

Top Tips for Note Taking



Write concise notes

Your instinct may be to write everything down as it is said but that way, you are likely to miss things, not be paying attention, and have way too much to revise. Instead **write down phrases**, particularly ones that aren't on the lecture slides, as you will be able to get these separately.



Learn which note taking style suits you

This is just a case of trial and error. There are some examples of note taking styles on the last page of these tips, try a few out and see which you prefer.



Use a recording

If you find it hard to write or type fast, you can record the lectures on your phone or a Dictaphone - or at the RVC, we record lectures for you so you can re-listen to them. These are best combined with your own notes.



Highlight, underline or CAPITALISE your notes

Use whatever you like, but make it stand out. If the lecturer is stressing a particular point, 'This will be on the exam', 'This is extremely important to remember', then make sure you will remember that after the lecture.



Use abbreviations

Don't worry about your words being perfect, they just need to be legible to you. You can use symbols, arrows, or shortened words to get your point down.



Get rid of distractions

Airplane mode on laptops/tablets is a good idea, to prevent you being distracted by social media notifications, or even checking up on news sites or emails.



Leave gaps in your notes

This way, you can add in more information later: either during the lecture, if the lecturer expands on a previous point, or afterwards if you expand the point yourself through research.



Type up your notes, or re-write them

Re-reading & writing your notes helps you solidify your knowledge, and make sense of anything which might be a bit confusing. Leaving this till revision time may mean you don't understand your own notes.

How to Take Notes



On a laptop or tablet

Many people can generally type faster than they can write, and there are even note taking programmes such as Evernote or OneNote to help you be organised.

Devices often come with distractions, such as social media, and they tend to create notes that are just text. This isn't great for visual learners, although you can re-write them in a more appealing way.



On paper

This may be slower than typing, but that may be a positive – you are unlikely to write down everything the lecturer says and so you will focus on the important points. Research suggests writing notes helps us be more engaged and retain more information.

If you like writing equations, drawing or using lots of arrows, writing on paper will likely be the easiest way. You might want to have a notebook or section for each class/module to keep things organised, and use different colours to highlight topics.

When to Take Notes



Notes before a lecture

Check if there is any assigned reading/tasks and take notes on these, or even research the topic yourself – this is an important part of independent learning and will help you familiarise yourself with the topic and solidify your knowledge. Then you can spend the lecture focusing on the important parts, and ask any questions that came up.



Notes during a lecture

Become a good listener, and pick out the most important points to write down, which might include words such as Especially, Significantly, or You need to know...

Anything that is repeated, written on the board, emphasized, part of a process (i.e. first, second, finally) should be noted and highlighted in some way.

Make sure you take good notes of any summary, conclusion or review the lecturer gives, as this will include the most important points. Complete your notes by asking questions and writing down the answer.



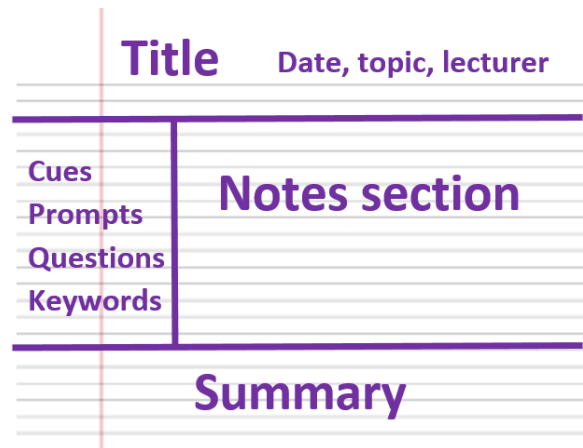
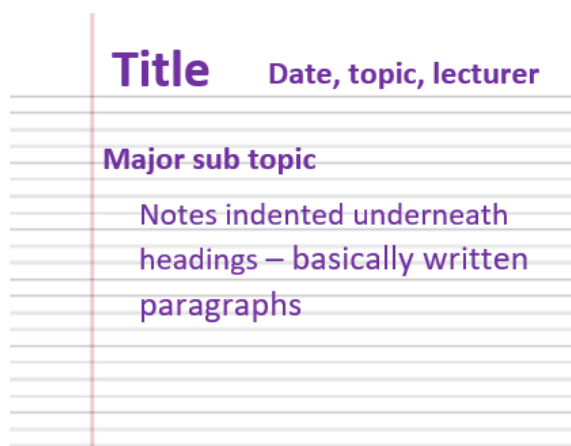
Notes after a lecture

Don't waste your notes! Look through them that day or week, make sure they make sense, and clarify anything that needs it. Then you will need to consolidate everything you learnt before, during and after the lecture, into one set of notes which you can revise from. Organise them in a logical way that helps you, and you will find revision much easier.

Styles of Note Taking

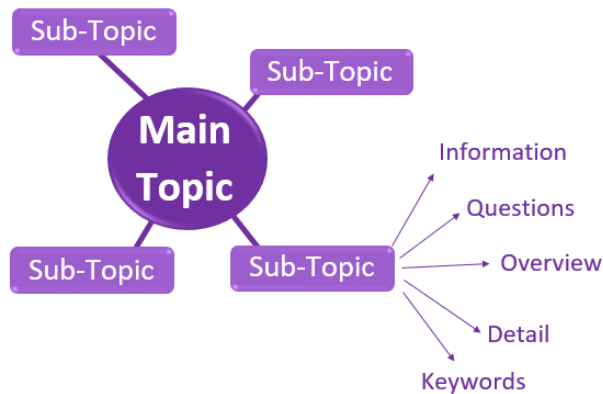
Linear note taking

If you prefer lists or paragraphs, you might find that linear note taking, or the Cornell method where you split the page into sections are the best for you.



Non-linear note taking

However, if you are a visual learner it may be that you prefer mind maps, or tables of information.



Disease	Species	Symptoms	Medication
<i>Tuberculosis</i>	<i>Humans Primates Cattle etc</i>		
<i>Toxoplasmosis</i>			
<i>Trypanosomiasis</i>			