Note making

There are basically two types of note making that a student will be faced with:
- Making notes in class
- Making notes as a result of private study and reading

There are many ways of writing notes, each with its own advantages and disadvantages, and it is best to try them all to see which method works for you. Certain subjects or topics may lend themselves to one particular method. The most important point is that they are useful later when you wish to re-use them.

Why make notes?
- Notes make you concentrate on what you are learning
- Notes make you put ideas into your own words and so aid understanding
- Notes help you remember things better
- Notes are excellent for revision

Making notes in class - how to improve your technique:

Many tutors adopt a style where students are required to take notes. In such a situation the following may be helpful:

- Don't try to write down everything the tutor says
- Concentrate on picking out the relevant points only
- Write notes in point form with separate sub headings
- Develop your own style
- Leave plenty of space between your notes for later additions
- Jot down any references given in class to read later
- Number any handouts issued with a corresponding number in the relevant place in your notes
- Underline key phrases or use a highlighter pen
- It is always advisable to date and number each sheet of A4 as you use it
- Before your next lesson expand on your class notes from text books, etc. using the tips given below

Finally, always ask the teacher for a further explanation if there is something you do not understand - you can be sure there is someone else in the class who has difficulties too!

The 2 most common note-making styles

Linear Notes
This method involves reorganising information in a written format using your own shorthand and personal style.

Advantages
- Makes you think analytically
- Aids your understanding
- Simple to revise from and use later

Disadvantages
- Initially quite time consuming
- Doesn't aid visual memory like pattern notes

In summary, initially takes some thought and time but probably most useful method for expressing complex ideas.

Example of Linear notes:

1 Good note-making
    1.1 Think before you write
    1.2 Keep brief notes
    1.3 Keep notes organised
    1.4 Use your own words

2 Useful strategies
    2.1 Write phrases not sentences
    2.2 Use headings
    2.3 Number points

3 Unhelpful strategies
    3.1 Copying chunks and phrases
    3.2 Writing more notes than you can use

Pattern Notes

This method involves using flow diagrams to record information.

Advantages
- Can sum up many pages of written notes
- You concentrate on the fundamentals
- Very active form of learning
- Visual images are a great aid to recall
- Add a 'fun' element to note making

Disadvantages
- Could be too absorbing!
- May be difficult to express more complex ideas clearly

Example of Pattern notes:
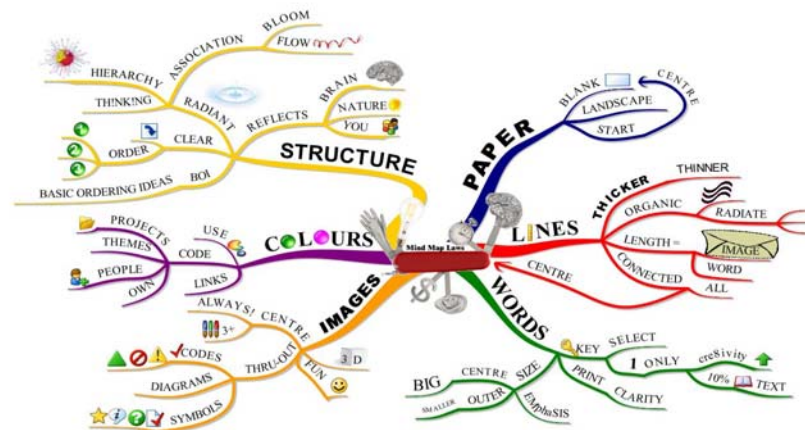
Note-making tips

- Avoid lengthy sentences
- Aim to have only one set of notes per topic. This makes it easy to locate your information when you need it later for an assignment or to revise for an exam.
- Always record the title, author and edition of the text you use for your notes, along with chapter and page numbers. This may prove vital for future reference. For further suggestions, see 'What to do with your notes' in this Study Skills unit.
- Copy quotations in full, and keep an exact record of the source (see above) so that you can locate it later if necessary.
- Label and number your pages of notes. This allows you to cross-refer to information noted elsewhere.
- Leave space and a wide margin in your notes so that you can add new information and ideas later.
- Use symbols and abbreviations to save time. Keep a key until you know them.
- Underline key points in or use a highlighter