

Making notes in class

Before: Tune in

- Check course materials (e.g. slides or an outline of the class).
- Do any preparatory work.
- Ask: Who, what, how, where, when?
- Look up and check key terms, concepts or ideas connected to this class.
- Familiarise yourself with any set text.
- Skim and scan one or two of the readings.
- The big picture - where does this fit?

During: Aim to note the key points

You don't need to write everything down.

Aim to make notes you can use rather than take down a verbatim record.

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Date, title, lecturer/tutor ▪ Key words and names ▪ Key debates/issues ▪ Note to self (e.g. look up 'x') ▪ Use abbreviations | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Use bullets ▪ Add visual prompts – underlining, question marks, arrows |
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Pay attention to visual and aural cues and clues


- Listen for sign posting (e.g. firstly, secondly, then)
- Pauses and changes in emphasis
- Changes in body language
- Any images or diagrams used


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. Writing by hand can be more flexible.

It can be tricky to type and watch on the same screen.

Beware of the temptation to distract yourself by browsing online.





Link ideas together

Pattern notes, concept maps or spider diagrams are a good way of summarising an overview of a discussion or key ideas after a class.

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.

