



How to Take Notes

This resource may be used by the Scholarship Chair to plan chapter-wide programming, support individual members, and/or share directly with all chapter members.

There is no one right way to take notes. Some note taking strategies lend themselves to different subject areas. Other note taking strategies are based on your preferred learning style. Finding a system that works for you and helps you learn is the most important thing.

This resource is designed to give you an introduction to a variety of note taking strategies to help you determine what will work best for you, your learning preferences, and your classes. Do not feel like you need to stick to a single form of note taking. In fact, it is recommended that you try each strategy in different classes and develop your ideal approach to taking notes.

THE CORNELL NOTE-TAKING METHOD

KEY CONCEPT

Creates a system for organizing notes without having to rewrite anything by dividing each page into three sections: note-taking area, cues and questions area, and a summary area.

HOW TO SET UP YOUR NOTES

- **Note-taking area:** Use this space to take notes during the lecture. As the professor moves to different concepts, skip a few lines and then continue taking notes. After class, add in any additional details that you can.
- **Cues and questions area:** As you review your notes after class, add cues and questions in a column to the left of your note-taking area.
 - *Cues:* Write a key word or phrase for each chunk of information. This cue word/phrase will help your brain during retrieval practice.
 - *Questions:* Write down any questions you have as you review notes. A best practice is to look in the textbook for information and/or see the professor during office hours for clarification.
- **Summary area:** After class, write a one-two sentence summary of all your notes on the page. The summaries help you consolidate information and starts building connections between individual topics.

WHEN TO USE AND EXAMPLES

Lectures and readings

- *Example Video:* [How to Take Cornell Notes](#)
- *Sample Template:* [Cornell Note-Taking Method Template](#)

THE OUTLINE METHOD

KEY CONCEPT

Notes are taken as you listen to a lecture and are organized as you go throughout the class. The outline method creates a highly organized set of notes; however, you must be careful when taking notes to ensure that everything is organized correctly. This method can help you see connections between concepts and is easy to use as a review tool.

HOW TO SET UP YOUR NOTES

- Write points in an organized pattern as you listen to the lecture using space indentations.
 - Major points go farthest to the left
 - Indent each more specific point to the right
 - Levels of importance are indicated by distance from the major point
- You can choose to use Roman numerals or another numbering system; however, the indentations make it so this is not required
- A traditional outline is deductive; however, a reverse (or inductive) outline in which minor points lead to a major point can be used

WHEN TO USE AND EXAMPLES

Lectures and readings with a clear organization/structure

- Example Video: [Outline Method](#)
- Sample Template: [Outline Method Template](#)

THE CHART METHOD

KEY CONCEPT

This method helps organize information during a lecture with a clear structure/approach. The chart method reduces the amount of writing required during a lecture and creates an excellent retrieval tool. The topics covered need to have something in common for this approach to work.

HOW TO SET UP YOUR NOTES

- Determine the categories you will use to collect information
- Set-up your notes in columns headed by the categories
- Record words, phrases, dates, and key ideas in the appropriate column throughout the lecture

WHEN TO USE AND EXAMPLES

Lectures and readings with a clear system of organization/structure; not ideal for math or content-heavy topics

- Example Video: [Charting Note Taking Method](#)
- Sample Template: [Chart Method Template](#)

THE MAPPING METHOD

KEY CONCEPT

The mapping method is highly focused on showing connections between concepts and ideas. The method takes less critical thinking and prior organization. To effectively use these notes for retrieval, you will need to reorganize the information. For highly visual learners, this method can be very helpful in learning and organizing information.

HOW TO SET UP YOUR NOTES:

- **Option 1:** Write the topic at the top of the page; Divide the topic into subtopics on the left and right as you go down the paper
- **Option 2:** Write the topic in the middle of the page; Subtopics will branch out from the middle

WHEN TO USE AND EXAMPLES

Lectures with a lot of content

Note: This can be used for reading; however, other notetaking methods are more effective when taking notes while reading.

- *Example Video:* [What is Mind Mapping?](#)
- *Sample Template:* [Mapping Method Template](#)

SKETCHNOTES METHOD

KEY CONCEPT

If you find yourself doodling during class, then this method could be perfect for you. The sketchnotes method combines words, shapes, and drawings. This is a good method for visual learners. The visual cues help you retain information and make connections between topics. You do not need to have an artistic ability to use sketchnotes – the drawings only need to work for you!

HOW TO SET UP YOUR NOTES:

- **Text:** Write short phrases and main titles
- **Drawings and shapes:** Use basic shapes and icons to create visual representations of concepts
- **Containers:** Put important words inside boxes or another basic shape
- **Connectors:** Draw lines and arrows to show how concepts connect

WHEN TO USE AND EXAMPLES

Lectures, brainstorming, and review

- *Example Video:* [Sketchnote Visual Note Taking Explainer](#)
- *Sample Template:* [Sketchnotes Method Template](#)