Note making provides a framework within which you can think about, organize and recall relevant points and ideas. Your notes are your personal response to a lecture or a text, and it is to your advantage to make them as useful as possible.

Preparing for the lecture
This will help you select out what is core material and what is peripheral. If you can read briefly about the lecture topic beforehand, you will be able to take more relevant notes. It also helps you become actively involved in the learning process.

Adopt an enquiring attitude
If you actively think about what the lecturer is saying, considering how this material relates to other things you know, you will be involved and attentive and will recall more of what is being said.

Vary your method according to the purpose and type of lecture
If you will need the lecture information for examinations and it will be difficult to find in such an orderly fashion elsewhere, you will need to take fairly full notes. If the material is examinable, but is available in your texts fairly readily, you may do better to listen actively and only note the main points or difficult parts of the topic. If the material is being provided for background interest and is not examinable, you may only need to take very spare notes and should listen as actively as you can.

There is wide variation in the amount of notes individual students take. You should take the amount of notes which serves your purpose. However, if you are uncertain it is probably safer to take more detailed notes than you may need. As long as taking notes is an active, thoughtful exercise (rather than a passive, mindless chore), you can hardly be wrong.

The following suggestions will help you to develop a noting technique which will serve your needs:

- Head page with topic, subject, lecturer and date. Number and date sequential pages for each lecture.
- Allow a wide margin, and space between sections for writing comments later.
- Use one side of the paper only.
- Work out the lecturer's format. How does the lecture begin? Is there a blackboard plan? Are there diagrams to copy? Does she reiterate points? Does he/she summaries at the end? This helps you to structure your notes.
- Use abbreviations whenever possible. Be consistent to avoid confusion.
- Write by phrases rather than whole sentences. Do not quote at length - you will lose the next points.
- Spend time at the end on detailed diagrams and graphs, rather than miss noting important issues during the lecture.
- Revise your notes and underline or highlight key points as soon as possible. This is very important because it helps to reinforce the information you have gathered in the lecture.

Some students divide their page with a larger than usual margin, say 6 cm, let us call it the action column, in which they mark significant items. Use arrows in the action column to connect points through the lecture. If your lecturer is presenting you with arguments and ideas on a topic, your action column notes may include:
- the lecturer's thesis
- supporting and conflicting evidence
- sources and references cited
- questions raised in the lecture.

These personal comments beside the notes will help you later. Add any personal comment such as a note to check something you do not understand or to indicate some information you could use in an assignment.

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