

**Are your notes helping you do your exams?**

Read down through the tips offered by students who went before you and note the suggestions that you might need to act on. With the help of your Guidance Counsellor, teacher or parents, work out a plan to introduce the necessary changes to the way you take your notes.

For each item, indicate whether you currently use this method. If you do, mark the box on the left - indicating that this contributes to your study success. If not, mark the box on the right, indicating that this is moving you away from your study goals.

**I took notes as often as I could:** I took notes when reading material from textbooks and other sources for the first time. Whenever possible I took notes in class.

**I kept my notes brief but informative:** I included information and not just headings in my notes but at the same time I kept my notes very brief. I'd advise that you only include enough key words or phrases that will bring the essential information/ideas to mind. Besides, one of the main reasons for taking notes is to save time, to allow more frequent revision. This won't happen unless your notes are brief and to the point.

**I organised my notes for easy access:** I placed my notes into a ring binder folder. I was able to divide my folder up into different Subject Sections. I had a separate section to deal with notes that I was still working on. As soon as I finished taking notes on a given topic, I would transfer them into a Subject Section I had created. The ring binder folder is flexible and allowed me add notes to any topic from time to time.

Alternatively you could use a separate folder for each subject and a separate folder for notes currently under construction. This approach will allow you to combine notes from different sources. You can get an overview of the whole topic more clearly.

**My class notes had main points only:** If you are taking notes in class do not try to take everything down that the teacher says in class. Spend more time listening and try to take down the main points.

**Make your notes legible and easy to use:** I discovered that it was very worthwhile making notes as clear and attractive as possible. The whole point in taking notes is that you refer to them often. As soon as I started to keep my notes in better shape I found it easy to refer back to them often. Up to then I had a tendency to clutter my notes. They must be easy and attractive to read. It is also a good idea to leave space to jot in additional notes later.

**Watch for cues:** It is essential that you note the main points covered in the textbook chapter or class. Be alert for clues as to what the teacher thinks is important. One of the essential skills in note taking is being able to identify the key points in what you are listening to or reading.

**Use your own words:** When taking notes I always tried to use my own words. You will remember your own phrases, sayings and expressions best. Definitions are an exception to this rule. Don't use full sentences.

**Use visual cues and reminders:** As the brain can deal with information much more easily when it is presented in maps or graphs, it is a good idea to have your notes in this format as much as possible. Use mindmaps where possible.

**What actions can you now take to increase your study success?**