The Studyvibe Guide to Notemaking

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Table on Contents

What is notemaking?

Notemaking is a strategy used to *extract* key information from what is being *read*, *viewed, listened to* or *experienced* and to record it in an *abbreviated* way that makes sense to the reader. This abbreviated information can then be used for *revision*, and *exam preparation*.
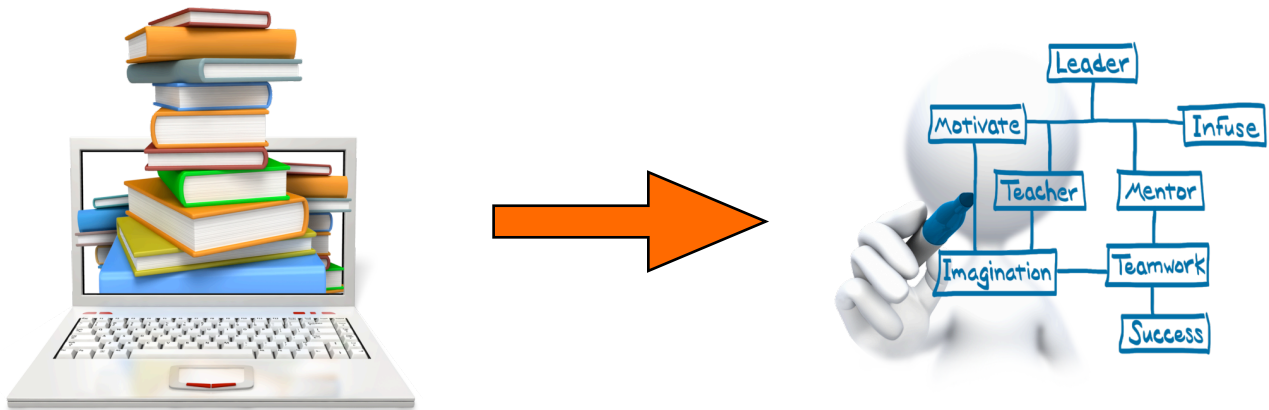
Your notes can be in the form of a:

Diagram or drawing

List of points (Dot Jot)

Key words and phrases

Voice recording

Highlighted text on a printed page

Mind map

Completed graphic organiser

Bookmarked / tagged websites

Take the time to develop effective notes to make revision for exams easier.

Why is notemaking important?

If you develop effective notemaking strategies you will greatly enhance your ability to retain the key information you need for exams, debates, presentations etc.

• Notemaking helps you to concentrate on what you are learning by focussing only on the *important facts*.

• By writing the information down you are helping your brain to examine it in a *different way*.

• During revision it is more *time efficient* to focus only on the *key information*. You can read your revision notes rather then re-reading whole chapters.

• Notemaking helps you to *clarify your understanding* of a topic because you are using your own words to describe major concepts.

Some of the main sources of information for notemaking will be:

Lectures and class lessons

Text books

Non-fiction books, journals, periodicals, encyclopedias and newspapers

The internet (this will include digital forms of the above resources)

Videos and documentaries

Excursions, guest speakers and demonstrations

You may find that different sources of information require different notemaking strategies and tools. Work out which ones are best suited to you and which ones help you record and retain the information most effectively.

How do you take effective notes?

There are many ways to take notes but here are two ways that you can look at it:

Sequentially

You can take notes in a *chronological sequence* as they are presented. Often you don't have the chance to go back and listen or view the information again.

You would use this form of notetaking when listening to a lecture, watching a movie, video or other presentation, or when on an excursion.

In these situations you often get only one opportunity to collect the information from this source so you take the notes down as they are presented.

HINT: If you have permission why not record the teacher's lecture or presentation so you can replay it later - then you can catch the things you may have missed later when you have more time.

Strategically

Before you begin to take *your* notes you have a *pre-determined purpose*, *framework* or *set of questions* you are seeking to answer. You are listening or viewing for a specific purpose.

To help you organise this information you may use **graphic organisers, mindmaps, focus questions** or **key words** to direct your listening, reading, viewing and notemaking.

Harvesting and Curating - the first step to online notemaking

Many students use online resources to find the information they need for their assignments. There are many tools available now that help you '*capture*' or collect key information while you are 'surfing the net'. This saves you having to go back and try to find the information later. You can '*harvest*' or '*collect*' the websites and then, when you have more time to interrogate them you can go back to the collection you have made. Bookmarking websites on your web browser was one way of doing this but now there are many tools you can find to do the same job more effectively. You can find details of them here.

Hints for Note taking

Here are some hints and tips that will help you refine and develop you notemaking skills.

1. Determine the best way to take your notes based on the *type of information* you are looking for.

    For example, if you are writing down a sequence of events use a *timeline* or if you are describing a life cycle use a *Flow Chart*. *Graphic Organisers* are an excellent tool that will help you focus on the type of information you require and how to organize it in your notes.

2. *Organise your notes methodically*. Color-coding is a good idea.

3. *Date* your notes and keep each subject together. If you are using a word processor make sure you organize you notes into labeled folders.

4. If you are using *note taking cards,* number them and keep topics / units / subjects together.

5. When taking notes form the board, *be accurate* with all dates. definitions, examples, formulae, solutions, conclusions, outlines, lists and anything else you are recording.

6. When taking notes from an oral presentation *don't try and take everything down.* Try to pick out the key points being made.

7. When taking notes from a *video* just write down *keys words* and use pauses in the narration, music and scenery sections to 'catch up" with your writing.

8. List *topic headings* and *main ideas.*

9. *Abbreviate.* Invent your own note taking style.

10. Add *color* and *images*.

11. Develop a *system* that works for you and use it consistently.

12. Develop a *mind map* as a way or organizing / recording your notes. These are very effective for *visual* and *spatial learners*.

Note taking from texts

Note taking from texts involves a number of steps.

PQRST is a logical system and method for making notes.

P   **Preview**

Q   **Question**

R   **Read**

S   **Summarize**

T   **Test**

PREVIEW

Before taking notes from a book or examining a website:

- *Browse* through what you need to read.

- Mentally note the *headings* and *sub headings*.

- Look at *graphs, diagrams, tables, illustrations* etc. to see what kind of information is presented.

- *Pay attention to high lighted, bolded and colored words* (these will be important key words).

QUESTION

Ask yourself questions related to the topic that you want to find out about. This will guide your reading.

You can use the questions *WHO, WHAT, WHERE, WHEN, WHY* and *HOW* as starters or use questions framework like the *Question Matrix, Bloom's Taxonomy* or the *Six Thinking Hats.* (All of these frameworks can be found in the *Toolbox Module of Studyvibe*).   Analyze your task or research question to find out exactly what is expected. Look at question words or key words or verbs like "c*ompare*", "*justify*" or "*describe*".

READ ACTIVELY

- *Be clear* about what information you are trying to find before you start. This way you are reading for a purpose.
- Read the material *section by section*. Search for answers to your question(s). *Study diagrams, graphs, tables, maps and illustrations* and link their meanings to the text. Don't underestimate the value of these things as a source of valuable information, sometimes even more so than text.
- *Read the topic sentence and final sentence in each paragraph*. Often this is where the most important information is found.
- Pay particular attention to *highlighted words* and *key words*.
- Keep reminding yourself of the purpose for your reading.

SUMMARIZE

- Make notes of the *main points* you read.
- Use *words and pictures* to activate both sides of the brain.
- *Employ colors* to make notes memorable. These notes can be either linear notes, mind maps or grid notes.
- *Kinesthetic learners* might like to use note taking cards (or Post-it Notes). Manipulating and sequencing the cards helps you to remember the information.

TEST

After completing your notes, *test your knowledge*. To ensure the information you have written is *committed to long-term memory* you need to revisit the information regularly for two weeks after you take them then on an ongoing basis as part of your revision program.

WARNING

There is the temptation when researching online to copy and paste huge chunks of information for assignments. The trouble with this is, however, that you do not really engage in or understand necessarily what you have copied because you are not synthesizing or processing it. To avoid this, *use graphic organizers* to organize key information into relevant groupings. Plagiarism (copying other people's work) is a habit you DO NOT want to get into.

Note taking before, during and after class

Step One: before class

- *Review* notes from previous lesson
- *Read ahead* in text if possible (this will give you some idea of the hierarchy of knowledge and how best to use your notes)
- Make sure you have all *relevant equipment* you need. (highlighters, post-it notes, note book, file paper, computer, iPad etc.)

Step Two: During class

- *Listen to the teacher's goal* for the lesson. Be clear about what you are going to be doing and what you hope to achieve by the end of the lesson.
- Take note of how the teacher is *organising the information*.
- Write the *fewest words* needed to get the key concepts presented.
- Use *abbreviations* and *symbols* to increase note taking speed.
- Include information *written on the whiteboard*. Pay particular attention to *diagrams*.
- Place a *?* next to anything that you write that you are not sure of or don't fully understand.
- If using a computer, iPad or tablet make sure you *name and save* the notes in a place where you can easily retrieve them.
- If the teacher gives you permission *record the lesson* on your phone, iPad or computer so that you can go back and listen more carefully for the information you missed during the lesson.

Step Three: After class

- *Ask your teacher* to explain anything you didn't understand.
- *Use text books, reference books* and appropriate *websites* to clarify anything you wrote in your notes that you didn't understand. It is useful to listen to, read or view the concepts you are learning abut in many different formats. this will help you brain to transfer the information into long term memory.
- Make sure your notes are as *complete* as possible and that are *clearly labelled and filed* for easy access. This should be the same whether they are paper-based or electronic.

- *Reread your notes* at least twice in the week following the lesson. This will help them to be retained in your *long-term memory.*

Special Note

If you are taking electronic notes make sure you:

- *Label the file* in such a way that you can easily locate them again.
- *Create subject folders*, then create unit or topic folders within each subject folder.
- Name each document and place them in date order. This way you can easily locate them.

Tools to help you with your notemaking

Key Words

Using **KEY WORDS** and phrases is a powerful notemaking process. The words capture the *key concepts* of what you are researching, then when you have collected what you need by *processing and synthesising* (joining) all the information you have found, you can create something that makes sense to you and it is '*in your own words*'. You can use key words on your **Mindmap** or **Graphic Organiser** or see the **Key Word Notemaking sheet** here or use **flash cards** to write your key words.
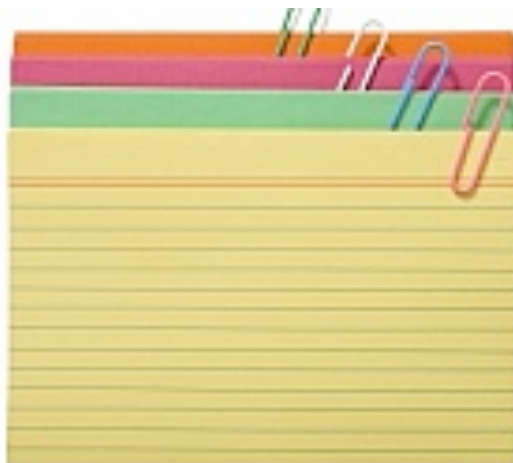
Graphic Organisers

Graphic organisers allow you to *organise your notes* into a format that supports the development of particular *concepts*. They have a *pre-determined structure* that allows you to put the information you find into the relevant section on the organiser.

For example, if you are recording a series of events you could use a **TIMELINE**. If you are comparing the same features of different countries you might use a MATRIX or **SEMANTIC GRID.** If you are comparing the similarities and differences of two energy sources you may use a **VENN DIAGRAM**.

Once you have written all of your notes it is easier then to *find connections* and *themes* in the information because the *common ideas have been clustered together* and the concept that was the focus of the organiser has the evidence to support it.

Here are some common organisers OR why not choose an organiser from the many that are provided in the **Creative Thinking Templates** section of the Studyvibe **Toolbox** or at the **English Companion** website.
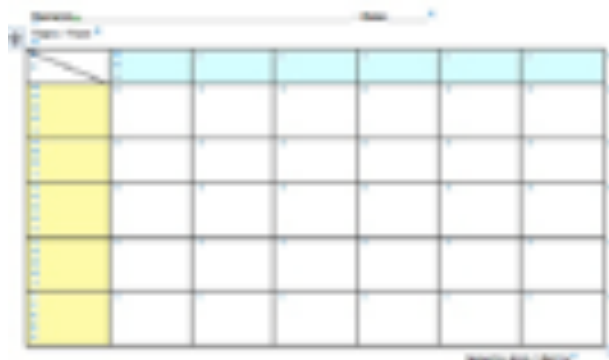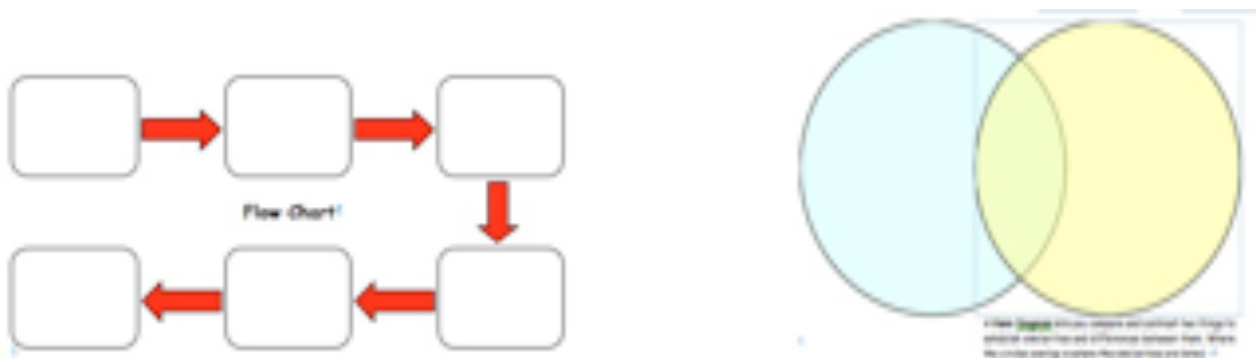
Mindmapping

A [mindmap](#) allows you to document the information you want to record in a way that reflects and supports how your brain thinks. By using colours, shapes, lines and pictures this can often help you remember information more effectively.

There are some great digital mindmapping tools and Apps that allow you to embed pictures, video, podcasts and much more.

Check out more information about Mindmapping [here.](#)
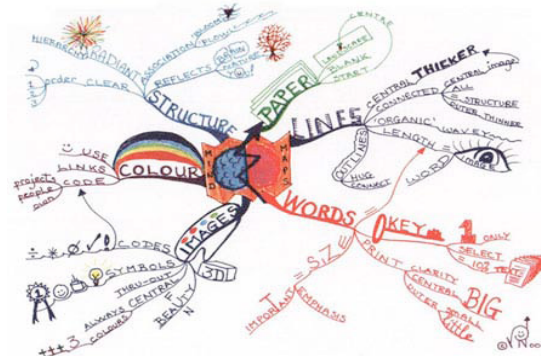
Top Five Traditional Tools

There are many tried and true materials and tools that can help you with your notetaking.

Flash cards

Highlighter pens

Post-it notes

Sticky tabs
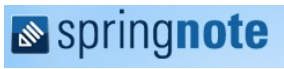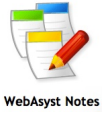
Notemaking pack (files, dividers etc)
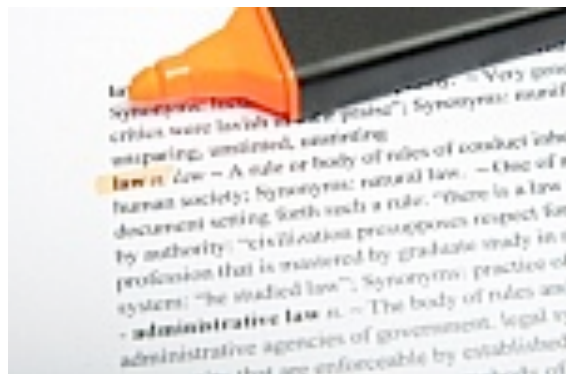
	Mindmapping Apps for iPad
	Total Recall FREE A elegant solution to mind mapping for the idevice. You can instantly create and share beautiful mind maps. Intuitive touch interface with automatic layout allows for mind maps with a few simple strokes.
	Simplemind FREE Drag and drop mind mapping tool with templates and clipboard for brainstorming or thought structuring. Large mind map support only limited by memory. Download to desktop. Styles, colour changes and border all supported within the node well.
	Idea Sketch FREE Ideas Sketch lets you easily draw a mind map and convert it to a text outline and vice versa. You can use Idea Sketch for brainstorming new ideas, illustrating concepts, making outlines, planning presentations, creating charts and more.
	Popplet $4.99 Super simple interface allows you to move at the speed of your thoughts. Capture your ideas, sort them visually, and collaborate in realtime. You can also sign up for an online account with the app featured in "New and Noteworthy"and "Whats Hot".
	Mindmeister FREE Easily create, view, edit and share mind maps in this app. Seamlessly sync with your online account. Share maps directly from your device, full drag and drop support, edit colours icons and styles.
	Mindnode $7.99 Mindnode is a very easy and intuitive application for collecting, organising and outlining your thoughts and ideas as mind maps. Mindnode makes creating mind maps on the iPad extremely easy. Drag out a node from the well and off you go

	Mindmapping Tools on the Web
	99 Mindmapping resources Your one-stop-shop for online mindmapping / notemaking tools. The only problem is there are too many to chosse from so you might like to try one of the ones listed below.
	Bubbl.us Bubbl.us is a free online mindmapping tool that lets you take notes simply and easily.
	Gliffy Easily create professional quality flowcharts, diagrams, technical drawings and so much more.
	Popplet Popplet is a very easy to use mindmapping tool that lets you drag and drop text, images, video and so much more.
	Mindomo
	Freemind Freemind lets you create mindmaps for your research and notemaking. it has extensive functionality so if you are looking for something with a bit extra then this might be for you.

Web Tools for Notemaking

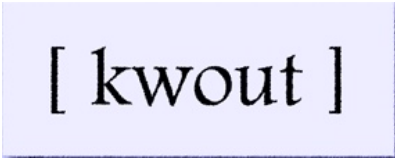|	
	Ubernote Ubernote allows you to keep track of assignments, manage your classwork, bookmark and clip webpages, quickly find any note you have created and much more.
	Springnote Allows you to create pages, wrk on them together with your friends and to share files. It is a great tool for group projects and gives you 2GB free storage.
	WebAsyst Notes comes with features for including attachments to your notes. You can sort the notes into specific folders and share the folders with your contacts.
	Zoho Notebook Provides you a palette where you can type and add image, audio, video, html, urls, RSS, files, sheets, and more. There are also various tools like the Line tool, Freehand tool, Select tool, Hand tool, and Shapes. There is a rich text editor with export, publish, and share features. You can record video and audios directly into the notebooks, integrate them with Skype for chats and IP telephony, or use the Firefox plugin to add Web clips easily.
	Studyblue Provides digital flashcards to help you organise your notes and revise for exams.

iPad Apps for Notemaking

Listed below are 10 iPad Apps that you can use for taking notes. Some of them allow you to take audio notes and some you can sync with things like DropBox.

Follow the links to the iTunes Store to find out more.

	iPad Apps for Notemaking
	Notability $4.99 Notability integrates handwriting, PDF annotation, typing, recording, and organizing so you can take notes your way
	CourseNotes $4.99 CourseNotes is a wonderful app for students. The app is designed around different courses or meetings you attend. The app also features a to-do list, tracking of assignments, and sync with your iPad's calendar. The app also fully supports AirPrint and exporting to Facebook. The app also supports sharing notes over local Wi-Fi or Bluetooth. You can take notes with a keyboard or simply draw on the screen. The main benefit of this app is that it keeps you on track and prepared for class
	Awesome Note for iPad $4.99 This app can sync with Evernote and Google Docs! It can also insert images, maps, and drawings all in the same note. It includes a to-do list, calendar, customized notes (icons, fonts, themes), passcode protection, email notes from within the app, Bluetooth note transfer, and AirPrint support.
	Complete Class Organiser $4.99 This app will sync your audio recording with your notes and lets you import PDFs & Google Docs. You can backup/restore through iTunes and so much more

	iPad Apps for Notemaking
	AudioNote - Notepad and Voice Recorder $4.99 You can record audio while you are in a lecture then sync the audio to where you write or draw on the iPad. You are able to the simply tap on a word and the audio will start to play. The notes you take will actually be highlighted as you play back your recording. You can use drawing or typing to enter your notes.
	Corkulous $4.99 Corkulous is a cork board for the iPad. You are able to stick up on this board notes, labels, photos, contacts, and tasks. You can have multiple cork boards, nested cork boards, searching, passcode lock, export/email boards as PDF or an image
	Note Taker $4.99 The app is designed around using your own handwriting on the iPad screen.
	Punultimate $0.99 Penultimate is like using a stylus or finger to write or draw on notebooks. You can have as many notebooks as you want. You can also choose between a thin, medium, or thick styled pen and also choose between graph paper, lined paper, or plain paper.
	SoundNote $4.99 With SoundNote you can record audio while taking notes then sync them together. The notes can be exported through email if you need to get them into another note taking system like Evernote.
	iOutline $0.99 iOutline is an outline editor for the iPad, in which you can build lists of single-line items. You can add sub-items and items at the same level of indentation.

Web Tools for Capturing Websites

	Evernote Evernote is one of the best tools for capturing websites, videos etc as you are exploring the web. You can add voice notes as well and access the information on all of your devices. It is free and if you use the internet for your research it is a 'must have' tool.
[kwout]	**Kwout** You can grab a screen shot of a page you wish to quote using the Kwout bookmarklet on your desktop
MyStickies Sticky notes for the web	**MyStickies** MyStickies allows you to place little yellow squares of digital paper anywhere and everywhere on the web. Along with the ability to put sticky notes on webpages mystickies offers a powerful interface to browse, search, sort and edit your sticky notes from any computer that has internet access.
Scoop.it!	**Scoop.it** Scoop.it allows you to create up to five topics where you can scoop or curate websites about a your chosen topics. It provides a graphic of the website and records them in a newspaper format where you can quickly and easily see what websites you have collected. This is a great tool for harvesting or collecting your information.

My KeyWord Notemaking Sheet

Name:_____ Topic:_____

Key Word / Question	Supporting information

5Ws Notemaking Sheet

Name:_____ Topic:_____

5Ws	Notes
Who?	
What?	
Where?	
When?	
Why?	

Right brain / Left brain notemaking

This strategy helps you to use both sides of your brain when you are taking your notes. As well as *words* and *pictures* try and use *colour* as well. Choose colours that reflect the concepts you are writing down.

Words /Phrases	Pictures / Diagrams

Summary of Main Points