Making notes during research – single method

Introduction

Whilst researching an assignment it is advisable to make notes about the information you read. This resource outlines what to include when making notes about sources that you have read.

Benefits of note taking

Note taking will allow you to:

- Organise and structure your ideas
- See trends in what different authors have found / said
- Avoid accidental plagiarism
- Ensure that you address all aspects of your assignment brief
- Monitor how much information you have collected about each aspect of your assignment brief
- Become more confident when summarising / paraphrasing information
- Plan out your assignment
- Write your first assignment draft

Note taking will reduce the likelihood of you:

- Needing to unnecessarily re-read material
- Forgetting where you originally found a piece of information
- Missing out important information in your assignment

Learning **Resources**

What to include in your notes

When creating notes it is advisable to record:

Reference	Formatted in accordance with your departmental referencing guidelines
Where the source was found*	For instance, using a specific database / library catalogue / on the internet
Keywords*	The search terms that you used in order to find the source
Summary of content	The main findings or conclusions / assertions made in the source. Whenever possible this should be written in your own words. Summary length could vary between several paragraphs to a single sentence. It worth remembering that the more detailed your summaries are, the easier it will be to develop your notes into paragraphs for use within an assignment.
Context	It is essential to record the context within which the information was originally presented. For example, research design (how was data collected and analysed? What was the sample composition?), limitations (such as sample size / validity / reliability) or possible bias (such as author's political allegiance). Including contextual information will help you to understand why author may have said the same / different things. This will assist you in showing analysis / evaluation of material when writing your assignment
Selected quotations	It can be useful to record / list quotations from a source that you think could be used in your assignment. In your notes it is advisable to use a different font / colour when quoting to remind yourself that quotation referencing conventions need to be followed should the quote be used.
Your ideas about source usefulness	Record of your thoughts about each source in terms of how it may be used in your assignment / relates to other material that you have read. This is <u>essential</u> in terms of adopting evolution / analysis in your writing.

* Not essential unless you are undertaking a systematic literature review - but this information will help you to avoid unnecessarily repeating searches

Learning|**Resources**

Structuring your notes

There are many different ways that you could structure your notes. Two suggested approaches are the 'single source method' or the 'themed notes method' - outlined in separate help sheets.

Further information

The Learning Resources Study Hub provides a range of opportunities (such as workshops and drop-ins) for you to enhance your academic skills. For more information visit: **lrweb.beds.ac.uk/studyhub**

Learning|**Resources**