

Long-hand or typed verbatim notes

This is where you try to write down almost all of what is said and put on the screen in class.

Many students say these help you to keep with the flow of an argument. Usually you end up with too much material and you miss key points or images because you are too busy getting everything down.

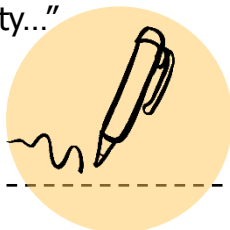
Note-making is thought to be more effective when it is 'generative'. That is when you select, summarise and translate the content deeper learning takes place.

The advantages of a pen

Researchers Pam Mueller and Daniel Oppenheimer found that students using a pen actually had some learning advantages over those using a keyboard.

Laptop users tended to take down more notes, but hand writers were more selective.

"Although more notes are beneficial, at least to a point, if the notes are taken indiscriminately or by mindlessly transcribing content, as is more likely the case on a laptop than when notes are taken longhand, the benefit disappears. Indeed, synthesizing and summarizing content rather than verbatim transcription can serve as a desirable difficulty..."



(Mueller & Oppenheimer 2014, p1166)

Using e-tools



Some pros

- Can delete, reword and move text.
- Can go back and add in comments or images.
- All your notes are in one place, so you can refer to previous classes easily.
- Can save more than one copy.

Some cons

- Drawing diagrams and mathematical notation can be trickier.
- Distraction factor – social media notifications, emails, browsing.
- Equipment dependency – running out of power, carrying weight.
- Comfort issues - eye strain, posture.

Specialist e-tools

- A tablet and stylus can allow you to draw diagrams and write down calculations.
- Some devices allow voice recording at the same time as making notes so the times are synced.

Pam A. Mueller and Daniel M. Oppenheimer (2014) The Pen Is Mightier Than the Keyboard: Advantages of Longhand Over Laptop Note Taking, **Psychological Science** Vol. 25(6) pp1159–1168.

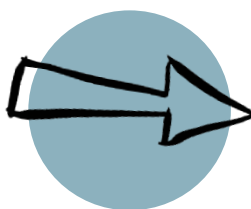
Key words and bullet points

- Write down only the key terms, names or concepts mentioned in a class (listing).
- The key word should remind you of the rest of what was discussed.
- Works well where you can access outlines, slides and reading lists to add to your notes.
- Using key words focuses attention on the main ideas, such as concepts, movements, individual authors or important texts.
- Revise and add to your notes fairly soon after.



Remember

The processing that occurs while you are actively making notes improves learning and retention.



Adding visual elements is a quick way of adding emphasis.

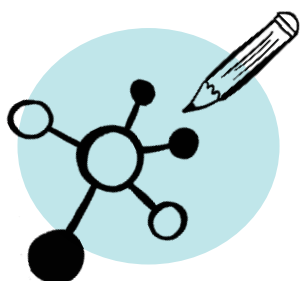


A question mark can be a reminder to check and clarify something.

Pattern or graphic notes and mapping

Pattern notes are a diagrammatic form rather than the linear line by line or list approach. In its simplest form, as a spider diagram, you put the main idea in the middle of the page and link topics to it.

Visual notes might take the form of concept maps or mind maps which give an overall picture and show connections.



Graphic notes are good for less structured sessions (e.g. discussion where the focus jumps back and forth). It can be a good way to make a summary of a class straight afterwards.

It can be difficult to make notes during formal lectures in this way unless you have studied the lecture structure in outline beforehand.

Note-making styles for classes: 3

Two-column or two-page method

1 Create a margin a third of the way across your page (e.g. fold a crease).

Or leave the left-hand page blank in your notebook.

2 Write your notes during the class on the right-hand side.

3 Add value afterwards by inserting headings, definitions and your own questions.

Cornell-style note making

A variation on a system originally devised at Cornell University by Prof Walter Pauk.

1 Mark up A4 sheets beforehand:

- About 6cms deep on the left.
- About 5cms deep at the foot.

2 Make notes during the class in the right-hand space.

3 Write a two sentence summary of the page in the space at the bottom after the lecture.

4 Afterwards, write in questions or cue-words in the left-hand column.

Top tip

Revise by covering up your notes on the right and answering your own questions in your own words.