

NOTE TAKING IN CLASSES AND LECTURES

Good notes are purposeful, logical, brief and accurate. They are your record of your understanding of the lecture and are used when preparing for exams or working on assignments.

Hints for note taking

1. Prepare beforehand

- Think about the topic of the lecture and what you know about it.
- Ask yourself questions such as, 'What do I know about the topic?' and 'How does it relate to what was covered last week?' This will open up connections to your long term memory.
- Read the PowerPoint slides before the lecture.
- Re-read your previous notes related to the topic and remind yourself of the content.
- If other reading has been set, do it.
- Arrive on time; the first ten minutes often contains an outline of the lecture.

2. In class time

Teachers use various strategies to indicate to students what is important. Being aware of these helps you identify the main ideas. Pay attention to:

a) Introductions and conclusions

Beginnings and endings are vital. In the introduction, the lecturer outlines the important points, connects them with the previous and next lectures and puts the topic in context. The conclusion summarises the main points.

b) Repetition and elaboration

Important points are repeated or illustrated with examples.

c) Linking expressions

Listen for words and phrases that direct you to new and important ideas or show the relationships between the points being raised. Examples include:

- **Addition** words – also, too, in addition, furthermore, another
- **Emphasis** words – importantly, specifically, especially, obviously
- **Sequencing** words – firstly, secondly, next, finally
- **Contrast** words – however, but, despite, on the other hand, conversely
- **Concession** words – although, even though, in the light of, given that
- **Illustration** words – for example, to illustrate, that is
- **Reason and result** words – consequently, because, therefore, leads to
- **Summary** words – in conclusion, to sum up, in summary

d) Voice emphasis

In lectures and tutorials, important ideas, words and phrases are often emphasised. A lecturer or teacher may do this by saying them more slowly, more loudly, or by pausing. Gestures and movement may also be used for emphasis.

e.g.

Today we'll be talking about the effect of information overload on the short-term memory. There are three main points ...

3. After the class

Revise notes within 24 hours of the class. Don't just file them away! Discuss the ideas with a study group, draw a mindmap of the key ideas, do some follow up reading about the key ideas and most importantly think about how the ideas relate to your assignments, exams or future career. Your independent study time is some of your most valuable time as a student; use it wisely.

The Cornell method of note taking

The Cornell method is a useful method for taking notes. It can be handwritten or you could set up a template on your laptop. The example below applies this method to the information shown above from a class on memory and learning.

Long and short term memory

To develop effective learning skills, it is necessary to understand more about how memory is structured, in particular the role of short-term memory and long-term memory. Short-term memory refers to the part known as the conscious mind and is used for paying attention. Long-term memory is where we store information. Many things that come into the short-term memory aren't 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. When you think about this, you can see how important it is to use active study techniques that help the brain select what is stored in your long-term memory.

When taking notes Cornell-style, use two columns:

- a main ideas or key words column on the left
- the notes or details column on the right.

At the bottom of the page, add a summary row, to use for revision and reflection.

Use point form to record information, ideas and your own thinking. Colour can also help to highlight different points, and leave space between different topics.

Memory and learning		15 Aug 2014
<p>Structure</p> <p>Short term</p> <p>Long term -Useful diagram in ppt.</p> <p>ST</p>	<p>Short term = conscious Long term = uncons.</p> <p>pay'g attention limited storage only holds 7 +/- 2 pieces of info — <i>for how long??</i></p> <p>impt info is transferred to LT mem "In fact the brain is designed to forget between 50% and 75% of the information that is not transferred to LTM within 24 hours." - <i>McKenzie 2013</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;">— info stored LTM</p>	

Commonly used abbreviations

Abbreviations can assist you to record what you hear more quickly. You should also develop your own shorthand for frequently-use vocabulary specific to your courses.

The table below shows some commonly used abbreviations. Develop your own for terms you will use frequently in your studies.

				%	percent
+ve	positive	-ve	negative	cf	compared with
re	concerning/ about	NB	note well	vis	namely
g	-ing	ca	about	etc	and so on
n	-tion/-sion (endings)	i.e.	that is	am	morning