

LECTURE NOTE-TAKING METHODS

Note-taking is an important part of attending lectures. Most people can't remember everything – especially over the course of two or more hours – and, even if you have access to the slides used by your lecturer, they'll undoubtedly digress from them.

There are a number of ways to arrange your notes so that they're easier to follow when you need to look over them again, whether to write an assignment or to revise for an exam.

■ Print out the lecture slides

If you can get access to the lecturer's slides before the lecture, then print them out. With PowerPoint presentations, there's a printing option whereby you can choose a layout with lines for note-taking next to each slide, thereby providing an easy way in which to organize your notes.

Even better: *read* through the slides before you go to the lecture. Of course, this isn't always possible, but it'll give you a bit of a head start in regard to the contents if you can.

■ Outlining method

This is where you have your main point on the left hand side of the page and then indent any supporting ideas under this key concept to the right, indenting further right as the supporting ideas become increasingly minor in importance. A supplementary or alternative idea to indenting is to use dashes, bullet points or numbers.

So, you'd start with your main idea here:

This would be a supporting idea.

And so would this one.

- Then you could include a few additional points.
- If you want, you can include dashes or numbers for clarity.

You might then have another supporting idea on this level.

- Followed by another on this level.

Then, you can put your second main idea here and continue as before.

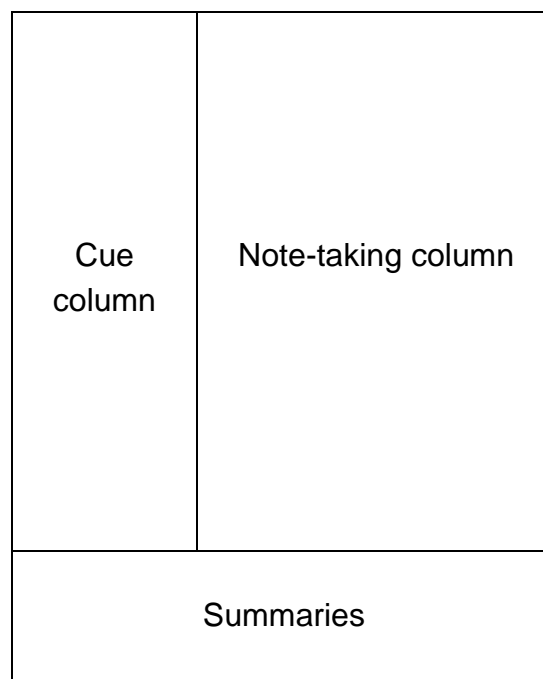
Advantages	Disadvantages
<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ This is an effective way to organize ideas (if done correctly)■ You can easily see not only the main content of the lecture, but also the main relationships between the ideas■ There's no real need to edit when reviewing	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ To organize notes in this fashion takes some thought■ If the lecturer speaks too quickly, this note-taking method isn't really effective■ Ideally, the lecture should have an outline organization, moving from point to point

■ Cornell method

This method requires a little preparation work. First, you draw a line down the left hand side of a piece of paper to create two columns, but the left column should take up only just over a quarter of the page (or 2.5 inches to be exact). The smaller, left hand column is your “cue column” in which you write key words and significant pieces of information. The larger, right hand column (which should be six inches in length) is your “note-taking column” in which you write – you guessed it! – your main notes. There’s an optional third section – the “summary area” – which appears as a row at the bottom of the page. You can keep this space free in order to jot down a few sentences explaining the main ideas behind your notes.

When you want to review your notes, you can cover up the note-taking column, then go through your cues and try and remember as much as you can about each, checking with the right hand column as you go.

So, your page would look something akin to this:



Advantages	Disadvantages
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ It’s simple to follow ■ This method provides a systematic way in which to review your notes ■ You can easily discern between your main concepts and additional information ■ You can use it in any type of lecture 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Requires a little preparation

■ Charting method

Again, you need to carry out a little prep work beforehand, not only in regard to page layout, but also in terms of knowing what the lecture will be about. For this method, you create a number of columns, each of which has a label appropriate to the lecture topic. For each category, you can then note down key words, phrases, etc. For example, say the lecture was about different types of human parasite. You might have the following columns:

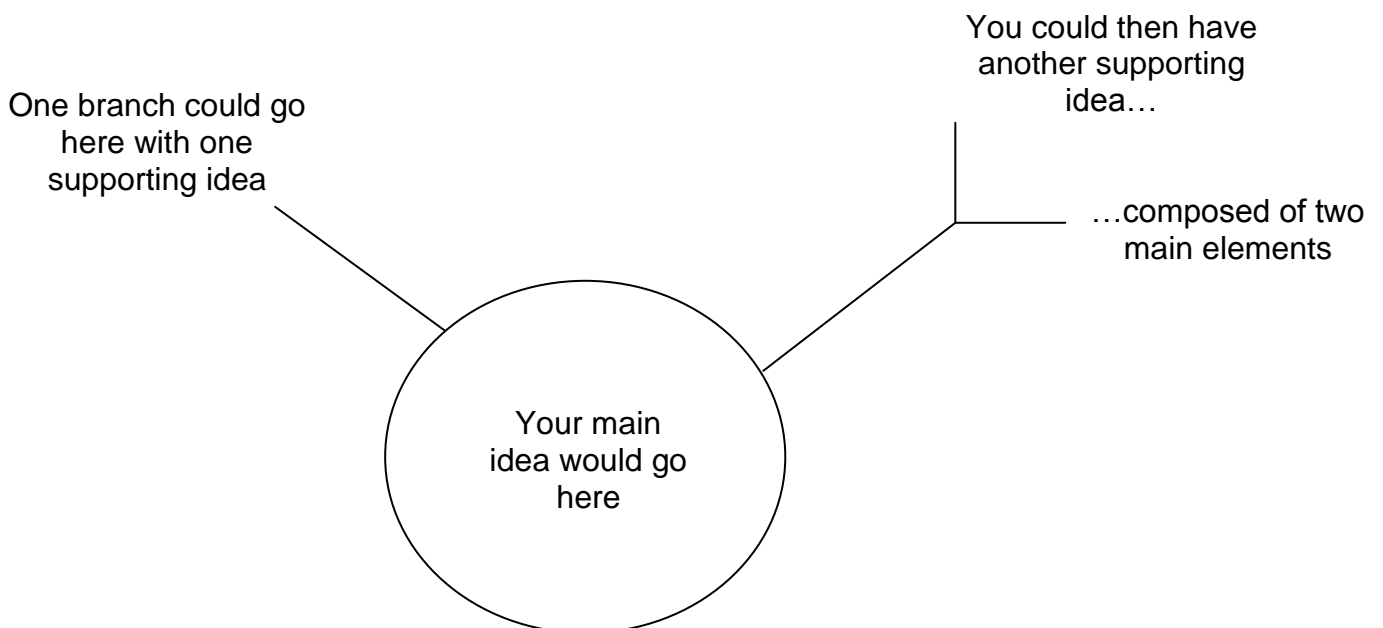
Parasite name	Type	Life cycle	Disease caused

Advantages	Disadvantages
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ It provides an simple way in which to review the information you noted down ■ You can notice different relationships and easily compare ■ It can save on writing time 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The lecture needs to be fact based ■ You need to make sure that you know exactly what the lecture is about beforehand (which isn't necessarily a negative point...)

■ Mapping method

This method is particularly effective if you're a visual learner. The main idea is written in the center of the page and then supporting ideas are added, connected to the primary concept via lines. You can also use different colors and/or numbers to link up ideas.

This system would look something like this:



Advantages	Disadvantages
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ You can keep a visual track of your lecture ■ It allows you to see relationships easily, and you can use different colors and symbols to help ■ When you review your notes, they'll make you rethink how these points fit together ■ It's good for when you're unsure of the lecture content beforehand 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The lecture needs to be well-organized

■ Sentence method

As the name implies, each time a new fact, idea or topic is introduced, you write it down on a new line, each of which you number. However, avoid writing in full sentences: you should paraphrase and use abbreviations to save time. So, for example:

- 1) 1st note here
- 2) No. next note 2
- 3) And cont. using abbrev., paraphrasing, etc.

Advantages	Disadvantages
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ You can write down basically all the information from the lecture ■ It works well for lectures where there's a lot of information and it's not clear how it relates 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ You can't tell major and minor points from each other ■ It's harder to review in this respect, and you may have to spend extra time relating points to one another

■ Reviewing your notes

Ideally, you'll review your lecture notes on the same day you took them. This will ensure that they all make sense and will be reusable at a later date. Of course, this isn't always possible. So, if not, aim to review them at least once at week. This may feel like an additional chore, but, when it comes to your exam, it'll be much easier to retain the information as you've already refreshed it once in your mind.