

How to take helpful notes

Participant guide

Session description and outcomes

Do you struggle to capture important information during lectures or while reading? Are your notes unclear or disorganized? Join us for a practical workshop on mastering the art of effective notetaking! In this interactive session, you will learn valuable techniques to enhance your notetaking skills and support your learning.

By the end of this session, you will have had a chance to:

- Discover various notetaking systems (Cornell, outline, concept map, flow, charting)
- Identify key information to record when taking notes
- Practice using a notetaking system

Activities

This workshop will involve opportunities to reflect on how you take notes through a poll question. There will be discussion on advantages and disadvantages of note taking systems (for the in-person session this is in small-groups through a worksheet, for the online session this is done individually on a shared Mural board). Finally, there is a video where participants practice using a notetaking system that is new to them, followed by individual reflection.

Working definitions

To see descriptions of the notetaking strategies discussed in this workshop, visit the [notetaking methods resource](#).

Your next steps

Following the session, reflect on the following questions:

- Which notetaking methods work for each of your classes? Will you use the same method for all contexts, or change depending on the learning environment?

Land acknowledgment

McGill is located on the unceded Indigenous lands of the Kanien'kehá:ka Nation, known as Tiohtià:ke/Montreal. The Kanien'kehá:ka, also known as the Keepers of the Eastern Door, are one of the nations that make up the Haudenosaunee Confederacy on Turtle Island/North America. Our presence on this land contributes to the dispossession and ongoing oppression of Indigenous peoples. Our goal is to promote learning and generate allyship with local Indigenous communities, by honouring and respecting the many nations removed from, as well as those still connected to this land. Consult [Native Land](#), McGill Indigenous Initiatives' [The Land and Peoples](#), and [Indigenous Education Resources](#) to learn more.

Resources

Consult the [learning resources](#) created by Teaching and Learning Services, particularly these resources on [reading strategies](#).

Visit [Self-Directed Learning Guides](#) from Student Accessibility & Achievement.

References

- Ihara, A. S., Nakajima, K., Kake, A., Ishimaru, K., Osugi, K., & Naruse, Y. (2021). Advantage of Handwriting Over Typing on Learning Words: Evidence From an N400 Event-Related Potential Index. *Frontiers in Human Neuroscience*, 15. <https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fnhum.2021.679191>
- Mueller, P. A., & Oppenheimer, D. M. (2014). The Pen Is Mightier Than the Keyboard: Advantages of Longhand Over Laptop Note Taking. *Psychological Science*, 25(6), 1159-1168. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0956797614524581>
- University of Tennessee Chattanooga Center for Academic Support and Advisement. (n.d.). Common Note-taking Methods. <https://www.utc.edu/enrollment-management-and-student-affairs/center-for-academic-support-and-advisement/tips-for-academic-success/note-taking>

Contact information

For any questions about the workshop material or other related information, visit mcgill.ca/tls/students or email learning.tls@mcgill.ca.