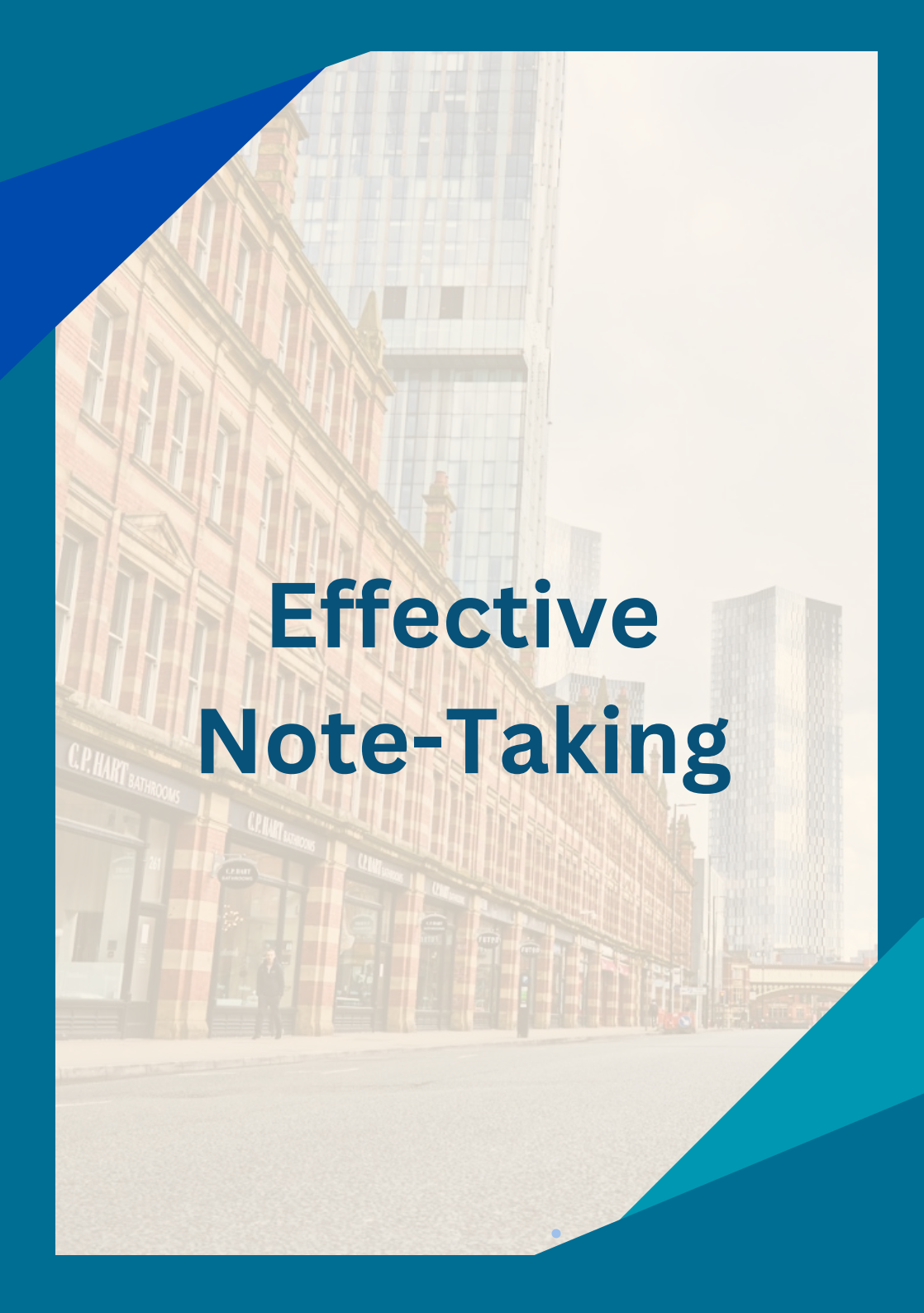




Effective Note-Taking

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Using this guide

Starting in Higher Education can feel overwhelming but with the right approach to your studies, you can ensure you get the most out of your course and have a great time doing it!

By following the principles outlined in this guide, you will learn how to extract key insights, structure your notes for maximum clarity, and leverage your notes as a powerful tool for retaining knowledge and making informed decisions.

We recommend that you take some time to work through this guide at the start of your course as a good understanding of this skill and the strategies discussed will help you to elevate your learning.

It is important to note that not every technique will work for you and you should take whichever approach suits your needs best.

This guide has been curated by the Student Experience and Engagement team with the help of other academic resources.

What is note-taking?

Note taking is an important skill for you to develop as a HE Student as it can help you to understand and contextualise your lectures.

Note-taking is not just about writing everything down and never looking at it again, it is a skill that will allow you to capture the lecture's ideas into your own words so that you can process the information, generate relations between concepts, theories and then use them to inform your practice.

Effective note-taking can enhance your learning by helping you to actively engage with your study material. It also aids the recall of important information, organises your knowledge for easier access, fosters critical thinking, and saves time when reviewing material.

Well-structured notes also support communication, decision-making, and reduce anxiety by providing a reliable resource for information.

This skill encourages active participation, ensuring a deeper understanding of topics, and is a lifelong tool applicable in education, career, and personal development, contributing to overall success and adaptability in a rapidly changing world.

What are the principles of note-taking?

It is not necessary for you to write in full sentences and take down every single detail. The skill includes being able to record key words and phrases in a way that is timely but memorable to you.

This booklet will provide you with different methods and practical strategies to improve your note-taking skills.

- **Capture the Main Ideas:** Focus on capturing the main points and key concepts. Avoid transcribing everything, as this can be overwhelming and less effective. Summarise information in your own words to ensure you understand it.
- **Use a Structured Format:** Organise your notes in a clear and structured format that makes it easy to review and study later.
- **Active Listening and Engagement:** Actively engage with the material as you take notes. Listen carefully, ask questions, and seek clarification if needed.
- **Be Selective:** Be selective about what you include in your notes. Prioritise important information, key details, and any examples or illustrations that enhance your understanding.
- **Review and Revise:** Regularly review and revise your notes to reinforce your understanding and retention of the material. Consider annotating your notes with additional insights, questions, or connections to related topics.

Cornell Notes

Cue:

Notes:

Questions

Use this section AFTER your lecture/study session
What do you still need to know?
Remember and organise

The Cornell Notes template is designed to help you understanding and retain information.

The template can be used interchangeably to suit your learning environment and/or topic of study.

Key ideas

Facts

Diagrams/pictures

Summary:

Bring together your learning from the lecture/study session.

What have you learnt today?

Cornell Notes

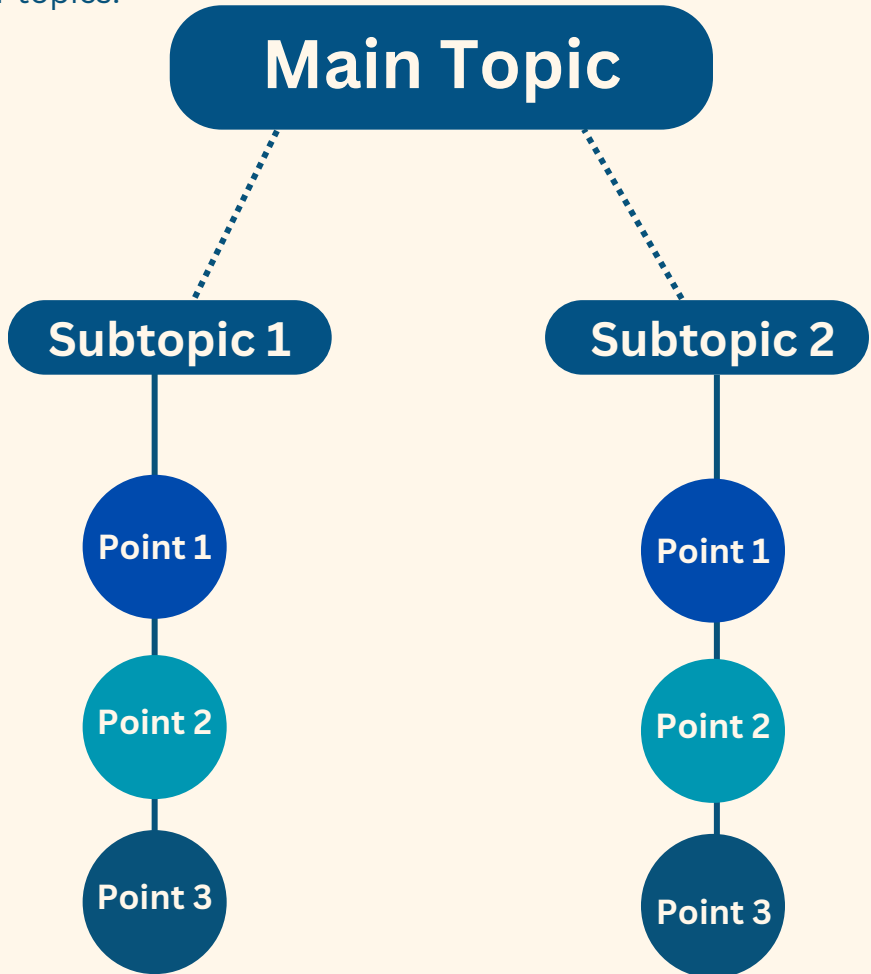
Cue:

Notes:

Summary:

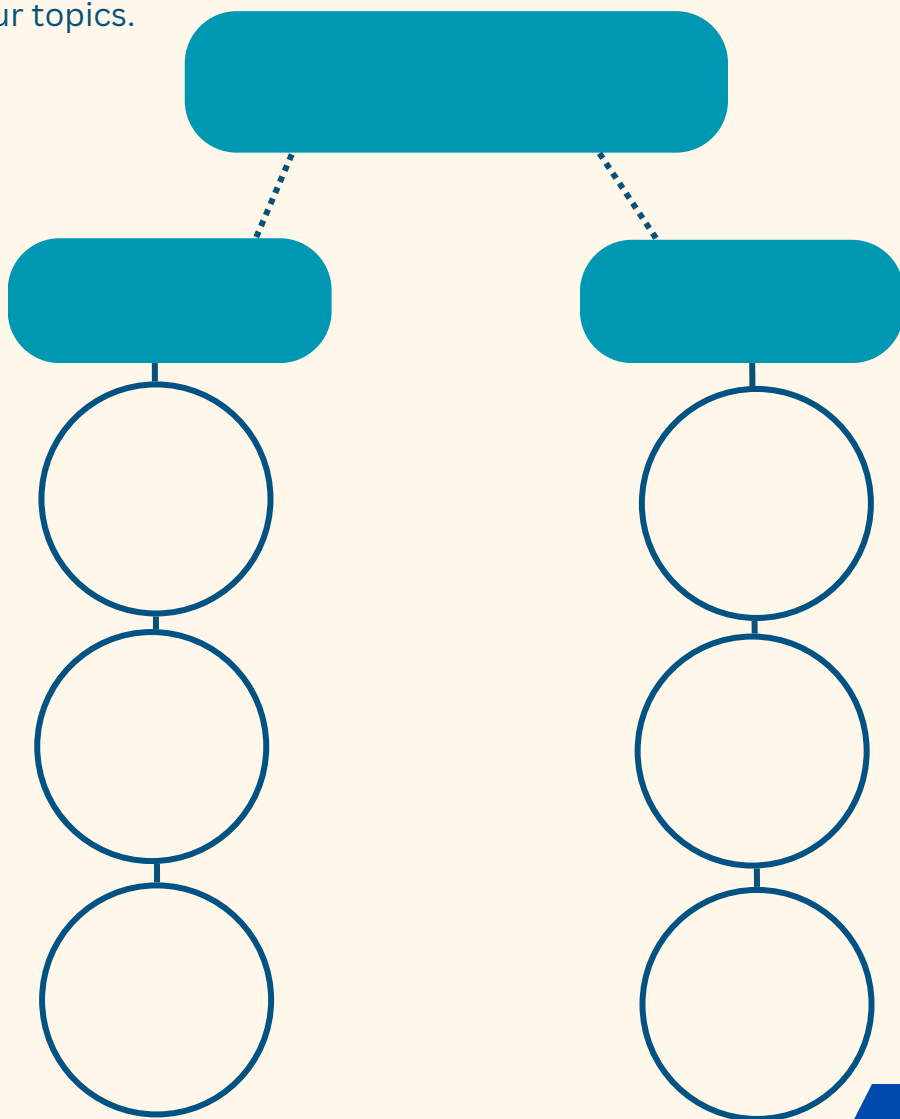
Mapping Method

The Mapping Method is a more visual way to record and organise your notes. It can also help to establish a connection between your topics.



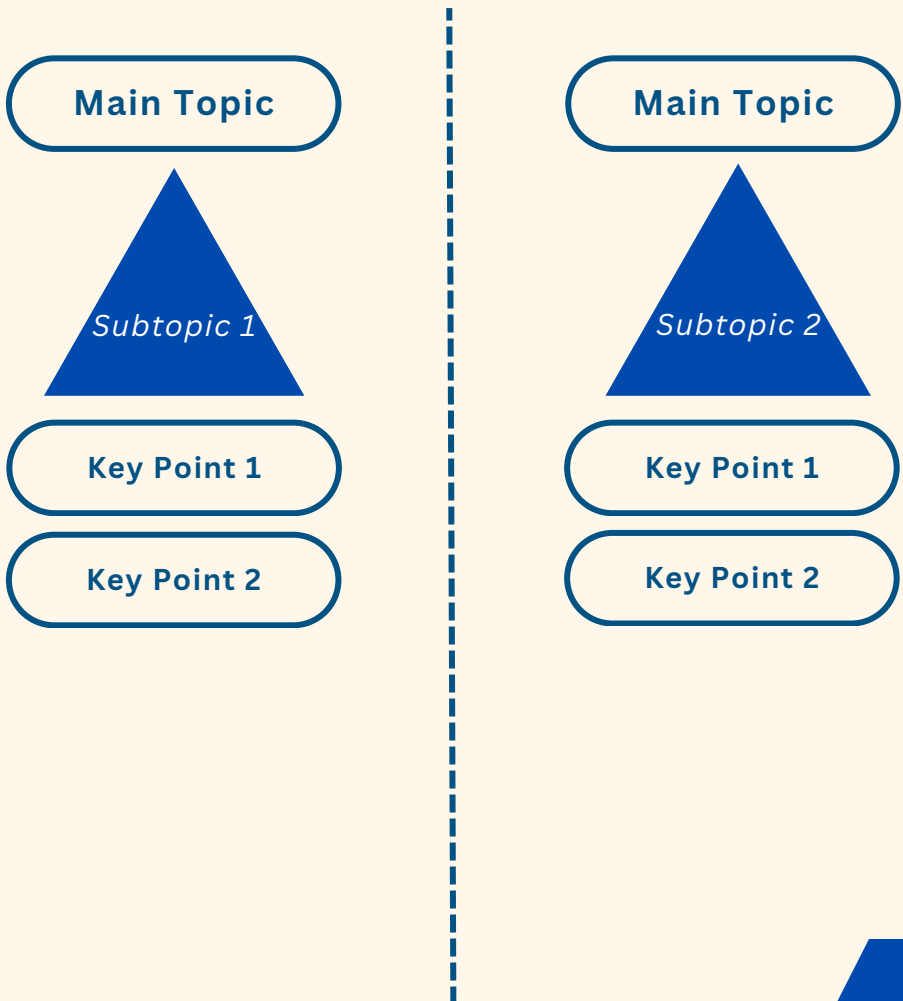
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The Mapping Method is a more visual way to record and organise your notes. It can also help to establish a connection between your topics.



Outlining Method

The Outlining Method is useful when taking notes on topics that have a lot of detail. This template can help to identify relationships between topics and support you to turn your points into study questions.



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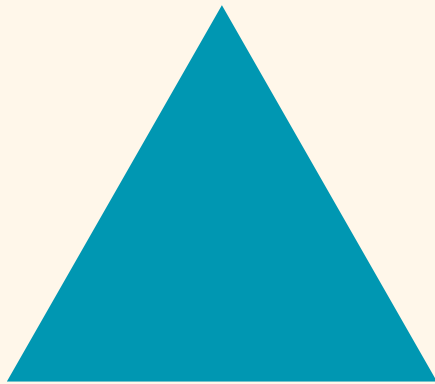
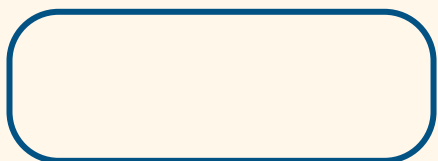
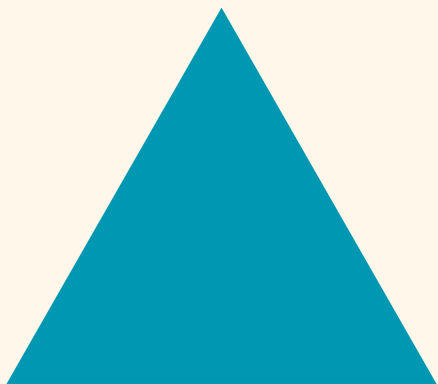
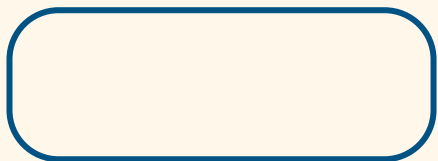


Chart Method

The Chart Method is useful when there are various topics and lots of facts involved. Using the chart template can help to highlight key information quickly whilst demonstrating the relationship between the information.

Topic 1	Topic 2	Topic 3
Point 1	Point 1	Point 1
Point 2	Point 2	Point 2
Point 3	Point 3	Point 3

Chart Method

The Chart Method is useful when there are various topics and lots of facts involved. Using the chart template can help to highlight key information quickly whilst demonstrating the relationship between the information.

Topic 1	Topic 2	Topic 3

Sentence Method

The Sentence Method is a good technique for lectures that are fast-paced and contain lots of information. This technique involves putting your information into a short sentences. Section titles/headers can be used for further organisation.

Sentence 1 - title/header

Summarise your information into a short sentence which gives context and demonstrates relevance to your topic/brief.

Sentence 2 - title/header

Summarise your information into a short sentence which gives context and demonstrates relevance to your topic/brief.

Sentence 3 - title/header

Summarise your information into a short sentence which gives context and demonstrates relevance to your topic/brief.

Sentence Method

Use the template below in your next lecture to see how much information you can capture

Sentence 1: _____

Sentence 2: _____

Sentence 3: _____

Abbreviations

Using abbreviations can be very helpful when it comes to effective note taking. Abbreviations can help you to take quicker and better organised notes. Well-chosen symbols and short-hand can also enhance clarity and help you to establish relationships.

1. **e.g.** - For example
2. **i.e.** - That is
3. **etc.** - Et cetera (and so on)
4. **vs.** - Versus
5. **w/ or w/o** - With or without
6. **&** - And
7. **@** - At (useful for email addresses)
8. **b/c** - Because
9. **info** - Information
10. **gov** - Government
11. **dept** - Department
12. **edu** - Education
13. **biz** - Business
14. **mgmt** - Management
15. **conf** - Conference
16. **wkshp** - Workshop
17. **yr** - Year
19. **wk** - Week
20. **pt** - Part
21. **app** - Application
22. **sec** - Section
23. **ch** - Chapter
24. **fig** - Figure
25. **ex** - Example
26. **ptn** - Pattern
27. **req** - Request
28. **ans** - Answer
29. **prob** - Problem
30. **sol** - Solution
31. **opp** - Opportunity
32. **info** - Information
33. **stats** - Statistics
34. **def** - Definition
35. **var** - Variable
36. **exp** - Experiment

Top Tips

- 1)** Avoid writing every word! The basic principle of good note-taking is being able to summarise information that you can use later.
- 2)** Decide what is important, listen/look out for key phrases from your lecture for example “the most important factor is...” this phrase is like a signpost directing you to an important fact/information.
- 3)** Be an active listener/reader, this is extremely important as it helps you to avoid drifting off and losing the thread of the lecture or written argument.
- 4)** Use symbols and abbreviations when you take notes as you will not have enough time to write everything down within your lecture.
- 5)** Use colours for extra clarification, this will allow you to show different themes and approaches, it is very useful when revising for exams or report writing.

Top Tips

- 6)** Revise your notes as soon as possible, this will allow you to re-write them in more detail which will stay in your memory longer.
- 7)** Be consistent, if you're in a lecture that is an hour long don't just stop writing your notes after 10 minutes. Try and pace yourself and gather information consistently throughout the lecture
- 8)** Improve your handwriting when note-taking as there is nothing worse than unreadable notes!
- 9)** Don't worry about spelling and grammar as achieving perfection is not important at this stage, gather and record information you can always correct spelling later.
- 10)** Avoid plagiarism and use paraphrasing instead, it is important that you don't not use someone else's words as your own. In note-taking make sure you paraphrase (put a passage or sentence into your own words).

A final note

This guide has provided you with guidance on how to elevate your note-taking abilities. You should trial each method included in this guide to determine which best suits your learning needs.

Effective note-taking is a fundamental skill that can significantly enhance your learning and information retention. By capturing main ideas, using a structured format, actively engaging with the material, being selective in your note-taking, and regularly reviewing and revising your notes, you can create a powerful tool for organising and retaining knowledge. Whether you're a student, professional, or lifelong learner, mastering the art of note-taking will empower you to better understand, remember, and apply the information you encounter in your studies and daily life.

Remember that effective note-taking is a skill that can be developed and refined over time. Experiment with different techniques and formats to find what works best for you and the specific context in which you're taking notes.

A final note

If after working through this booklet you are still unsure about how to take notes effectively, please do not hesitate to contact our Student Engagement Officer who can offer additional advice and guidance to build your confidence and skill-set.

- You can contact us via our central email - **studyskills@ucenmanchester.ac.uk**
- One-to-one appointments are available through **Microsoft Bookings**.
- See the digital screens at your campus for drop-in session information

Have your say.

Your input is invaluable in helping us to enhance the Study Skills package we provide. Your honest responses will enable us to identify areas of improvement and tailor our approach to better support your learning journey. After you have completed this booklet, please take 5 minutes to let us know what you thought! You can do this by scanning the QR code below!



