

## Basics

Reading long texts can be difficult. It is also difficult to remember the main points in the text, so writing them down is the solution. You need to be able to write clear and accurate notes that you can read to help you remember the main points.

## The academic context

At university or college, the notes students make are very important, because they may need to use them when they want to write an essay or prepare for a seminar. Learning how to write notes is an essential skill.

## Key features

Here are some ideas for making notes:

- Note making is not copying – you must use your own words. This helps you remember.
- You can use a highlighter to mark key points, but you must go back and make written notes later.
- You can use abbreviations and symbols to keep your notes short. Here are some examples:  
D definition    ? check this    \* important    E needed for my essay    Ref reference  
You can invent your own abbreviations, too.
- Make a note of any words you don't know. You can check them later.
- After you have finished reading, take a look at your notes and see if they give you a clear reminder of the text you read.
- Be sure to check the sources and references for your main points and put them in your notes. You need to note the name of the writer, the publication and the date.
- If you have time, comparing your notes with those of another student on the same text will help you both learn.
- Organize your notes well – use paper or online folders to help you find things.
- Keep notes as short as possible – they are not a copy of the text.
- Try to use good handwriting – or a computer!

## Challenges / difficulties

It can be difficult to find the key points; look out for keywords and topic sentences. Note making can take time, but be patient. It is an investment for when you need to write an essay using the information you have noted down.

## How can I develop this skill?

Test the quality of your notes by giving them to a partner. See if your partner can explain the main points from your text using only your notes. Then swap roles. You can also test the quality of your notes by rereading them a week or two after you made them. Can you write a summary of the topic based on your notes? If you can't, go back to the original text and try to work out how you can improve your notes.

## Learning outcome

After this session, students will be able to demonstrate note-making skills from their reading.

## Theory to practice

Below is a text from the C21 Level 2 Course Book and some notes on it. Read the article with the notes – would you change anything? Is there any important information missing from the notes?

*Britain needed new maps*

- \* Maps were expensive*
- \* 100 years needed to make maps*

*20<sup>th</sup> century mapmaking transformed*

- \* 1995 digital maps available in Britain*
- Maps can be ordered online ???*

### Maps – old and new

In 1791, Britain needed new maps. The government was worried about a war with France. They wanted to measure the height of hills and river valleys to find the best places to defend the country. These maps were very expensive. They cost about two weeks' salary each. It took nearly 100 years for all of the maps to be finished, and they were used in planning railways and roads.

In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, people wanted to enjoy cycling or walking, so they needed new maps. Electronics, lasers and photographs transformed the way maps were made. In 1995, Britain became the first country with digital maps that you could buy online. As well as the maps in shops, you can now decide where you want a map for, and how big the scale is, then you can order it online. This is useful for everyone, from town planners to leisure users.

## Ways to get more practice

The best way to get useful practice in note making is to work with one or two other students. You all read the same text and compare your notes. Ask yourselves if any information is missing, if the notes are too long or short and if you can all understand the notes.