursework, etc.

Question: How do I do this?

Answer: Ask questions.

Question: What questions?

You could ask yourself:

Have my notes answered the questions asked?

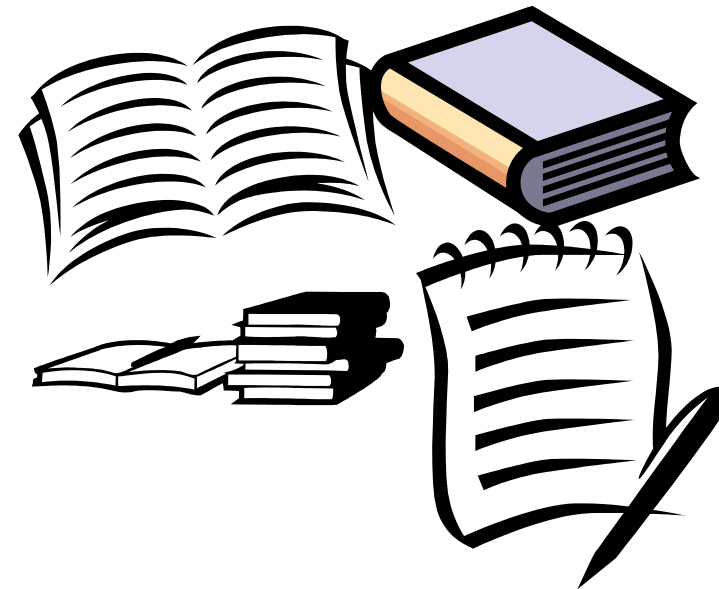
Are there any concepts I don't understand?

How does the material relate to my other knowledge or understanding on the subject?

Have I included all the appropriate referencing information?

You may also need to edit or summarise your notes. If your handwriting is difficult to read, - you could word process them! Whatever you do make sure your notes are clear enough to read at a later stage.

Good note taking is an art and may take a while to develop. This will take time and practice! It is worth developing this skill as it is central to your university study.



Taking Notes from Written Material

Tips for Taking Notes

- On each page of notes, write the title, author and the page numbers of the book or article; or write the web address and date for internet. This is a good habit and is essential for giving exact quotes, referencing and checking the content of an idea you want to paraphrase.
- Use quotation marks to clearly indicate the beginning and end of materials you have copied down exactly.
- Clearly identify the beginning and end of material that you have paraphrased.
- Write any numerical data or information accurately.
- Space the notes to allow insertions at a later time.
- If the notes are being taken for an essay – link them to your essay plan. You could also label them eg. supporting evidence, contrasting point of view, definition, etc.
- Use headings and subheadings to give you a framework for your notes. This helps to focus your notes.
- Use different coloured pens to highlight different questions, concepts, ideas, etc.

A useful method for recording your notes is to draw a wide margin down the left hand side. This gives you space to write your notes in the right hand area with references or links in the left hand area.

<i>www. st-andrews.ac.uk/saltire</i>	<i>Study skills report - are there any other reports for previous years / other institutions???</i> <i>Taking notes is important in study - it acts as a good reminder for essays, etc.</i>
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With complex tasks you may need to take more notes than with other texts, but make sure you do not take copious notes as a way of avoiding understanding the material. You should not have to copy blocks of material. If you do need every word – photocopy the text.

Highlighting and Underlining

Underlining / Highlighting (hereafter referred to only as highlighting) should be done because it forces you to decide what's important in what you are reading and how ideas are related; it tests your understanding by putting ideas into your own words; and, you concentrate because you read actively rather than passively.

Basic Guidelines

- Read the entire paragraph or section (depending on the subject matter of the material) before highlighting. Decide what the main idea is and what the supporting details are.
- Always try to make your own sentences. Select key words and short phrases to make smooth and complete sentences. Sometimes you may have to write in a word or two to make the sentence complete. Generally, it is best to leave out small words like "the" or "a".
- Highlight the right amount. Make sure your highlighting covers ALL the necessary material for recall on tests; but make sure you don't highlight too much. Different kinds of material require different percentages of highlighting, eg. a very rough guideline is to underline about 20 percent of the material.
- Develop and use a variety of symbols for instant discrimination during review. For example, circle defined words; underline the definition; draw a margin down the side of the page for the examples or elaborate material. Use a variation of this technique for different kinds of subjects. In reviewing the material. Look first at the circled words. You may not need to review the definition, etc.
- Highlight and use markings consistently. Every once in a while review the type and amounts of marking in earlier chapters to ensure consistency.
- Use the margins - for writing key words, correlation with lecture notes, your own thoughts/reactions, etc.
- Remember that the main purpose of highlighting is to reduce the amount of material to be specifically remembered and thus to be reviewed.
- Review the material highlighted - often, regularly and quickly.