SMARTER STUDY SKILLS



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• What do you need to record?

One of the pitfalls of making notes is that people often start off with a blank sheet, pen in hand, and then begin to note 'important' points as they read. Within a short time, they are rewriting the book. To avoid this, the trick is to:

- identify your purpose in relation to the assignment task;
- scan the section to be read:
- establish the writer's purpose, for example:
 - a narrative of events or process
 - a statement of facts
 - an explanation of reasoning or presentation of a logical argument
 - an analysis of an issue, problem or situation
 - a critique of an argument;
- work out their 'take' on the subject, and how this relates to your purpose;
- decide on the most appropriate note-making style and layout for the task:
- Ensure you paraphrase in your own words rather than transcribe; but if you do transcribe, use quote marks and note reference details.

How are you going to lay out your notes?

There are several strategies that you might consider using. Figures 6.1-6.7 illustrate some examples. Not all will be relevant to your subject, but some will. Some techniques may not seem directly suitable, but, with a little adaptation, they may work for you. Table 6.8 compares the advantages and disadvantages of each method.

Note-making formats



Sometimes notes may be better suited to being laid out on paper in the landscape rather than the portrait position. This clearly suits methods such as concept maps (Figure 6.5). Similarly, you can take advantage of the landscape format when making matrix (grid) notes (Figure 6.6) by creating columns across the page.

Topic: DEPOPULATION OF THE COUNTRYSIDESource: Ormiston, J., 2002. Rural ldylls.
Glasgow: Country Press.

Problem: Population falling in rural areas

Traditional communities disintegrate Incomer settlement – dormitory villages

Reasons: Mechanisation of farming

Creation of farming combines Bigger farms, fewer employed

Decline of traditional farming & related activities

Effects: Families dispersed – fewer children

Closure of shops, post offices, schools, surgeries

Transport links less viable

Solutions: Housing subsidies to encourage families to remain

Diversify economic activity, e.g. tourism/action holidays Stimulate rural economy – farm shops, farmers' markets Diversify from traditional crops – seek new markets

Figure 6.1 Example of keyword notes.

Topic: OBESITY IN CHILDREN

Source: Skinner, J., 2001. Diet and Obesity. Edinburgh: Castle Publishing.

- 1. Lifestyle
 - 1.1 Television, computer-games generation
 - 1.2 Unsupervised leisure time sedentary
- 2. Diet
 - 2.1 Constant 'grazing' junk food
 - 2.2 Additives/processed foods
 - 2.3 Lack of adequate fresh food, including fruit + vegetables
- 3. Exercise
 - 3.1 Sport by spectating rather than participating
 - 3.2 Decline in team sports in schools
 - 3.3 Children over-protected from 'free play' outdoors
- 4. Family
 - 4.1 Parents overeat; children likewise
 - 4.2 Instant food
 - 4.3 Food as an incentive + reward
- 5. Schools
 - 5.1 School meals spurned in favour of snack bar/chip shop
 - 5.2 Healthy-eating programmes as part of curriculum
- 6. Health service
 - 6.1 Less emphasis on prevention
 - 6.2 Limited health education of parents and children

(a)

Figure 6.2 Examples of linear notes. These are samples drawn from three diverse disciplines (a, b, and c) where topics lend themselves to hierarchical approaches.

Figure 6.2 continued

Topic: GENERAL FEATURES OF ORGANIC MATERIALS

Source: Barker, J., 2001, Chemistry for University. Manchester: Midland Publishing.

- 1. Solid state molec. crystal powder, poly. Thin films
- 2. Unique physical properties exploit for high-tech applications
- 3. Advantages
 - 3.1 Versatile properties reg. by organic chemistry
 - 3.2 Readily accessible via organic synthesis
 - 3.3 Low cost cheap raw materials
 - 3.4 Tractable fusable, soluble: easy to fab.
- 4. Disadvantage
 - 4.1 Relatively fragile
- 5. Important types
 - 5.1 Conducting CT salts
 - 5.2 Conducting poly

(b)

Topic: OPERATIONAL AMPLIFIERS

Source: Scott, D.I., 1977. Operational Amplifiers. Coventry: Circuit Publishers.

- 1. Usually an integrated circuit; can be discrete
- 2. Uses all technologies: bipolar; FET; MOS; BI-FET
- 3. Effectively a highly stable differential amplifier
- 4. Advantages
 - 4.1 High voltage gain typ. 100,000
 - 4.2 High input impedance typ. $1M\Omega$ can be much higher, FET, MOS
 - 4.3 Low output impedance typ. 600Ω
 - 4.4 Low drift, BI-FET best
 - 4.5 Wide supply voltage range
- 5. Disadvantages
 - 5.1 Relatively narrow bandwidth GBP typ. 1MHz (but operates to DC)
 - 5.2 Very unstable in discrete versions requires matched transistors
- 6. Common types
 - 6.1 741 most common
 - 6.2 LM 380 common AF AMP
 - 6.3 TDA 2030 common power amp. 20W into 4Ω

(c)



Figure 6.3 Example of time-line notes. This design is good for showing a sequence of events, in this case, the development of European organisations.

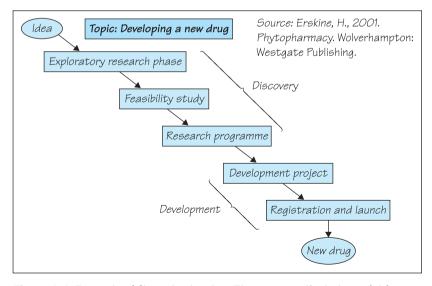


Figure 6.4 Example of flow-chart notes. These are particularly useful for describing complex processes in visual form.

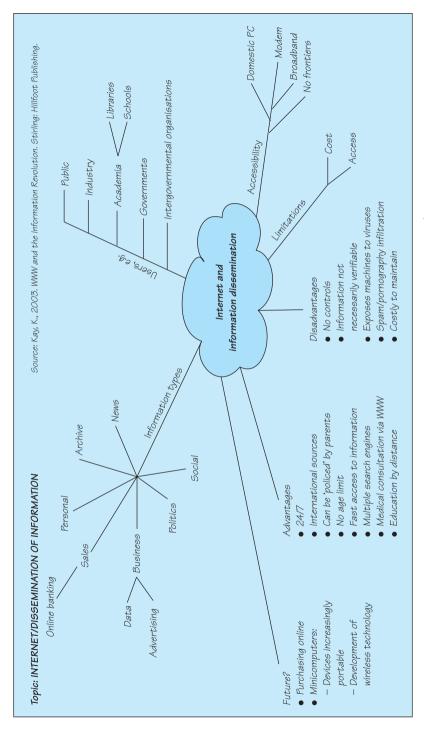


Figure 6.5 Example of a concept map. This may also be called a mind map. Suits visual-spatial/visual learners.

Topic: TRAFFIC CONGESTION	N	Soun	Source: Walker, I.M.A., 2005. Urban Myths and Motorists. London: Green Press.	and Motorists. London: Green Press.
Solutions	Council view	Police view	Local business view	Local community view
Pedestrianisation	+ Low maintenance - Initial outlay	+ Easier to police + Less car crime + CCTV surveillance easier	+ Safer shopping and business activity - Discourages motorist customers	+ Safer shopping + Less polluted town/city environment
Park and ride schemes	+ Implements transport policy – Capital investment to initiate – Car park maintenance	+ Reduce inner-city/town traffic jams + Reduce motor accidents - Potential car park crime	Lose of customLack of convenienceSends customers elsewhere	+ Less polluted town/city environment - Costly
Increase parking charges	+ Revenue from fines - Costly to set up	 Hostility to enforcers 	 Loss of custom Delivery unloading problematic 	 Residents penalised by paying for on-street parking
Restrict car journeys, e.g. odd/even registrations on alternate days	+ Easy to administer	+ Easy to police	 Seek exemption for business vehicles 	+ Encourage car-sharing for daily journeys
Levy congestion charge for urban journeys	+ Revenue raised - Cost of implementing tracking system	– Traffic jams on alternative routes	- Cost of loss of custom	– Inhibit work/leisure activities – Cost

Figure 6.6 Example of matrix notes. This particular analysis lays out positive (+) and negative (-) viewpoints on an issue from a range of different perspectives.