



KINGS NORTON
GIRLS' SCHOOL & SIXTH FORM

NOTE-TAKING

EFFECTIVE NOTE-TAKING

Effective note-taking is an important practice to master. It helps you to engage purposefully and creatively with the many challenges of learning: keeping your mind active and bridging the gap between your own thoughts and the subject you are studying. There is no 'right' way of taking notes. Instead, there are a range of techniques and approaches from which you can choose to create your own style.

TOP 10 TIPS FOR NOTE-TAKING

Note-taking is a skill that we use in many walks of life: at school, university and in the world of work, so here are 10 tips on how to be an efficient and successful note-taker. These can apply equally to taking notes from someone else's verbal presentation or from a written text.

1. Don't write down every word

The whole point of note-taking is to be able to summarise information in a different, shorter form to use later. Therefore if you try to write down every word of a lesson or book then you will soon get behind and lose the thread of what is being presented to you.

2. Decide what is important

Listen/look out for key phrases such as 'the most important factor is...' which is like a large signpost directing you to the fact that a vital piece of information is coming up and instructs you to ready your pen to take a note of it.

3. Be an active listener/reader

Try to make meaning from what you are learning. Think about what you want to get out of your research before you start. Try to make connections between what you have already learnt and the topic as a whole.

4. Use colours

For extra clarification and to improve your active listening/reading techniques make sure you use different coloured inks when taking notes. You can show different themes and approaches by changing to a different colour for example.

5. Use symbols and abbreviations

When you take notes you will not have time to write in full sentences, and sometimes the information comes so thick and fast that you cannot even write full words. Develop your own set of symbols and abbreviations. Some examples are:

USEFUL COMMON SYMBOLS

& or (+)	and
+	plus, in addition to
>	greater/more
<	smaller/less than
=	is the same as/equal to
.	therefore
. .	because
w/	with

USEFUL COMMON ABBREVIATIONS

e.g	for example
i.e.	that is, that means
etc.	and the rest
NB	important, notice this
p.	page (pp. = pages)
Para.	paragraph
Ch.	chapter (Chs = chapters)
Edn	edition
Info	information
Cd	could
Wd	would
Impt	important

6. Revise your notes as soon as possible

Do not simply take your notes and then file them away and forget about them. Read over them a short time after and perhaps re-write them again, more neatly or in a different order, depending on how or why you want to use them. This will help you to use the information actively and it will stay in your memory for longer.

7. Be consistent

If you are in an hour long lesson, do not be tempted to take a lot of notes for the first 10 minutes and nothing at all for the rest of the time. Make sure you pace yourself and gather information consistently throughout the lesson.

8. Improve your handwriting

Do not be so immersed in note taking that you forgot to notice that your handwriting has become unreadable!

9. Spelling and grammar is not so important (as long as your key words/technical words are spelt correctly)!

This is the one time when no one is going to blame you for a few spelling and grammar mistakes, rather, focus on the gathering and recording of information.

10. How to avoid plagiarism and use paraphrasing instead

This is an issue especially when taking notes from written texts. Do not copy down material from another source without putting it in quotation marks and noting its origin. If you do not want to use someone else's words, while you are note-taking make sure you paraphrase (i.e. put a passage into your own words). If you do this at the note-taking stage, there can be no confusion later on.

THE FIVE Rs OF NOTE-TAKING

Here is an easy way to remember the most important points of note-taking:

RECORD: During the lesson, write all meaningful information legibly.

REDUCE: After the lesson, write a summary of the ideas and facts using key words as cue words.

RECITE: Recite all the information in your own words without looking at your notes or the text.

REFLECT: Think about your own opinions and ideas. Raise questions and record your own ideas and thoughts.

REVIEW: Before attending the next lesson or reading new material on the subject, take 10 minutes to review your older notes. Skim over the main ideas and details.