Introduction to Note Taking

Who is This For?

This session is aimed at developing your academic skills and improve your knowledge of the key skills needed to succeed at University. You will be able to apply this advice and information directly to any essays/assignments/research projects you will be given during your time at University.

Aims and Objectives

Aims:

Gain an increased awareness of different note taking techniques.

Objectives:

The session is not about teaching you how to take notes but to expose you to new ways of note taking and give you tips on how to take better notes. There is also an opportunity to reflect on what you currently do and help improve your current practices.

By the end of the session:

- Students will gain a further understanding of the importance of making good notes.
- Students will be introduced to three different types of note taking techniques.
- Students will have the opportunity to put these techniques into practice.

What is Note Taking?

“Note making is not just about writing down everything you hear or read. It is a process of reviewing, connecting and synthesising ideas.” —Skills @ Library, University of Leeds
Many people believe note taking seems simple, however, a lot of thought is required to take accurate and worthwhile notes. Consider note taking as an active and reflective process; how often have you been in a lesson, taken notes, but not taken any of the information in?

Activity One

Have a think about why note taking is important; now turn to your activity sheet and write down five benefits of note taking; you will find the suggested answers below.

Benefits of Note Taking

- Helps you stay active and engaged during your research.
- Allows you to understand content more deeply and clarify your thought processes.
- Enables you to be selective and pick out key ideas.
- Makes material more memorable – key for revision and reflection.
- Helps you to organise your ideas and make connections between sources.
- Useful for planning and structuring written assignments.
- Helps avoid plagiarism (claiming another’s work as your own).

Activity Two

Turn back to your activity sheet and make a list what you think all good notes should include. Where possible, use examples from your own research too about how each of these stages are important.

What Good Notes Should Include:

1. Date: Make a note of the date -this will help you keep track of your reading.

2. Source Information: Ensure you include the following: author, title, date, publisher, page numbers etc.
3. **Headings and Subheadings**: Which aspect of your research does this source contribute to? Ensure you make this clear!

4. **Ideas/Prompts for Further Research/Study**: Did this source reference another work which seems to fit in well with your research? If so, note it down!

The S.M.A.R.T Method

- Specific
- Measurable
- Agreed Upon
- Realistic
- Time-Based

These elements should be balanced and interrelated to ensure effective goal setting.
Large tasks are always more manageable when broken down into smaller sections. You should ask yourself:

- Why you are reading **this source**?
- What **information are you looking** for? A specific fact? An overview? An in-depth account?
- **How long** are you going to spend looking at this source?
- **Be realistic** about what you gain from one text. You will need to look at more than one source to gain your information.

**Reading Strategies**

**Predicting**
- Guessing what a text is from the title.

**Scanning**
- Looking through a text for a specific piece of information.

**Skimming**
- Reading very quickly to pick out the main ideas of a text.

**Reading Intensively**
- Reading in detail to fully understand the meaning of a text.
Note Taking Techniques

Linear Technique:
- Most widespread, recognisable form of note taking.
- Integrates headings, subheadings, underlining to clarify most important sections.
- Arrows, dashes and equal signs signify interrelated material

Pattern Technique:
- Visual note taking technique.
- Often incorporates colour for clarity.
- Can include diagrams, sketches, doodles to aid memory.

Cornell Technique:

- A reflective form of note taking.
- Ensures you engage in active note taking by summarising material as you go.
- Based on two ‘columns’ and a summary section.
- Right hand column is for general notes
- Left: for keywords, questions, references
- Bottom: for summaries, concluding remarks.

Activity Three

Turn to your activity sheet and have a look at activity number three. This activity will give you an opportunity to practice the skills you have been learning about today; allow yourself approximately 30 minutes for this task.
Referencing Tips

Digital Note Taking Tips

- **Evernote**: Suitable for all devices. Photograph hand-written notes and sync them with your digital findings.
- **Simplenote and Notability**: Apps designed specifically for iPad users. Ideal for people who like notes to be eye-catching.
- **PDF Annotations**: In-text note-taking tool. Small icons run alongside the main text highlighting key information.

Paper Note Taking Tips

- Use sticky notes or flash cards
- Use diagrams or ‘doodle notes’
- Using highlighters for emphasis
- Colour coding your files by subject
Reflection: Ensure Your Notes Are

Concise
- Are your notes expressing the most information you can fit in the smallest space?

Clear
- Can you understand your notes? Will you be able to understand them if you read it again next week?

Comprehensive
- Are you sure you have the whole argument? Are you missing anything important?

Remember!
- Good note taking skills are essential further and higher education
- Set yourself SMART goals: specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, timed.
- Don’t forget! Record your reflections on which note taking method works best for you

Further Resources
1. University of Leeds Skills@Library: https://resources.library.leeds.ac.uk/note-taking/
2. Overview of Cornell Note-Taking Technique: http://lsc.cornell.edu/notes.html
3. University of Leeds YouTube Video on Making Effective Notes: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OaF3v0lMG9k