

Note-Making

1. Why make notes?
2. Do's and don'ts of note-making
3. Methods of note-making
4. Making the most of your notes

1. **Why make notes?**

Notes are a permanent record of information that will help you prepare for seminars, presentations, assignments and examinations.

Note-making helps you concentrate on what you are reading, watching or hearing; it helps you to understand new information and new ideas; noting things down in your own words helps to place them in your long-term memory.

Effective note-making is a key academic skill; it is invaluable in helping you avoid plagiarism and study more efficiently.

2.

Do

- * Be consistent – use a similar format each time you take notes.
- * Use a loose leaf approach that allows you to insert/arrange additional material.
- * Always record your sources – date, subject, lecturer, title, author, page no. etc.
- * Write on one side only.
- * Use “speech marks” or a ~~different coloured~~ pen to identify direct quotations.
- * Use abbreviations – but only if you'll remember what they stand for!
- * Keep separate notebooks/binders/folders for each course – don't muddle them.
- * Use colour, shape, dotted lines, to highlight, link, group ideas.

Don't

- * Copy word for word – note down what you think are the key points.
- * Use 'pocket' notepads; give yourself room to spread out your writing and ideas.
- * Rely on PowerPoint handouts – make your own notes as well.
- * Worry if you miss something – aim to get the big picture rather than all the detail.
- * Consider any examples too obvious – note them down.
- * Write down more than you would want to read again.

3. **Methods of note-making**

There are a number of different ways in which you can make notes, and each has its advantages and disadvantages. There's no right or wrong way to make notes, but, as above, there is good and bad practice. So it's worthwhile experimenting with a number of different styles to see which work best for you and are best for the subject you're studying, and the activity you're engaged in – lectures, reading, revising, preparing an assignment, etc. Alternatively, you might choose to create different styles of your own, using the best features of the methods described below:

Linear notes

What is Critical thinking?

1. Discoment - to perceive difference, to distinguish
2. Analysis - to reduce to smaller parts to understand
3. Evaluation - to determine values against a set of standards

It's a form of Judgement (purposeful reflective)
It's about judging what to accept as a reliable explanation for material phenomena (realities)
It's about judging what to accept as descriptions of material phenomena (realities)
It's Challenging information you are given in a constructive manner
It's Weighing up evidence for (and against)

It includes :-

- Standing back - identifying bias
- Examining from different perspectives
- Checking accuracy
- Checking logic
- Identifying flaws in reasoning
- Identifying literary/statistical devices
- Asking questions / problematising

Advantages

- Simple and familiar approach.
- Good for listing information.
- Good for detail

Limitations

- Order tends to follow the source.
- Difficult to go back and insert additional information.
- Repetitive format.
- Poor at conceptual/big picture level.
- Can reduce complex issues to lists and bullet-points.

Keyword notes

METHOD STUDY

* Examines the way a task is done - operational efficiency
* Involves - observation, data collection, analysis.

SREDIM (acronym)

1. Select the task to study
on basis of Safety issues, Capacity probs., idle time, quality probs., etc.
2. Record the facts about the task
observation, interview, experience, process charts, timing diagrams, etc.
3. Examine the facts
What's being done, why, by whom, when, where
How, How else, who else, etc.
4. Develop a new method
Brainstorm, investigate possibilities, feasibility, reliability, Costs, etc.
5. Implement the new method
Staff consultation, training, planning & resourcing, budget, etc.
6. Maintain It
Commitment to change, monitoring of performance - fire fighting team.

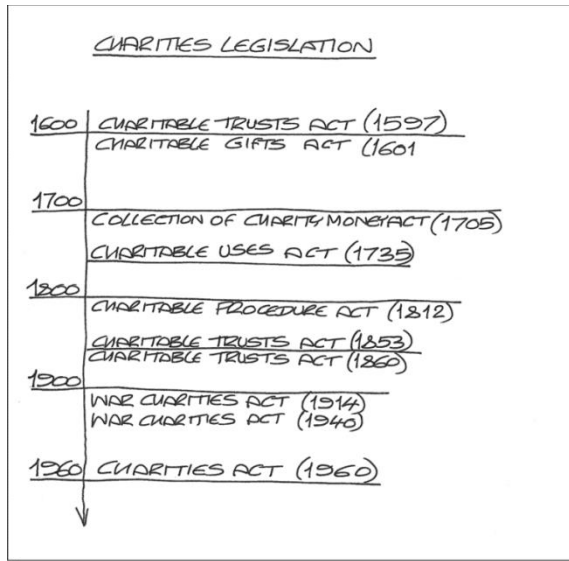
Advantages

- Presents information in a clear and simple manner.
- Good for organising information into categories and hierarchies.
- Good for structuring information into a memorisable format.

Limitations

- Can segregate information in an artificial manner.
- Can reduce complex issues to lists and bullet-points.
- Only works with certain forms of information.

Time lines



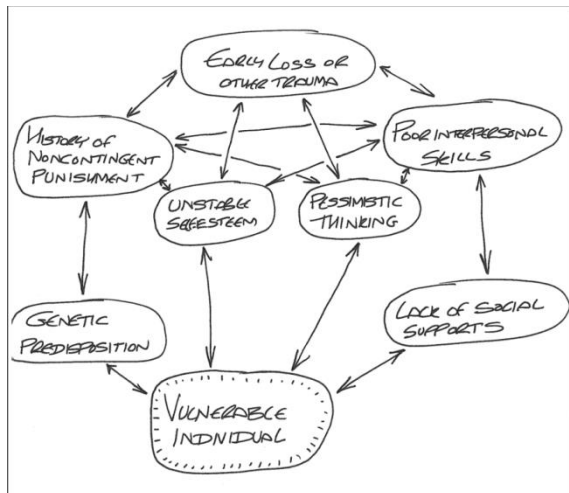
Advantages

- Good for clarifying the sequence of complex events/ideas/etc.
- Clear, simple and logical.
- Good for structuring information into a memorisable format.

Limitations

- Limited space for detailed information.
- Can over-simplify a more complex picture.
- Can tend towards teleology.

Flow-chart notes



Advantages

- Presents complex processes/interactions in a simple, easy to understand manner.
- Can reduce large volume of text to simple graphics.
- More memorable and differentiated than plain text.
- Generates processed information.

Limitations

- Can be time consuming to construct.
- May require more than one go to get right.

Matrix/grid notes

<u>CHILDHOOD OBESITY</u>		
	CONTRIBUTING FACTORS	COUNTERACTING FACTORS
LIFESTYLE	TELEVISION-COMPUTERS SEDENTARY ACTIVITIES UNSUPERVISED LEISURE TIME.	NINTENDO Wii! REASONING OF COMPUTER TIME TV WATCHING
DIET	CONSTANT SNACKING JUNK FOOD ADDITIVES LACK OF FRESH FOOD - FRUIT & VEG.	DIET OPTIONS HEALTHY OPTION FOOD FOOD PACKAGING
EXERCISE	WATCH RATHER THAN TAKE PART. LACK OF SCHOOL SPORTS. OVER-PROTECTED FROM OUTDOOR 'FREE-PLAY'.	ACCESS TO SPORT OUTSIDE OF SCHOOL. ACCESS TO RANGE OF ACTIVITIES BEYOND NORMING RANGE OF SPORTS - CLIMBING, SKATEBOARDING, ETC.
FAMILY	PARENTS OVEREAT INSTANT FOOD FOOD AS A REWARD INACTIVE PARENTS	FAMILY-BASED OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES. DIETARY INFORMATION HEALTH INFORMATION

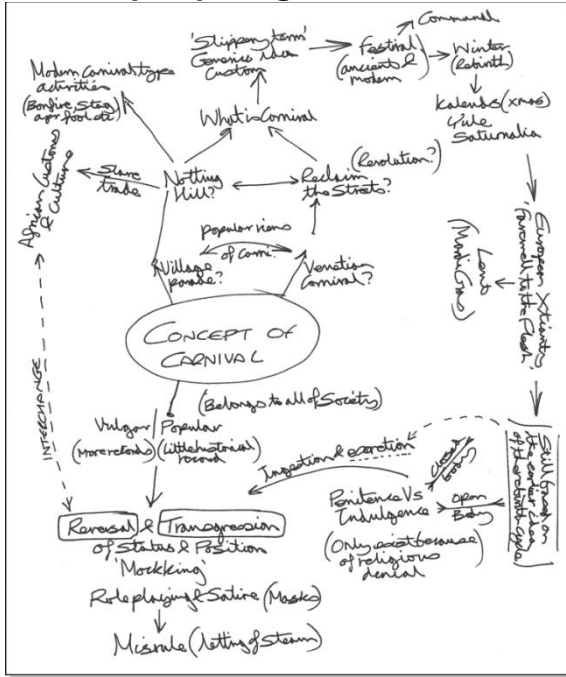
Advantages

- Clarity
- Good for understanding a topic thematically.
- Good for deconstructing complex information.

Limitations

- Danger of categorising complex information in overly simple -ve/ +ve terms.
- Space content for information.

Mind maps/spidergrams



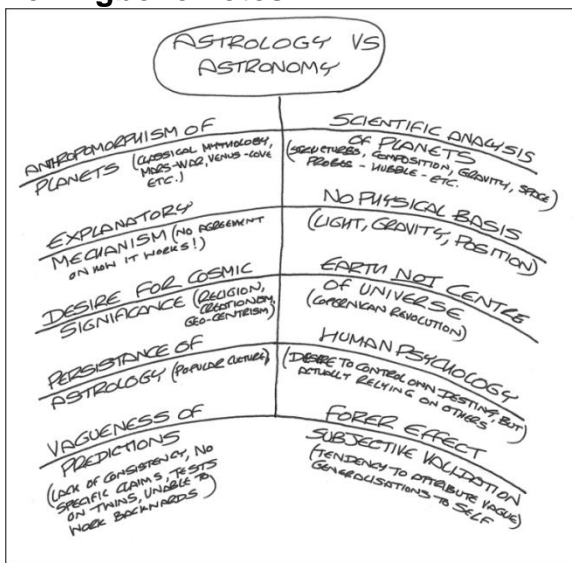
Advantages

- Generates processed information.
- Highly personalised.
- 'Whole brain' activity.
- Can reduce large volume of text to simple graphics.
- Easy to arrange and link information.
- Good for showing connections/ big picture.
- More engaging than copying.

Limitations

- Can become messy/confused.
- Requires practice.

Herringbone notes



Advantages

- Clarity.
- Good for compare/contrast type approaches to a topic.
- Good for setting out arguments/ opposing viewpoints.

Limitations

- Danger of categorising complex information in overly simple -ve/ +ve terms.
- Space content for information.

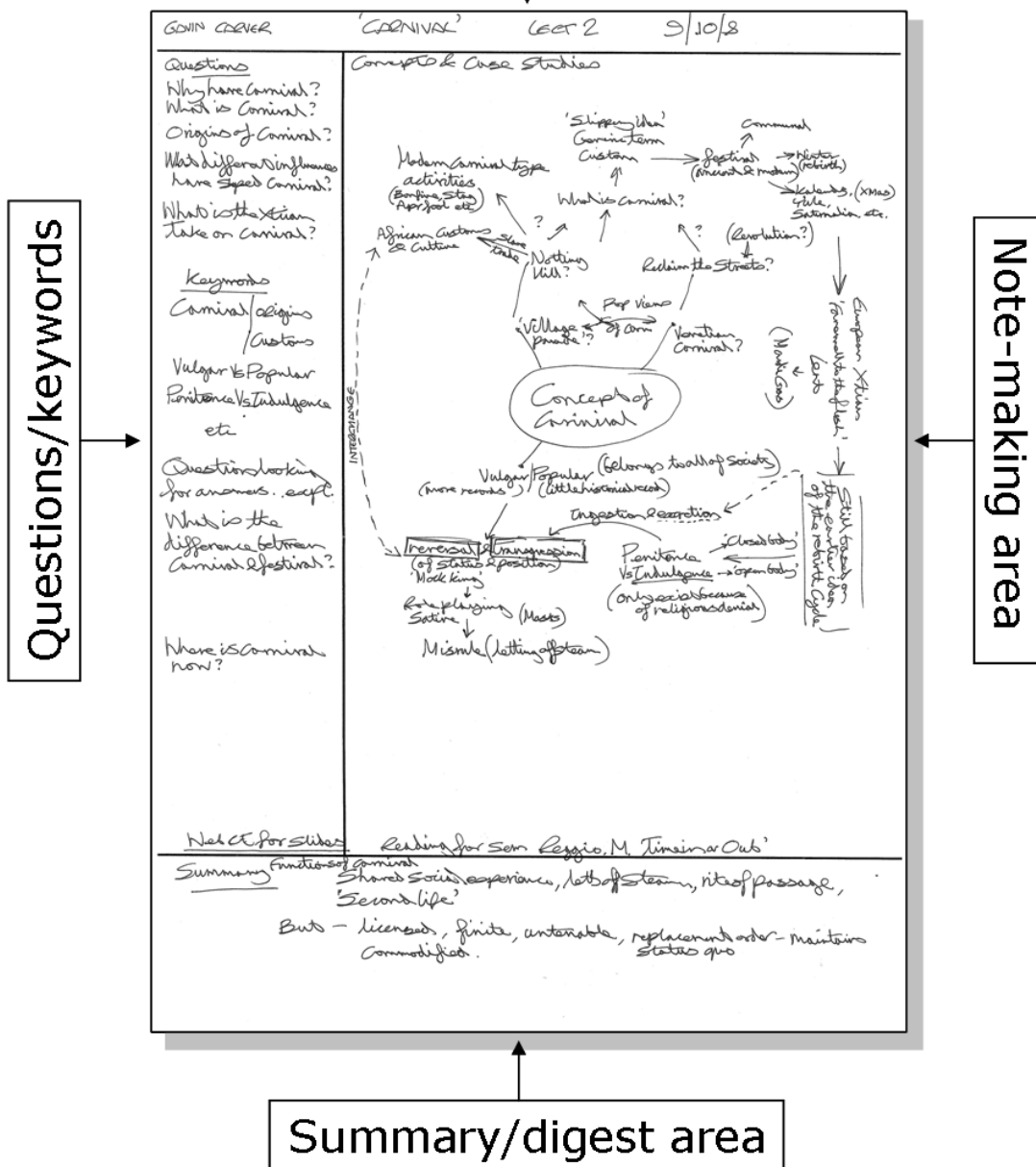
4. Making the most of your notes

To make your notes an effective resource, spend some additional time processing the information you have collected while it's still fresh in your mind; annotate, summarise, identify keywords, themes and topics – record questions that the notes address or raise. Making your notes meaningful now ensures that they will still be meaningful in weeks, months, even years time. If you just 'file and forget' your notes, they'll be of little value to you in the future.

One method that encourages you to make the most of your notes is the **Cornell** approach (see overleaf). This promotes reflection, consistency and accurate record keeping, without stifling creativity since any style of note making can be used within the pro-forma:

Cornell notes

Record keeping details



The note-making and record keeping areas are filled-in during the note-making activity time, and the summary/digest and questions/keywords areas completed later on during reflection. (NB. use A3 size paper to ensure sufficient space for recording information; if this isn't enough room, then you're probably noting down too much information.)