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Note Taking

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How do you feel about taking notes?

- a) Confident: I know what I'm doing and I like my method
- b) Somewhat confident: I know what information to retain but am not sure my method is great
- c) Uncertain: I know I'm meant to summarise but I don't always know if I get the main point
- d) It's something I'm supposed to do but I haven't really been told how



What do you find most challenging thing about taking notes?

- a) Identifying the information
- b) Knowing how to record the information
- c) Using my notes effectively
- d) Remembering things for the exam



What we'll address today

- ❖ Why note taking matters
- ❖ What to look for critical texts
- ❖ What to look for in narrative texts
- ❖ Different note taking methods
- ❖ How to use notes effectively



Why note taking matters

- ❖ Practical necessity
 - ❖ People can talk at an average of 2–3 words per second but write (on average) 12–18 words per minute (c.f. Piolat A., Olive T., Kellog R. T., 'Cognitive effort during note-taking', *Applied Cognitive Psychology* 19 (2005), 291–312.
- ❖ Record the essence of the information
 - ❖ Higher retention rate
 - ❖ Stronger comprehension of the material
- ❖ Implant the material in your mind



Key information in critical texts

- ❖ Identify the *claims* and the *reasons* for the claim
 - ❖ Why does the reading suggest it is a useful reading? What are the explicit (and subsequent/implicit) claims of *fact*, *method*, and *policy*?
 - ❖ e.g. does it present a new understanding; does it highlight and analyse new sources or data; does it apply a method from a different discipline to a text?
- ❖ Identify how the case study is being used
 - ❖ What is the key approach
 - ❖ What are the key questions the critical text wants to answer?



Key information in narratives

- ❖ Look for 'SWBS': Somebody / Wanted / But / So
 - ❖ Understanding narratives in terms of character motivations gives *plot events* context
 - ❖ Key narrative scenes reveal at least two things about 'Somebody / Wanted/ But/ So'
 - ❖ Characters' motivations, complications, and responses reveal thematic development
- ❖ Using a summative framework for a narrative text means your overall analysis will feel more comprehensive and holistic when you write essays – it will be more obvious that themes and characters develop in relation to character motivations and actions and do not emerge in contextual vacuums



Note taking methods

- ❖ Linear note-taking
- ❖ Outline note-taking
- ❖ Cornell method
- ❖ SQ3R
- ❖ Mapping
- ❖ Combinations of the above!



Linear note taking

- ❖ Summarising ideas as you hear them
- ❖ Potential danger: writing everything down without critically listening
- ❖ What it looks like:

FORMAT FOR THE OUTLINE METHOD OF NOTE-TAKING

Title or topic

- I. MAIN TOPIC (to the left side of the paper near the margin)
 - A. MAJOR SUB-TOPIC (indented and subordinate to the preceding heading)
 - 1. Minor sub-topic (indented under A)
 - 2. Minor sub-topic (indented under A)
 - a. Detail (under 2)
 - b. Detail
 - B. MAJOR SUB-TOPIC (indented the same as major sub-topic A)
 - 1. Minor sub-topic
 - a. Detail (under 1)
 - b. Detail
- II. Continue in the same way with main topic #2, #3, etc.

URL

https://flexiblelearning.auckland.ac.nz/note-taking-skills/15_4.html



Outline notes

- ❖ Writing points based on space indentation
 - ❖ Major points farthest to the left
 - ❖ Indent each specific point farther to the right
- ❖ Advantages:
 - ❖ Emphasises content and relationships between material
 - ❖ Easy reviewing
- ❖ Note: Requires time to organise ideas
 - ❖ difficult to apply in fast-moving lectures

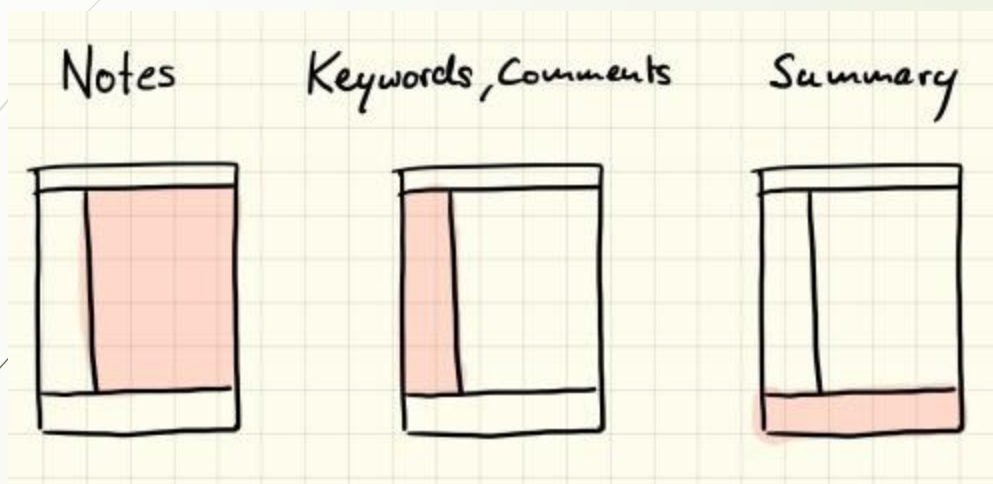


Cornell method

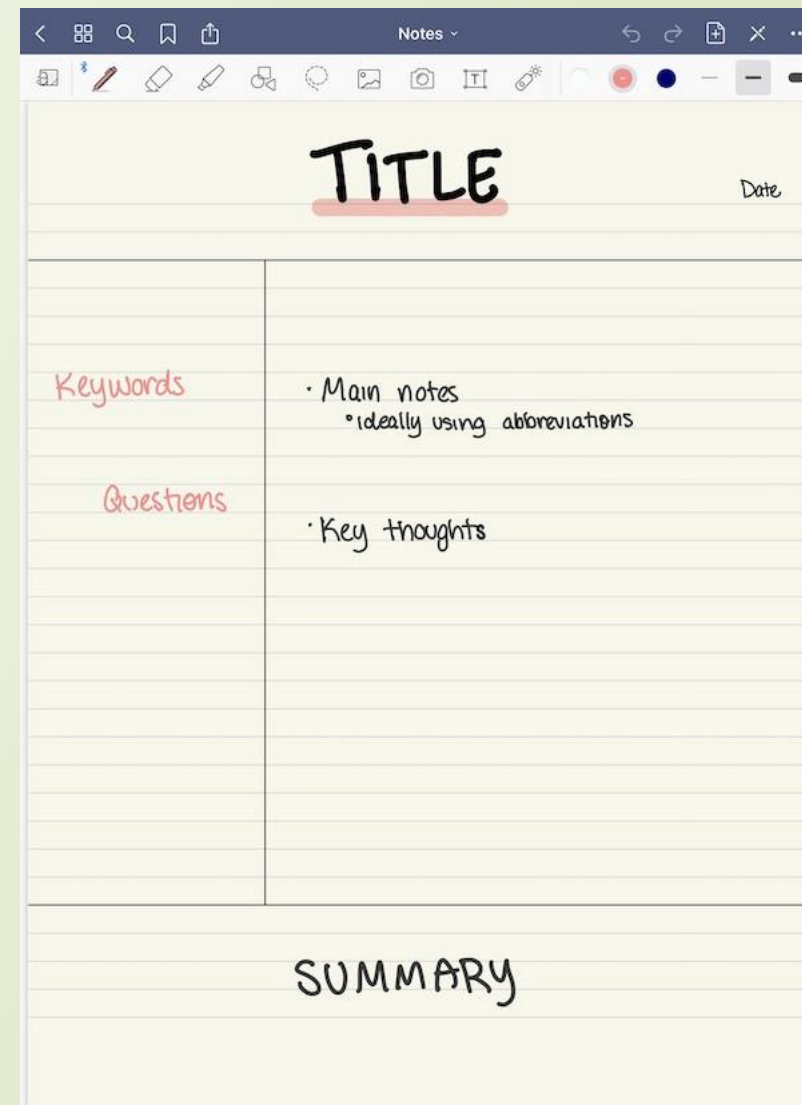
- ❖ Devised by Prof. Walter Pauk of Cornell University in the 1950s
 - ❖ Divides a page into columns and sections to differentiate key questions from more detailed ideas
- ❖ Advantages:
 - ❖ Visual and spatial organisation of ideas and page
- ❖ Difficulties:
 - ❖ Best used to take notes from notes: the organisation takes time



Cornell method



Images from 'Cornell Note Taking – The Best Way To Take Notes Explained', GoodNotes, (Aug 9 2017),
URL <https://medium.goodnotes.com/study-with-ease-the-best-way-to-take-notes-2749a3e8297b>; [accessed August 4 2021]





SQ3R (Survey, Question, Read, Recite, Review)

- ❖ Easily used in conjunction with Cornell/outline notes
- ❖ **Survey: skim the entire reading, looking for:**
 - ❖ Main headings and subheadings: what's the relationships between them?
 - ❖ Pictures, graphs, charts: what do these add?
 - ❖ Questions or statements at the ends of paragraphs: what does the author think is important?



SQ3R (Survey, Question, Read, Recite, Review)

- ❖ **Question:** turn your headings into questions. Write the question in the left-hand margin of your outline/Cornell notes
 - ❖ Questions arouse your curiosity
 - ❖ Questions recall information you already know
 - ❖ Questions make important points stand out for explanatory power



SQ3R (Survey, Question, Read, Recite, Review)

- ❖ **Read:** read actively to answer your questions
 - ❖ Look for main claims, supporting evidence, and the **relationship between ideas**
 - ❖ Similar ideas: also, moreover, likewise, furthermore, in addition
 - ❖ Change of ideas: but, nevertheless, despite, however, although
 - ❖ Conclusions: thus, therefore, in summary, consequently, in conclusion, hence, accordingly
 - ❖ Look up new and key words using glossaries and dictionaries: write the definition in your notes!
 - ❖ Understand graphs and figures



SQ3R (Survey, Question, Read, Recite, Review)

- ❖ **Recite** while reading the text
 - ❖ After reading a section, look at your left-hand column in your outline notes; try to answer your question without looking at the reading
 - ❖ Write your answer in the right-hand column/indentation of your notes
 - ❖ Write enough to jog your memory
- ❖ **Review**
 - ❖ Re-skim the entire reading when you have finished
 - ❖ Re-read your notes. Make sure you understand main ideas and their relationships. Reread parts of the text if you don't understand your notes
 - ❖ Use your questions in the left-hand margin; recite the answers without looking at your notes!
 - ❖ Review your notes once a week to avoid forgetting and cramming



Mapping

- ❖ Mind map, based on key ideas
- ❖ Advantages
 - ❖ Highlights connections between ideas
 - ❖ Good for visual learners
- ❖ Often works well in *conjunction* with other forms of notes (e.g. linear notes)



Combining methods

- ❖ Multiple recall techniques improve the chances of implanting material in your memory
 - ❖ SQ3R's strength: active recall (questions); using multiple parts of you mind and body (speech, thought, writing)
- ❖ Play around and see what works for you
 - ❖ e.g. combine outline notes with linear notes or linear notes with mapping – the latter is helpful if you're working on a big research project
 - ❖ SQ3R is best if you are trying to learn content for an assessment and working with a smaller number of interpretive documents (i.e. SQ3R is not the easiest to work with for long research essays that deal with 10+ sources)



Using your notes

- ❖ *Using* notes is about building active recall
- ❖ Aim is to *use* notes, not just make them!
- ❖ Notes are a tool, not a silver bullet!
 - ❖ Use the notes to help form questions you can ask and answer
 - ❖ Rewrite your notes in different formats so that you can retain and understand content at a deeper level



Digital or physical notes?

- ❖ Digital notes can be helpful – clarity, efficiency, more detail
- ❖ Physically taking notes *does* often enable better retention
 - ❖ Even if your notes have a digital format, it is helpful to transform at least *one* set of your notes into physical form