

Basics

First, think about why you are making notes from a text – Are you going to attend a lecture on the same topic? Are you going to write a summary or report? Are you going to give a presentation?

Don't make notes passively. This means don't make notes without **thinking** about what you're reading. If you simply highlight or underline parts of a text, if you cut and paste parts of a text, or if you copy complete sentences from a text, you won't understand what you've read. In addition, you won't be able to evaluate it or think critically about it.

Remember that you're not allowed to copy large amounts of information from a text word for word. If you do, you are committing an academic offence.

Make notes actively. Think about what you want to learn before you start reading, so that you read with a goal in mind. As you read, check that your questions are answered, and your opinions challenged. Use your own words, paraphrasing what's expressed in the text. Use direct quotes only when appropriate and make sure you make it clear that you have done so. Try reading parts of a text and then covering it. Make notes from what you remember so that you're less likely to copy word for word.

Keep your notes brief and be selective. Space notes out, so they are easy to look back at. Show the relationships between the main ideas by using the approaches below.

The academic context

When you are studying at college or university, you will have to do a lot of reading. To help you remember what you've read, it is very important to make notes – and to learn how to make notes that include all the essential information and will make sense when you read them again at a later date.

The notes you make as you read throughout the academic year will be an essential tool when you start to revise for exams and assessments towards the end of the year. Your notes will mean you won't need to read all the books and articles again.

Good note-making will help you understand texts better and use the main ideas later to attend lectures, write reports and give presentations.

Key features

Here are some points that will help you to make good notes:

- Think about why you are reading. Ask yourself some questions about the topic. As you read, see if the text answers your questions. See if you learn information that you didn't know before.
- Make brief notes and leave spaces between lines. Choose only key points from the text and use your own words.
- Make notes actively. Think about what you're reading as you make notes.
- Don't simply highlight or underline parts of a text.
- Read parts of a text and then cover it. Make notes from what you remember so that you don't use the same words as the writer.
- If you need to use a direct quote from the text, make it clear that you have done so.

Challenges / difficulties

Sometimes you might feel that every part of a text is relevant and find it difficult to be selective. Occasionally, you will look back at notes and not remember quite what that part of the text was about. It takes practise to read and note down key points efficiently. The more you do it, the more skilled you will become.

How can I develop this skill?

As with a lot of skills, the key is to practise. Try to develop your own way of making notes. Use abbreviations. Learn to write fast. Make notes on reading texts of all types – newspaper articles, instructions, stories, etc., as well as academic texts; then re-read your notes later to make sure they really do help you to remember everything you read.

Learning outcomes

Students who have learned this skill should:

- be aware of efficient and inefficient approaches to note-making.
- understand that different note-making approaches will be better suited to different types of text and different parts of a text.
- make notes more actively and more efficiently.

Theory to practice

Organise your notes depending on the topic of the text. If you're taking notes about a text that lists events chronologically, you might want to write dates in the margin and a summary of the event next to each date.

1888 – born / wealthy family

1894 – village school

1906 – Bologna University – chemistry

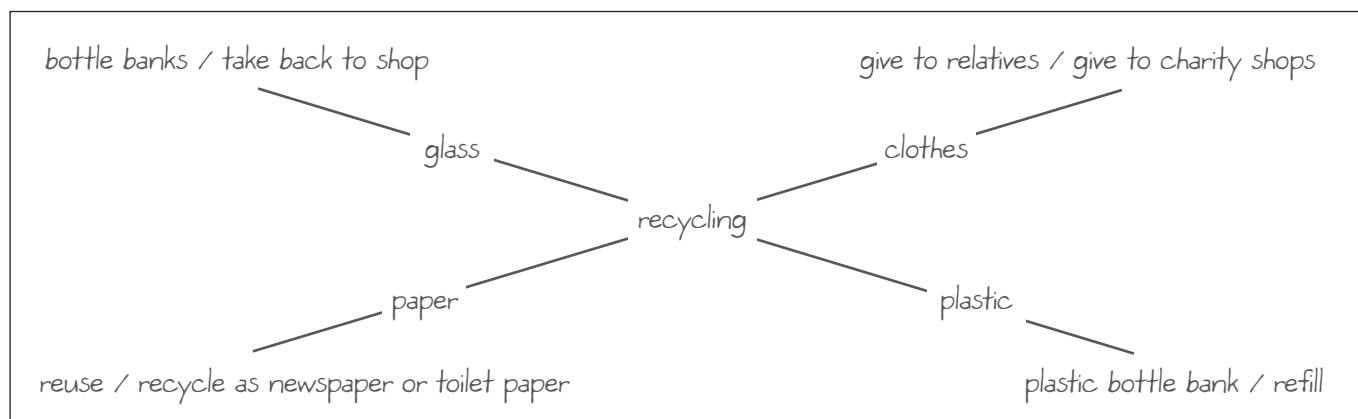
If you're making notes about a process or events where there is a cause and effect, you might take notes in the form of a flow chart.

deforestation → tree roots not hold soil → rain carries soil away → landslide

If you're making notes about a text that contains conflicting points of view or advantages and disadvantages, you can use columns with headings.

zoos + only place to see wild animals	zoos – animals not happy in cages	natural environment + animals free	natural environment – some animals hunted
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Notes on various texts might be best organised as spider-grams or mind-maps. Put the main topic at the centre and then main points and subpoints around it.



If you're happier using conventional linear notes, add headings and subheadings and use abbreviations. Use bullet points or number events in order. You don't need to write full sentences. Highlight and underline key words in your notes rather than in the text itself.

outside during storm

- Find building or shelter in car
- Trees, bus stops etc – not give enough protection
- Stay away from water / if in w get to dry land
- no mob. phones

at home during storm

- no baths or showers – lightning passes through water
- Unplug elec. apps
- use a torch – no candles

Some texts might mean adopting different approaches to different parts of the text.

Try to use all of the methods above when you make notes, and see which ones work best for you.

Ways to get more practice

Read different text types and texts on a variety of topics, and practise different approaches.

Work with a partner. Take notes on the same text and then compare what you have selected and how you have organised information.

Access online sites that give advice about note-making.