



Creating revision notes

Introduction

Making sure you are well prepared for an exam is the best way to maximise success. Part of the preparation process will involve creating revision notes that cover topics that will be addressed in your exams.

Note taking

You should create notes throughout an academic term – for example, during lectures or whilst undertaking additional reading. These notes should provide a summary of points that have been addressed in a unit and will form the basis for your revision.

Ways of making notes

There are a number of different ways that you can create revision notes. Certain methods are more appropriate for illustrating different things, so you might want to use a mixture of formats in a single set of notes.

List notes

The most common note taking format is a list. This involves writing down the main points that you have read in a textbook / have been told in a lecture as a series of short sentences or bullet points. The following are some key things to include when making list based notes:

- Overview of key points
- Correct spelling of authors' surnames
- Correct names of key models / theories
- Correct date of key models / theories
- Lecturers' own opinions
- Whether a model / theory is well supported

Remember, you should not aim to write down everything in your notes. Rather, your notes should act as a prompt (i.e. there is enough information to remind you about what was covered and what were the main ideas). As long as you have covered the main points, you can always refer to a textbook if you need more detail about anything that was addressed.

PowerPoint handouts and making notes

When students are given a set of PowerPoint slides, they commonly make their notes directly on to the handout. This can quickly become very messy and make it very difficult to use the notes during your revision. The following outlines an alternative endnote strategy:

- A) Number (1, 2, 3 etc) each PowerPoint slide where you want to make additional notes
 - B) On a separate piece of paper write the corresponding number and next to it write up your additional notes
 - C) At the end of the session staple the piece of paper with your hand written notes to the end of the handout that you were given
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Table notes

Table based notes are very useful when you want to make comparisons between different pieces of information (such as theories). What you include in table notes will depend upon the purpose of your revision. The following example shows how table notes can be used to compare a number of theories about the same topic:

Author	Date	Theory	Description of Theory
Jones, L.	2000	Theory X	This theory suggests....
King, H.	2010	Theory Y	This theory suggests....

The size of your table will depend upon what you are revising. For instance, you could add additional columns such as: Who else has supported the theory? Was the author a prominent figure in a theoretical movement – if so, which one?

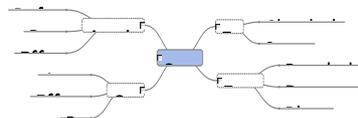
Mind maps

Mind maps are useful in terms of identifying connections between different sources of information. It is useful to create mind maps (or spider diagrams) that summarises each of your main revision topics. For example, create and then review mind maps that summarise each of your lecture topics. The process of thinking about and reorganising the material in this way increases memory and understanding of the information.

How to create a Mind map

- A) Write your main topic in the centre of your page
- B) Write down key areas linked to the main topic (around the main topic) and join these to the main topic using branches
- C) Write down factors that are relevant to key areas and use branches to expand

Example:



There are software packages available (as used in the above example) on the computers in the University Learning Resource Centres and Libraries (such as Inspiration and Mind Genius) that you can use to create electronic mind maps.

Compilation notes for revision purposes

Compiling notes involves creating one new set of notes out of several other set of notes. When creating revision notes it can be useful to 'compile' information that you had originally made notes about on separate occasions. For instance, you could create compiled notes by linking together notes you created in a lecture and notes you made whilst undertaking additional reading.

Things to consider when creating revision notes

These are some important things to consider when making notes:

- **Be selective** - Do not copy out large chunks of text and include these in your notes – this will not help you to learn the information. Likewise, it is not a good use of your time – you might as well just reread the original source.
- **Structure** - Consider using headings and subheadings to breakdown which parts of your notes address different aspects of a topic.
- **Highlight key areas** - Selectively use highlighters or coloured pens to identify key parts of your notes. However, do not use highlighting feature excessively because this will make it difficult to identify the highlighted parts that are most important.
- **Clear and legible** - Whenever you write notes, it is crucial that you lay them out so that they are clear and easy to read. Therefore, when writing notes take your time and think about how you are formatting and laying them out.
- **Note your questions** –Note any questions that you have whilst undertaking your revision. This will allow you to identify gaps in your knowledge and structure revision.

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

