



Taking notes

Taking effective notes is important to **understand, organise, and remember** what you learn.

Taking notes helps you to:

- identify key themes
- prepare for exams efficiently
- connect new ideas with prior knowledge
- reduce stress during revision.

Note-taking across different disciplines

Business

- Facts or concept-based ideas.
- Theories/research, data, context.
- Case studies, real examples.
- May include graphs, diagrams, processes.

Science

- May be more fact-based.

- Graphs, data, timelines, diagrams, visuals.
- Outline processes, parts, experiments, key findings.
- Important terminology.

Arts

- Often more concept-based.
- Discuss and evaluate theories, ideas.
- Examples from texts, qualitative data, key figures.
- Argument, scholarly opinion.

Engineering

- Argument, scholarly opinion.
- May be more fact-based.
- Graphs, data, timelines, diagrams, visuals.
- Outline processes, parts, experiments, key findings.
- Important terminology.
- May be more fact-based.
- Case studies, evaluation, processes, systems.
- May involve maths, graphs, data, diagrams.
- Important terminology.

Think about one unit you're currently taking. Which discipline style does it match? How should this guide your note-taking?

Concept-based versus fact-based lectures

Concept-based lectures

- Harder to transcribe directly.
- Less concrete 'facts' to note.
- Possibly lots of different research and theories discussed.
- Imposing hierarchies/organisation/order on information is helpful.
- Sometimes it is more important to just listen and understand first (revisit recording later for details).

Fact-based lectures

- May be more detail-oriented.
- Can be easier to transcribe directly.
- Can involve huge amounts of information.
- Terminology is important (note down acronyms, explain terms).
- Generally more intuitive to organise.
- May involve visual elements that need to be drawn or annotated.

Tips

- Don't copy *everything* on the lecture slides.

- Don't try to write every word the lecturer says.
- Don't rely solely on reading and highlighting.

Note-taking Workflow

1. Before the lecture

- Download/print slides.
- Prepare space for summaries.
- Skim previous notes.

2. During the lecture

- Listen before writing.
- Note key ideas, new terms.
- Watch for instructor cues.
- Use headings, arrows, bullets.

3. After the lecture

- Fill in gaps.
- Summarise in your own words.
- Create diagrams/mind maps.
- Add questions and links to assignments.

Note-taking methods

The Cornell Method



Organise your notes pages into 3 sections:

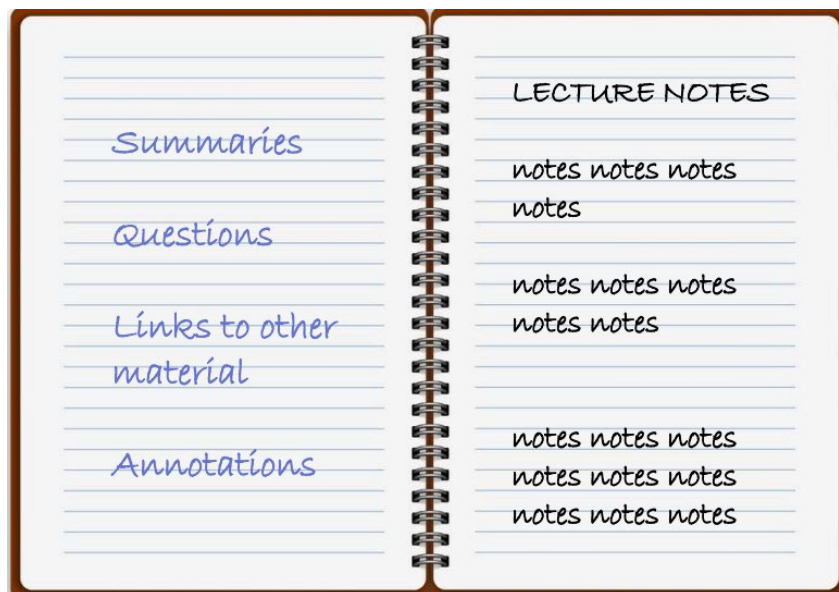
1. Keywords.
2. Notes.

3. Summary.

Why use this method?

The Cornell Method helps organise information clearly so you can review and recall content more efficiently. It also encourages active learning by prompting you to summarise key ideas in your own words. The Cornell Method helps you organise information clearly, improve recall, and actively summarise key ideas, and you can easily customise it to suit your own style. You can add colour, highlighting, or visual cues, and even use templates from the internet to make it work best for you.

The two-page method



Three simple steps!

1. Write notes only on the right-hand page of your notebook.
2. Leave the left-hand page free.
3. Come back afterwards and use the left-hand page to revise: summarise, link, annotate, add questions, etc.

Why use this method?

The Two-Page Method gives you space to keep lecture content on one side and your own thinking, connections, and summaries on the other, which boosts understanding and retention. You can personalise it with colour, visuals, or online templates so it matches your study style and helps highlight what matters most.

Additional methods

Digital note-taking

Digital notes can:

- be searchable
- be easy to reorganise

- sync across devices
- be great for mixed media (audio, drawings and diagrams).

Try out different notetaking apps/software/styles to see what works for you.

Be advised: if you want to use an AI tool to generate notes, remember that you can't share/upload any UWA/UWA India resources (e.g., lecture slides or transcripts).

Dual-coding in note-taking

Combining words and visuals, like diagrams, pictures, or graphic organisers, to present information in two ways, making ideas more concrete and easier to understand.

Making notes from readings: general principles

1. Define your purpose (identify the key areas of interest).
2. Record bibliographic details (author, date, and year).
3. Be selective.
4. Paraphrase (explain using your own words).
5. Note questions.
6. Look for examples to support or refute the argument.
7. Compare authors.
8. Map the idea relationships between the different points made in the paper.

Additional considerations

Long hand versus keyboard

Effective note-taking relies on active learning, often achieved by hand-writing notes, where students engage with material through reading, writing, discussing, and problem-solving while reflecting on their own thinking. Typing notes verbatim often encourages passive learning, whereas handwriting notes promotes deeper understanding by requiring summarising, paraphrasing, organising, and mapping concepts.

Self-assessment: are your notes effective?

- Do they help you revise?
- Do they have the right amount of detail?
- Are there any gaps?
- Do they make sense after a month?