

# HOW TO READ AND TAKE NOTES FOR STUDY PURPOSES

*Writing any kind of assessment not only requires copious reading and also effective note taking. While there is no single way to do this, each student should aim to experiment with different methods with the aim **of perfecting their own system and then using it consistently**. Regardless of whether you read paper books and take hand-written notes or read e-books and type notes as you go, these suggestions may help you discover and then perfect your own style and system.*

## Why is note taking so important?

- Good note taking not only maximizes what you are reading and processing but it also ensures that you are not plagiarizing the work of others. It is important to know where you read certain ideas and be able to delineate between the work of others and your own thoughts.
- Note taking allows you to order your thoughts and plan your writing.

## Note taking helps you clarify why you are reading

- Note taking ensures you are actively reading. It helps you focus on identifying the reason why you are reading a particular article or book.
- If you are reading in order to answer a specific assessment question ensure you clearly understand the question being asked before you begin reading.
- If you are reading more generally then highlight or make notes in margins or e-book note systems.

## Developing a System is critical

- This most important aspect of note taking is a consistent system that works for you and is established before you start your note taking. This system should include a way to record citations and quotes as you read (Word document, Endnote etc.)
- Use shorthand so you can easily find the source of any notes you take when you need to return to quote or read further. For example, number each reading in a Bibliography or reading list and use that number in the margin of your notes with the page number (1/23 would be page 23 of reading No. 1).
- Have your individual way of indicating in your notes the difference between direct quotes, where you have paraphrased someone else's ideas and your own original thoughts and questions.
- If you are taking notes in a notebook, divide your notebook into different sections based on different parts of your assessment question. By taking notes in the appropriate sections you will have all your notes in the one place when you come to write. This will also allow you to see which topics or parts of a question you have plenty of information about and where you need to do more reading.
- Remember that sources can now include more than books and journal articles so ensure you record accurate details (including dates) or websites, podcast, lectures etc.

## Note-taking Basics

- Don't copy large amounts of text out but rather mention in your notes why it is important and how you might use it.
- Write down questions you have as you read. These will be important when you come to write critically.
- Use abbreviations for common and regularly used words
- Don't just use words. Use diagrams, mind maps or any other tools that will help you to organize your thoughts and the relationships between all that you are reading.

## Keep your Notes

- Handwritten notes should be scanned and kept for future reference using software such as Evernote. Use tags that will allow you to search topics at a later date

## Dangers

- Don't go over board with your notes – at some point you need to stop reading and start writing
- Note-taking is supposed to assist you not distract you

