Making notes in lectures

Before: Tune in

- ❑ Check course materials (e.g. online for slides or an outline of the lecture).
- ❑ Ask yourself : Who, what, how, when?
- ❑ Look up and check key things in the title or any outline you may have.
- ☑ Familiarise yourself with any set text.
- ❑ Skim and scan one or two of the readings.
- ❑ The big picture - where does this fit?

Using a laptop might seem the best option, but has limitations.

If you like to sketch diagrams or make pattern notes, it may not suit you. Also writing by hand can be quicker.

Beware of the temptation to distract yourself from the lecture by going online.

During: Aim to note the key points

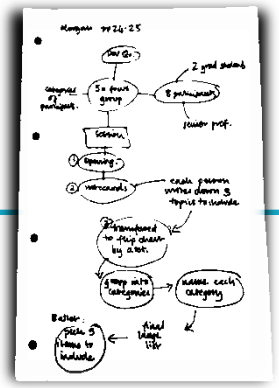
A common mistake is to try and write everything down.

You should aim to make notes you can use rather than take a verbatim record.

- Date, title, lecturer
- Note the key points
- Key words and names
- Key debates
- Note to self (e.g. look up)
- Use abbreviations
- Use bullets
- Add visual prompts – underlining, question marks, arrows

Pay attention to visual and aural cues and clues

- Changes in body language
- Listen for sign posting (e.g. firstly, secondly, then)
- Pauses – can indicate a new section
- Changes in emphasis – stressing words or bold lettering
- The images selected



Link ideas together

Pattern notes, concept maps or spider diagrams are a good way of summarising an overview of a lecture or key idea afterwards.

After: Add value to your notes

- Go through your notes soon afterwards (that evening or the next day)
- Use a highlighter to emphasise key parts
- Check important spellings (names, terms)
- Underline key terms or authors in colour (you might want to develop your own code)
- Identify points you want to clarify or follow up
- Add definitions and clarifications
- You may want to add in key quotations

Lectures slides are usually available online.

Finally - file and label your notes.