



# Single source method of making notes

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## Introduction

In the early stages of your university career, you might consult between five and ten sources when writing an assignment. In such instances you could make notes about each source that you have read on a separate piece of paper and then cross reference. This style of note taking could be undertaken using pen and paper or on a computer.

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## How to create notes using the single source method

1. Prior to creating your notes you need to:
  - a. Read through your assignment question and associated guidelines and identify the topics you need to research.
  - b. Start to search for sources related to each of the topics.
2. Once you have found a relevant source, on a piece of paper / in a word processing document record the following:
  - a) *Full source reference*
  - b) *Where you found the source (e.g. journal database / library catalogue)*
  - c) *What search terms you used to find the source*
  - d) *Paraphrase / summarise what the author said about your topics of interest (use your own words)*
  - e) *Any useful quotations*

f) *Your thoughts about how the source could be use / relates to other material you have read*

3. Repeat step 2 for other sources you read (only make notes about one source on each piece of paper).

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## **Please note**

- It is advisable to start each paraphrase / summary in your notes with a reference (for example, Jones (2013) found..... ).
- It is advisable to start each quotation in your notes with a reference (for instance, King, (2013, p.l56) stated “.....”) and format this in a different font colour – this will remind you to double check your reference formatting should you use the quotation in your assignment.

## **Example**

Notes made using the single source method could be formatted as follows:

<i>Full reference</i>
<i>Where the source was found</i>
<i>Key words used to find the source</i>
Summary in own words
Summary in own words

Summary in own words
Summary in own words
<b>“Quotation” (p. X)</b>
<b>“Quotation” ( p.X)</b>
Thoughts about how the source could be use

## Worked example

1) Imagine you were set the following assignment question:

***“Critically evaluate how academic skills can be best taught within a university”.***

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2) There would be three main areas that need to be researched:

- a) *Definition of academic skills*
  - b) *Ways of teaching academic skills in a university*
  - c) *Evaluation of academic skills teaching*
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3) The following are an example of single source notes created for one relevant article that was read.

**Sweeney, D. (2013) *How to teach study skills*. London: Publish House.**

Book - available in the University library (class mark 999.99SWE)

Search terms – note taking / university

- 1) Sweeney (2013, p.4) stated that “writing, note taking, reading, researching, referencing, mathematics and ICT – are all academic skills”. Note: I think these are also called ‘essential skills’ or ‘study skills’.
- 2) Student respond well to academic skills delivered through lectures. However, the larger the group the harder it is to ascertain whether students have learned concepts that have been discussed.
- 2) 1:1 delivery is most popular amongst the vast majority of students. Note: The same finding was outlined in King (2009 – see other set of notes)
- 3) Academic skills teaching can assist students to enhance their grades, improve motivation / confidence and transferable skills that are valued by employers.
- 4) Sweeny (2013, p.23) stated that “social media represents an exciting means of interacting with students in relation to academic skills teaching”. Not sure how best to use this information but seems useful.

#### **How information might be used:**

- 1) Use when defining the term ‘academic skills’
- 2) Use when outlining different ways of teaching
- 3) Use when addressing evaluation of academic skills teaching
- 4) Other

## Summary

There are many ways to format your notes during research. You may therefore wish to experiment and adapt the single source method to suit your own purposes.

For example, you might:

- Use headings and subheadings to structure each set of notes
- Mix quotations and paragraphing - rather than keep these separate
- Add your thoughts about how sources could be used at the end of each summary rather than at the end of the document

You could also consider using other presentation options such as mind maps or tables. Likewise, you might use different colour fonts / highlighters to categorise specific areas of interest. It is however, essential to find and adopt a style of note taking with which you feel comfortable.

It is also important remember that when you transfer information from your notes into an assignment you must ensure that you always include the appropriate reference (both in text and in the reference list).

If you intend to use more than ten sources in your assignment you should consider using the themed notes method – detailed in a separate Professional and Academic Development How to - resource.

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### 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](http://lrweb.beds.ac.uk/studyhub)**

