Student Disability Services

Note-taking

Aim: to capture the essence of content using as few words as possible

Use abbreviations and symbols

- Use acronyms, the first syllable of words, conventional symbols such as digits, + @ & < > etc.
- Many mathematical symbols can be put to use in non-mathematical notes – you will find an extensive list at www.rapidtables.com/math/symbols/Basic_Math_Symbols.htm
- You can also devise your own symbols – after all, your notes are for your own personal use. Think text-speak – it works well for notes and you can develop your 'vocabulary' by looking at a few websites (including www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/SMS_language)
- You could also devise abbreviations or symbols for subject words that crop up frequently

Leave out unnecessary words

You don't need to write everything down, sentence by sentence; in lectures you will quickly fall behind and when taking notes from texts you will put yourself at risk of plagiarism. Again, think in terms of texting language. It's not going to dumb down your written language expression when the formal academic writing is required.

Use headings and numbers

You can make your notes more readable (and understandable) if you build in some sort of structure. Main topics can have a heading with information that relates to them under subheadings. These can be numbered 1, 2, 3 (main headings); 1a, 2b,3c subheadings etc.

When making notes while researching for an essay, cross reference your notes to your essay plan, using the same numbering (see Essay Writing).

Leave spaces

You may want to add information later when you come to review your notes, so after each topic or sub-topic, leave some space.

Note- taking in lectures

Before lectures, print out power point presentations as hand-outs (if available on Moodle) with three slides to a page or upload the presentation straight into a program such as Audio Note-Taker. You can then annotate the slides by hand or on your computer, adding to the information already provided.

Preview power point presentations before lectures. As you read, ask yourself:

- What are the key concepts/ideas in this lecture?
- How do they apply to any examples mentioned and /or to the wider topic/theme/subject area studied?
- What is likely to be the most essential information to remember from this lecture?
- Are several things being compared?
- What are the relationships between the ideas/processes?
- Is any of the content controversial?

If you know you have difficulty recognising or spelling new vocabulary mentioned in the lecture you can use text to speech software to say the words aloud (Text Help Read and Write/ Claro-Read) or you can use an online pronunciation tool such as http://www.howjsay.com/

Previewing lectures will provide you with a context, and you will be more likely to absorb the content. Note-taking during the lecture will be easier, and having some idea of the content you may realise you don't need to write so much.

During the lecture be aware of **phrases** that lecturers use to **signpost** what is being said:

 To start with...	This will signal the introduction
 The lecture is divided	Tells you the structure
 However, on the other hand, but, conversely, despite	Contrasts opposing information and evidence
 In addition, in other words, as I said previously	Repetition of information or alternative definition
 For example, that is to say, furthermore	What follows will be examples of the main point
 Especially, significantly, most importantly	Link is important and special attention required
 Firstly, secondly, next, then, penultimate, ultimately	Be ready to record a series of linked information
 Therefore, thus, because, consequently, accordingly	Cause and effect
 I'll expand/ give more detail/ take up this point later	Be on the alert to note and listen out for more information
 In conclusion/ summary/ recap/ in brief/ to wrap up	The overview and recap is coming. Be alert to clarify points

Table: Thanks to David Mooney Imperial College London

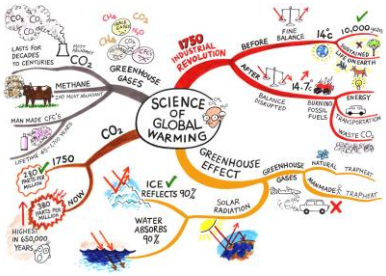
Remember there is a place for sitting back and listening; thinking about what you are hearing and making notes of your ideas about the subject rather than just making a record of what the lecturer is saying. Listen to a complete point before writing. Try to record your own reactions to what is being said. Do you agree with what is presented? What questions do you have?

When recording a lecture

1. As you are note taking, ensure that you can see the time counter on your recording device. **Make a note of the number (at all points on the recording)** where you think there was an **important piece** of information that may need further development after the lecture.
2. Use the same strategy **if you didn't understand something** or missed something out.
3. Rewind to listen to those points to amend and complete your lecture notes. You should only really be listening to edited highlights. You don't have time to listen to the entire lecture again. Only consider this if lecture is particularly good or will help you with an assignment or exam

Using visual spatial notes

Many students like to use visual note taking tools or approaches. These can be paper based or digital. Using a different 'radial' approach to notes can actually fit better with the natural flow of a lecture. Lecturers don't always deliver points in a logical sequential order.



Review your notes after lectures to make sure you can make sense of them and to add any other information.

Useful software

Audio Note-Taker *www.sonocent.com/en/**audio_notetaker***

Inspiration http://www.inspiration.com/

Mind View www.matchware.com/en/products/**mindview**/default.htm

XMind (free to download) www.**xmind**.net/

Natural Reader (free to download) http://www.naturalreaders.com/

TextHelp Read and Write Gold www.**texthelp**.com /

ClaroRead www.**claroread**.com/