

Study skills

Making Notes

There is no single note-making style that will suit everybody. You may need to try different styles before you find one that suits you. But, regardless of style, the **purpose of note making is to record important information for future reference**. You will probably need to refer to your notes when writing assignments and/or sitting tests and exams, so your notes will need to make sense to you when you use them.

Making notes from lectures

- Preview before class.
 - Read course texts, last week's notes and other sources to gain a basic understanding of the topic before class to make more effective notes
- Record the lecture's date and title at the top of the page.
- Understand and use the lecture's structure.
 - Listen for lecturer's signposts ("firstly," "secondly," "finally," etc.).
- Listen for the lecturer's emphasis.
 - If a lecturer repeats a point or pauses to give students time to note it, it is probably worth recording.
- Don't be afraid to ask the lecturer to repeat or clarify a point you didn't hear properly or didn't fully understand.

Making notes from readings

- Record the source's bibliographical information (author, title, publishing details including date etc.) at the top of the page.
 - Each time you make a note, record the page number to help you re-locate this information if needed.
- Note the reading's main argument and points.
- Understand the structure of the reading (see the [Reading Strategies: Articles/Chapters](#) and [Reading Strategies: Books](#) handouts).
 - If it is a piece of academic writing (an essay, article or chapter in a book) it is likely to be structured as introduction, body and conclusion.
 - The introduction typically ends with the thesis statement, which states the aim, purpose or main argument of the writing.
 - The paragraphs of the body will deal with one main point each.
 - The first sentence of each paragraph of the body is usually the topic sentence that states the paragraph's main point.

Note making tips

- Record only what you don't know or what you think you'll have trouble remembering (concepts, names, dates, etc.).
- Leave space so you can make further notes when you are reviewing notes later.
- Use abbreviations (you can make your own, although it might be useful to write a key in case you forget what your abbreviation stands for).
- Use different colours and symbols to emphasise and differentiate points.
- Use headings and subheadings to differentiate sections.
- Review your notes after class and transfer notes to a different format (e.g. transferring split page or Cornell style notes to a mind map).
- Make sure you keep notes in a form you'll be able to understand when you revise for exams later in the year.

Note making styles

You are free to devise your own note making style and you will find the style that suits you best through trial and error. The following styles tend to work:

Cornell style

- Split the page into two columns, the left-hand margin slimmer than the right.
 - Along the left margin, write subheadings and page numbers:

Note making styles [add page number if making notes from text]	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Cornell• Split page• Mind maps
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(Summary at the end)

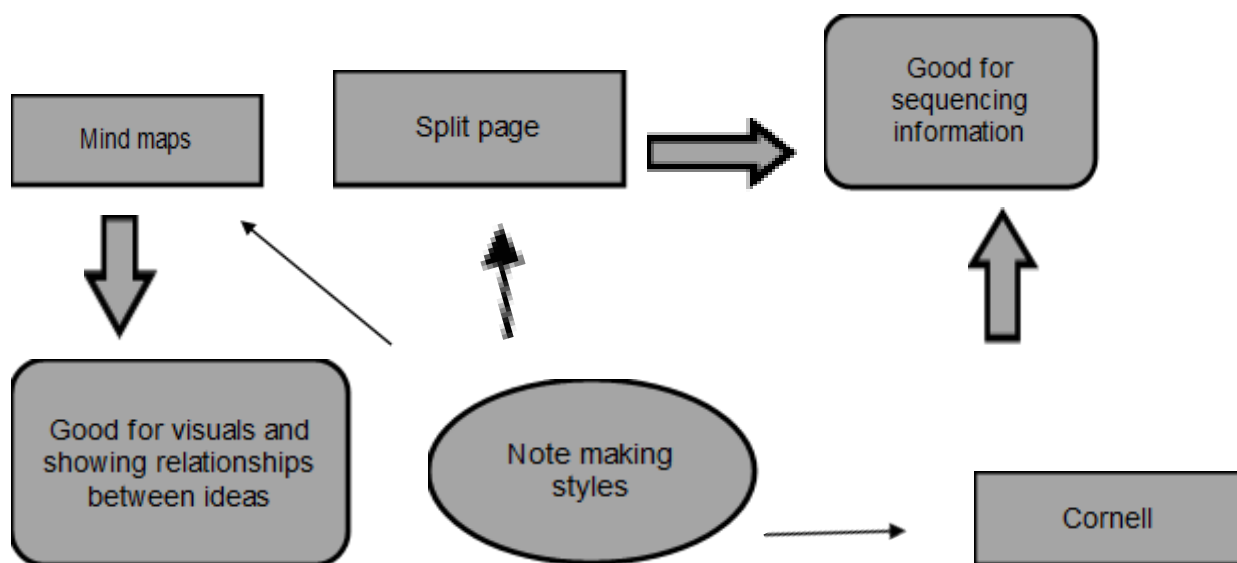
Split Page

- Split the page into two equal halves so that there are two even-sized columns.
 - Fold the page in half at the columns and write only down one column.
 - Leave the other column for notes when reviewing:

[Leave blank for reviewing later by, for example, summarising, offering definitions of keywords or making notes from further reading]	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Many note-making styles<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Cornell• Split page• Mind maps
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Mind Maps (see [Mind Maps](#) handout)

- At the centre write the main topic, point or argument.
 - Create strands coming from the centre showing how subsidiary ideas link:



Common abbreviations

- When note taking, it is good to abbreviate commonly used conceptual terms.

e.g. - for example
w/n – within
w/out – with out
c/f – compared with
∴ - therefore

re – concerning
i.e. – that is
viz – namely
pa – per annum; each year

et al. – and others
etc. – and so on
C. – Century
b/f – before

For other useful Learning Services handouts and resources related to this topic go to <https://myara.ara.ac.nz/pages/academic-support/learning-resources>