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DEVELOPMENT

m Note ~~/~~ taking in lectures



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Should we take notes or make them?


Is it possible to take down everything that's said anyway?

Or is it better to make useful notes?

Why bother?

- What should you do in a lecture?
- What kind of notes do you need?

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If you can download the lecture slides beforehand, check them later or make an audio recording in a lecture, then why would you bother to make your own notes during a lecture? Shouldn't you just sit back?

What should you do in a lecture?
What kind of notes do you need?

NB: Students are normally permitted to audio record lectures using their own equipment for their own personal learning subject to certain conditions. For further information see the University of Edinburgh Accessible and Inclusive Learning Policy (2013)
http://www.docs.sasg.ed.ac.uk/AcademicServices/Policies/Accessible_and_Inclusive_Learning_Policy.pdf

Why bother?

- Making notes keeps you actively involved
 - Making notes helps to keep you on track
 - Your notes are personalised
 - As a way of summarising the course content
 - For assignments and for exam revision
-
- **Because we forget...**



It is important to take charge of your own learning and consciously make the effort to understand during the lecture. Otherwise there is a danger you might simply let the lecture wash over you.

Active note making helps us to remember



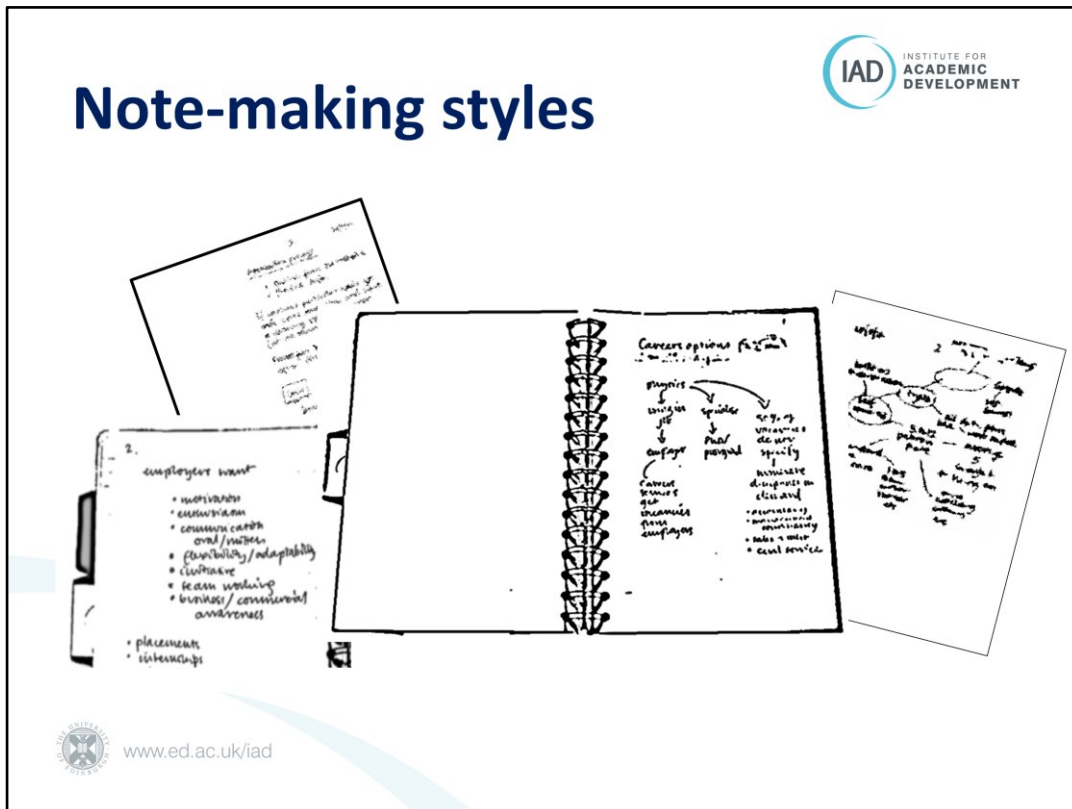
“Generally speaking, the more deeply information is processed at the encoding stage, the better it is remembered. This finding, replicated in countless psychological experiments, has become known as the ‘levels of processing’ effect.”

Charles Fernyhough (2012) **Pieces of Light: The new science of memory**. Profile Books, London, page 92.



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The more you engage with the content of a lecture before, during and after the lecture, the more likely you are to be able to recall it, understand it and make use of it when you need it.




These are suggestions to try out. Note making is a personal business and you get better with practice.

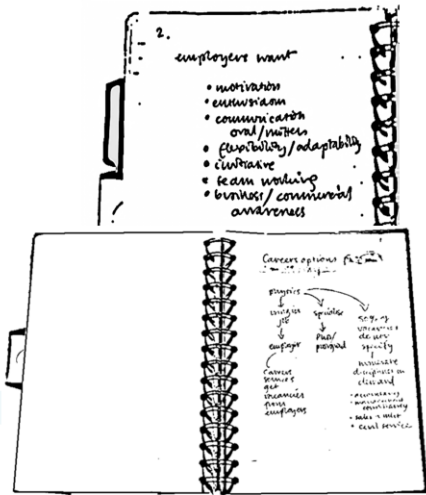
All sorts of formats can be used to make notes. You will develop your own styles for different purposes (and different lecturers).

Leaving some space allows you to add to them later.


(There is an IAD pdf handout on note-making styles on LearnBetter – see p15 for details of how to access this and also <http://www.ed.ac.uk/schools-departments/vet/staff-students/undergrads/study-skills/lectures/make-notes> has a copy.)

Keywords and bullet points





- Use short phrases and abbreviations.
- Note key terms, ideas, names, important texts and concepts.
- Leave spaces to add to your notes.


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Trying to make longhand linear notes where you try to write down most of what is said and put on the screen is difficult. Many students say these help you to keep with the flow of an argument in a lecture. Usually you end up with too much material and you miss key points or images because you are too busy writing everything down.

It is usually better to aim to write down keywords and phrases.

- Write down only the key terms, names or concepts mentioned in a lecture (listing).
- The key word should remind you of the rest of what you heard.
- Works well if you use lecture outlines, slides and reading lists productively and add to your notes.
- Using key words focuses attention on the main ideas, such as concepts, movements, individual authors or important texts.
- Revise and add to your notes fairly soon after.

Lecture outlines or presentation slides are often made available at least 24 hours in advance. These are valuable for preparing beforehand and for adding to notes. Key technical words and/or formulae may also be provided beforehand. Students should check course handbooks and/or the course VLE to find out how to access these materials.

Two column method

1 Create a margin a third of the way across your page (e.g. fold a crease).

Or leave the left-hand page blank in your notebook.

2 Write your notes during the lecture on the right-hand side.

3 Add value afterwards by inserting headings, definitions and your own questions.

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A two-column method is one where you leave a wide margin on the left-hand side of your notepaper and make notes during the lecture on the right-hand side.

You can draw wide margins on in advance using a ruler, but all you need to do is fold the page to create a crease about a third of a page across.

- You use the blank space afterwards to **add value** by inserting headings, definitions and your own questions.

Other variations would be to leave the left-hand page in a bound notebook blank or to use the Cornell system (a slightly more complicated version of the two-column sheet which includes a short summary section at the foot of each page of notes).

Before, during and after

- 1. Before:** Firstly tune in beforehand and avoid going into the lecture knowing nothing at all about the topic.
- 2. During:** Secondly make your notes in a way that gives you time to listen and watch.
- 3. After:** Finally **add value** to your notes.



There are three stages to making useful notes.

Firstly tune in beforehand and avoid going into the lecture knowing nothing at all about the topic.


Secondly make your notes in a way that gives you time to listen and watch.

Finally add value to your notes afterwards.

Before: Prepare and tune in

Look up the basics:

- Check the slide notes
- Revisit the previous lecture(s) in a series
- Do preparatory set readings



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Going in to a lecture 'cold' without doing any preparation makes it much harder to follow the lecture.

- Even if you haven't much time to prepare beforehand, you can still tune in by looking up the basics.
- **Check the VLE (Learn) & EEVEC:** This is where your course information is made available to you. Check for information about the lecture or lecture series and a reading list. If the lecture slide notes are available beforehand, you can skim through them and may want to print them out to take with you. Lecture outlines or presentation slides are usually made available at least 24 hours in advance. Key technical words and/or formulae may also be provided beforehand.
- Check if there are **set or recommended readings** connected to the lecture. You may not want to read these in depth before the lecture, but it can be useful to skim and scan at least one of them beforehand. The aim is to get a feel for the subject matter and familiarise yourself with the topic.

During: Follow and engage



Aim to make notes you can use rather than to write everything down.

- Pay attention to visual and aural cues and clues.
- Key points, terms, names and debates.
- Add visual prompts – underlining, question marks, arrows.



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It is very easy to get lost during a lecture. You get half of what is said down on paper and end up not knowing what it was really about. It is important to listen and watch. Lecturers will give you visual clues and auditory cues that stress and reinforce the main points. You should aim to note these main points down. (You will get better at doing this as you gain experience of lectures.)

Aim to engage during a lecture. If you have a printed set of slide lecture notes add further comments and emphasis. Note key terms and shorter phrases rather than everything that is said. There is usually no need to copy all of the information on presentation slides as these should be made available (e.g. on the Learn VLE). A recording can be useful to clarify parts of the lecture afterwards, but listening to whole lectures again can be very time consuming.

You might like to experiment with how you take notes. All methods have their advantages and disadvantages.

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After: Add value

Go through your notes soon afterwards

- Highlight key parts, terms (colour)
- Check important spellings (names, terms)
- Identify points you want to clarify or follow up
- Add definitions and clarifications



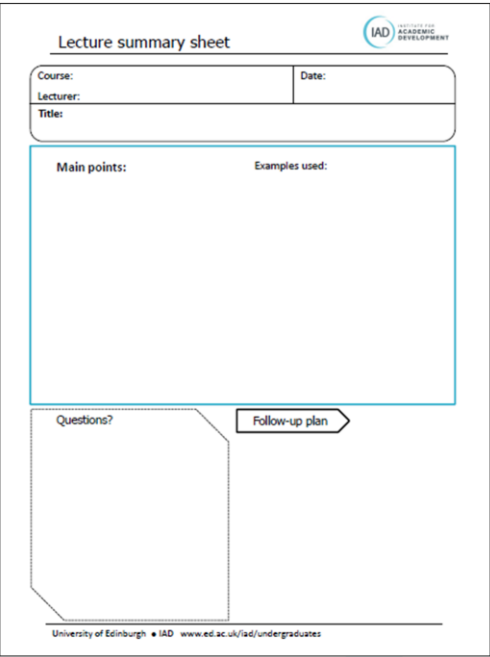
Go through your notes soon afterwards – ideally that evening or the next day.

Aim to add value – these are suggestions:

- Use a highlighter to emphasise key parts and underline key terms or in colour (you might want to develop your own code)
- Check important spellings (names, terms)
- Identify points you want to clarify or follow up
- Add definitions and clarifications from your textbooks or from key readings
- You may want to add in material (quotations, diagrams, reference to textbook).

Lecture outlines or presentation slides are usually made available at least 24 hours in advance. These are valuable for adding to your own notes. Key technical words and/or formulae may also be provided. Check course handbooks or the course VLE to find out how to access these materials.

Summary sheet



A summary sheet can help you identify:

- the main points
- evidence and arguments
- what questions you have
- what you need to do next

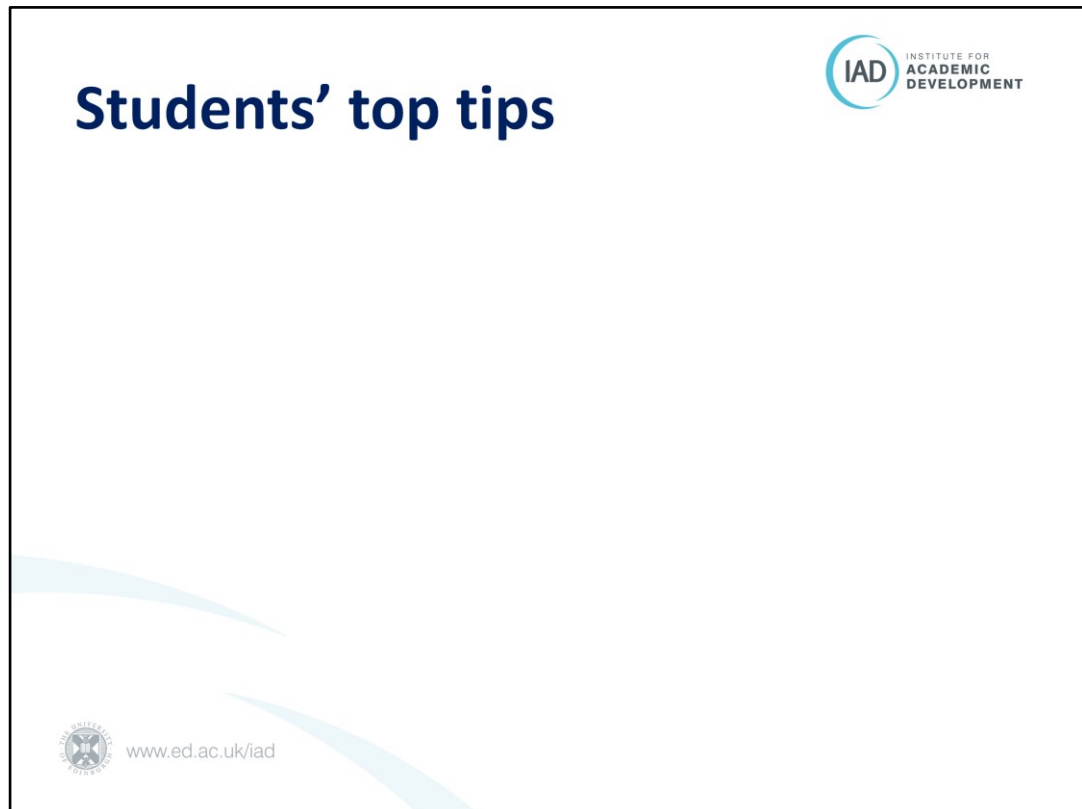
Lecture summary sheet: One way of adding value to a set of lecture notes is to attach a summary sheet. This is something that should be filled in soon after the lecture (ideally on the same day).

This might have a note of the details of the lecture, a summary of the main points, examples used and anything you need to follow up.

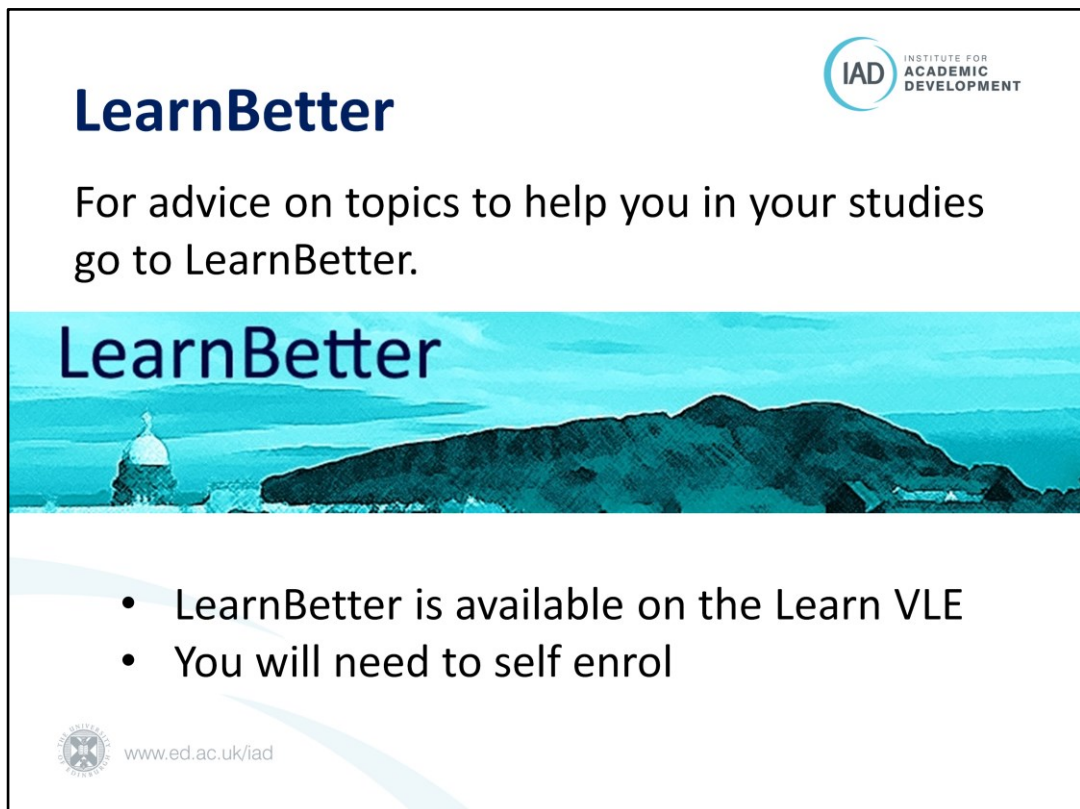
Using a summary sheet is a way of actively reflecting on what you have understood. You have to consciously make sense of the lecture and relate it to what you already know and identify what you are less sure of and need to clarify.

The summary sheet acts as a content list and is an aid to filing and ordering your notes. This makes your notes more useful because you can easily find what you are looking for, particularly when revising.

You can try the IAD version or make your own. (The IAD summary sheet can be downloaded from LearnBetter (see p15 for details of how to access LearnBetter or you can get a copy from <http://www.ed.ac.uk/schools-departments/vet/staff-students/undergrads/study-skills/lectures/make-notes.>)



One suggestion might be to have a lecture buddy – someone you can discuss a lecture with afterwards or share notes with.




LearnBetter

For advice on topics to help you in your studies
go to LearnBetter.

LearnBetter

- LearnBetter is available on the Learn VLE
- You will need to self enrol

 www.ed.ac.uk/iad

Any student (or member of staff) with access to MyEd and Learn can enrol on LearnBetter.

Users will find pdf handouts and other materials available which you can download and print off or save.