

Note Taking

The purpose of note taking is to create a concise representation of something longer, larger, or more complex. Effective college students learn to take notes from a variety of sources including lectures, textbooks, films, meetings, observation, audio sources, and more. In addition, there are [many ways to take notes](#). Some focus on speed, while others focus on long-term retention. Regardless of the context, the point of [active note-taking](#) is to create something you can look back on later to review and reinforce what you have seen, read, or heard. Listed below are a few methods for taking notes in different contexts.



Textbooks

Among the easiest places from which to take notes are your textbooks. They are normally well organized, explanatory, have bolded terms and italicized items, special sections, questions to ponder, and often answers that are easy to find. Since you purchase your books, you can write in them, highlight, underline, bracket, and doodle all you want. [Click here](#) for tips specific to taking notes in and from textbooks.

Lectures

One of the most effective methods for taking note from lectures is the [Cornell Note-taking Method](#). You can employ this method in five steps: Record, Reduce, Recite, Reflect, and Review. This is effective with handwritten notes or using a laptop or tablet in class. It is also very similar to the [SQ5R method](#) of studying.

Research Articles

A good part of your unassigned reading will occur during the research process for your papers. The key here is to review many articles quickly to find appropriate sources for your papers. Most online databases through the Library review hundreds of articles quick and easy by using keyword searches, filters, and summaries. Taking notes from these can be a simple copy/paste of the articles abstract, or you could glance at the desired sections (e.g., discussion, results) and jot down a few key notes. In comparing articles, you could create a grid by listing them down a column on the left and then key attributes along the top. There intersection of the two can be a few words that easily allow you to refer back to them alter when writing, or study for a test if you need to remember different authors' arguments.

Films

Whether they are full-length classics, contemporary blockbuster, documentaries, or shorts, the mind mapping technique works well. Essentially, mind mapping is a visual expression of how you organize a topic and make connections. This flexible technique allows the user to track multiple topics simultaneously that may not be occurring concurrently in the film. Further, this technique works great with a computer or a pen and paper. There is [free software](#) on the web and often there are [free templates](#) to use for different topics. The result is as unique as the note taker, and it creates notes particularly useful for visual learners.