

## Lesson five: Note taking

Note-taking is the process of recording key information from various sources such as books, lectures, conferences, and interviews. Effective note-taking enhances comprehension, aids in organization, and supports academic writing and research.

### Reasons for Taking Notes

Taking notes serves multiple purposes, including:

- Helping you remember essential information.
- Keeping a permanent record for future reference.
- Assisting in planning and structuring written work.
- Reorganizing material for better understanding.
- Supporting deeper engagement with the subject matter.
- Improving concentration and active learning.

### What to Note Down?

Deciding what to write depends on your research goals and prior knowledge. Consider including:

- Key facts (dates, places, names, statistics, definitions).
- Summaries of arguments, explanations, and descriptions.
- Personal reflections, interpretations, and critiques.
- Questions and areas requiring further research.
- Relationships between different sources.

### Note-Taking Language

Except for direct quotations, it is advisable to use your own words when taking notes. Using active vocabulary:

- Ensures a deeper understanding of the material.
- Strengthens memory retention.
- Makes notes easier to review and synthesize later.

### Effective Note-Taking Techniques

Smith and Smith (1994, pp. 93–103) outline ‘golden rules’ for successful note-taking:

1. **Clarify your purpose** – Identify the objective of your note-taking.
2. **Standardize your notes** – Use the same format (paper, digital document, or index cards) for consistency.
3. **Record full bibliographic details** – Include author, date, title, source, and page numbers to locate references quickly.
4. **Use headings and subheadings** – Anticipate main ideas using titles and section names.
5. **Differentiate personal thoughts from the source** – Maintain clarity between the author's ideas and your analysis.
6. **Summarize after completion** – Review and condense your notes into key takeaways.

### Organizing and Storing Notes

An effective system for organizing notes ensures easy retrieval and analysis. Consider:

- **Digital tools** (e.g., Evernote, OneNote, Zotero) for structured storage.
- **Manual methods** (e.g., index cards, color coding) for quick referencing.
- **Topic-based categorization** to facilitate comparisons and connections between sources.
- **Chronological or thematic organization** for logical flow in research writing.

### Utilizing Notes in Writing

Your notes should serve as building blocks for academic work. They can:

- Support arguments with evidence.
- Provide authoritative references.
- Allow comparisons between different viewpoints.
- Strengthen analysis by incorporating various perspectives.

### Tasks:

#### Task 1: Discuss the following

1. When can notes be considered ineffective or "bad notes"?
2. What are the possible consequences of ineffective note-taking?
3. How does a disorganized collection of notes impact research quality?

**Task 2: Design a Note-Taking Format for Literature Review** Create a structured template.