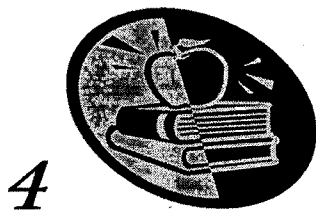


MODULE 4

INFORMATION STORING SKILL

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4

INFORMATION STORING SKILL

4.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

As you learn through this module, you will be able to:

- Check how useful and effective your present notes are
- Identify ways of improving your note taking skill for lectures
- Identify a number of common abbreviations/symbols
- Use and form new abbreviations while taking notes
- Improve your listening skill
- Learn the Cornell system of notes taking
- Use the mind mapping technique for notes taking and notes making

4.2 INTRODUCTION

Information storing mainly involves two skills viz. notes taking and notes making.

Note taking implies taking notes during a lecture sometimes copying down what is written on the blackboard or dictated. One may also take notes from books, copying chunks of important matter or summarizing. These notes are usually unorganized.

Note making implies organizing your rough notes, by combining notes taken during lectures with those taken during study from various reference books. You put together all related ideas in a particular order, and in an easy to read format.

Being able to take clear comprehensive notes, which allow you to understand and learn the presented material for your course assignments or exams, is a vital skill for students at college and university. It can also be a major challenge if you are coming up from school without having had to make your own notes on what was happening in class. The following chapter gives ideas for creating useful and effective notes from which you can learn more easily. You will also be introduced to an interesting way of taking and making notes using mind mapping technique.

Before we go any further let's check how good you are at notes taking and notes making.

4.3 SELF-CHECK

How efficient is your note taking?

Rate your current competence in note taking, using the scale:

5 4 3 2 1

For example, if you consider your note taking is easy to read award yourself a 5. If, however, it is a little hard to read you could award yourself a 2.

Circle your rating for each statement then add up your total.

My note taking is...

5 4 3 2 1

Easy to readHard to read

5 4 3 2 1

Brief, to the point.....Too detailed

5 4 3 2 1

Easy to understand.....Hard to understand

5 4 3 2 1

Well organizedPoorly organized

5 4 3 2 1

Pages numbered/labeledNo system

5 4 3 2 1

Easy to learn fromDifficult to learn from

5 4 3 2 1

Well abbreviatedNo abbreviations

5 4 3 2 1

Important ideas stand out.....Not easy to see important

Points

clearly

5 4 3 2 1

In my own wordsChunks copied from books or

Lectures

Total score:

The points on the left side indicate the characteristics of a good note. Try to improve your notes taking/making skill keeping these points in mind.

Adapted from: Cottrell, S. (1999) *The Study Skills Handbook*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan

4.4 LECTURES AND NOTE-TAKING

Lectures are designed to be useful starting points for learning, giving a general overview of the subject, its main ideas and theories. At every lecture you are presented with a large amount of information, spoken, written (on the black board), or through demonstration and experiments. It is next to impossible to store everything in your memory. So you make notes to remind you. Even the sketchiest note-making is better than simply sitting and letting information drift through your mind.

Lecture notes are a great asset to efficient study for the following reasons:

- (a) Lecture notes constitute a permanent record. This is necessary for revision and subsequent study.
- (b) Note-taking helps you react intelligently to the lecture. The mind and the senses – eyes, ears, touch (writing) – come into play, thus enriching the intake of knowledge. Thus note taking keeps you alert in class and increases your participation.
- (c) Good lecture notes will provide you the means of checking the accuracy of what you think the lecturer said.
- (d) A good set of notes will help you demonstrate meaningful relationships between different ideas, learned at different times from different sources.
- (e) Lecture notes help to stimulate organized thinking, which makes the reading of your textbook easy.

(4-3) TEST YOURSELF

- Q.1. Define note-taking and note-making.
- Q.2. Note down at least five characteristics of a good note.
- Q.3. Write down at least two reasons for preparing lecture notes?

Now let us try to see how we can become good at note taking.

4.5 IMPROVING YOUR NOTES TAKING SKILL FOR LECTURES

To become efficient at note-taking at lectures you may use the following tips – which have been classified as under:

Before the lecture

During the lecture

After the lecture

Before the lecture

- Glance through your notes from the previous lecture, and look for links with the next lecture.
- Read (or just flick through) a book on the subject of the lecture. Look for themes, issues, topics and headings. Look up any technical word you don't understand.
- Write down questions you want answered. Leave space to write the answers under each question either during or after the lecture.
- Reflect and jot down your points, opinion.

Activity

Select a subject of your choice and make the preparations required before attending a lecture. You may use the following record sheet to jot down questions you want answered during the lecture. Fill in the first two columns of the following cover sheet.

RECORD SHEET

Lecture notes: cover sheet

Subject area/unit:	Date:	Unit:
Subject of lecture:	Lecturer:	
Preparation: Questions and ideas prompted by reading or discussion prior to the lecture; what do I want to find out during this lecture?		

Opening comments by the lecturer. Issues , questions, etc., to be addressed during the lecture
Main theme of the lecture
Main points made in the lecture; examples or evidence given (use supplementary sheets as necessary)
Questions raised by the lecturer
References to books, etc

During the lecture

- At the beginning of the lecture jot down the main topics to be covered as declared by the lecturer.
- Take notes of headings, questions, sub-points, and references. (Use record sheet given above)
- Avoid writing details you can easily get later from a textbook. Keep your attention for your listening. If you are not clear where information comes from, ask.
- In your head, challenge what the lecturer says: this will help to focus your attention. Ask , *‘Is this always the case?’*, *‘How representative is this?’*, *‘Why is this?’* & *‘Do I agree?’*
- Indicate new questions raised by the lecturer in a different colour.
- Use abbreviations and symbols wherever possible.

After the lecture

- Label and file your lecture notes and any hand-outs.
- Read through your notes. Fill in details from your reading or research.
- Link new information to what you already know.
- Discuss the lecture with others. Compare your notes and fill in any gaps
- Follow the inquiry technique. Turn headings, sub-headings, key words and main-idea sentences into questions

(4-4) TEST YOURSELF

Q.1. Write down two things you should do before a lecture to improve your note taking skill?

Q.2. Write down two things you should do during a lecture to improve your note taking skill?

Q.3. Write down two things you should do after a lecture to improve your note taking skill?

Next, let us learn some techniques which may help us in taking notes quickly.

(a) Some commonly used abbreviations

When taking notes during lectures, it is important to write quickly so that you can include all the important information. A good way to increase your note taking speed is to use abbreviations. Abbreviations are shortened versions of words.

Here are some standard abbreviations:

<u>Word</u>	<u>Abbreviation</u>	<u>Word</u>	<u>Abbreviation</u>
for example	e.g.	before	b/f
morning	AM	namely	viz.
afternoon	PM	That is	i.e.
And so on	etc.	Per annum	p.a.
Note well	N.B.	And others	et al.

(b) Forming abbreviations

Besides standard abbreviations given above, you can make your own ones. Only, keep these rules in mind:

- (i) *develop your system and stick to it; do not change,*
- (ii) *do not use abbreviations in material other people will have to read.*

You can form your own abbreviation for just about any word. Here are three ways you can do this.

1. Write just the beginning of a long word. For long words whose beginning is easy to pronounce, write just the beginning of the word. Here are some examples.

<u>Word</u>	<u>Abbreviation</u>	<u>Word</u>	<u>Abbreviation</u>
different	diff	feminine	fem
incorporated	inc	population	pop
elementary	elem	ambiguous	ambig
molecular	molec	separate	sep
division	div	hippopotamus	hippo

2. Leave out the vowels when writing a word. For shorter words that do not begin with a vowel, leave out the vowel or vowels. Here are some examples.

<u>Word</u>	<u>Abbreviation</u>	<u>Word</u>	<u>Abbreviation</u>
century	cntry	point	pnt
mountain	mntn.	school	schl
reason	rsn	clean	cln
popular	pplr	teacher	tchr
quality	qlty	progress	prgrss

3. For words that have just one syllable and do not end with a vowel, write just the first and last letter of the word. Here are some examples.

Word	Abbreviation	Word	Abbreviation
quart	qt	land	ld
tick	tk	round	rd
girl	gl	pack	pk
night	nt	field	fd
link	lk	heart	ht

Use common abbreviations of words whenever you recognize them. For other words, form abbreviations by using one of the three ways you just learned. Use the way that best fits the word for which you are writing an abbreviation. Do not try to abbreviate every word you write in your notes. Abbreviate those words that are important and for which you can quickly form an abbreviation. **REMEMBER: YOU MUST BE ABLE TO RECOGNIZE THE COMPLETE WORD FROM ITS ABBREVIATION.** Knowing the context in which you wrote the word will help you recognize the complete word from its abbreviation.

Activity

Write an abbreviation for each of the following words. Use the way of abbreviating that you think best suits the word.

- 1. larva -----
- 2. model -----
- 3. quark -----
- 4. gulf -----
- 5. scavenger -----
- 6. temperature -----

(c) Using symbols

You can also increase your note taking speed by replacing words or terms with symbols. Here are some common symbols and the words or term they represent.

Word	Symbols	Word	Symbols
Therefore	∴	Is less than	<
Because	∵	18 th century	18
Equal to	=	without	w/o
Not the same as	≠	An increase	↑
Is greater than	>	A decrease	↓

Activity

Read each sentence that follows and rewrite them using symbols. You can use the same symbol more than once.

1. I am sure that ten plus five equals seven plus eight.
.....
2. I still have difficulty doing a division and finding out a percent.
.....
3. Going to a college is not the same as going to a school.
.....
4. Learning to learn skills are very important for the twenty-first century student.
.....
5. With an increase in pressure there is a decrease in the volume of air in a vessel.
.....

(4-5) TEST YOURSELF

Q.1. What is an abbreviation?

.....

Q.2. What do the following abbreviations stand for - etc., et al., viz., p.m.

.....

Q.3. Write down three ways in which you can form your own abbreviation?

.....

Since the most important skill required during a lecture is listening skill, let us try to understand how we can become a better listener.

(d) Suggestions for better listening

Listening, like reading, is a way of learning both in and out of classroom situation. Good listening like good reading is an active process. The good listener is constantly thinking, evaluating and making connections.

Here are some useful suggestions to help you listen better...

- Get ready to listen as soon as the bell has rung. Usually important information is given at the very beginning. If you practice listening attentively the first ten minutes of the period, it is likely that you will develop the power to listen well for the rest of the period.
- You must learn to listen purposefully. Direct your attention to what the speaker is saying. Do not let other sounds distract you.
- Poor students generally have the tendency to let their minds wander. This defect must be checked by serious effort, because it diminishes your power to concentrate. Besides, it may give occasion for embarrassment or humiliation in class if you are suddenly asked a question while your mind is on a different track!
- Listen critically, thoughtfully and with understanding rather than merely mechanically. Your brain, your eyes, and your ears must be active together if you are to hear intelligently. If you do not understand a point, ask for explanation then or after class.

Now let us learn a new way of taking notes while attending a lecture.

4.6 The Cornell system of note taking in classroom situation

You may use the Cornell system of notes taking during lectures, which also offers an easy way to review your lecture.

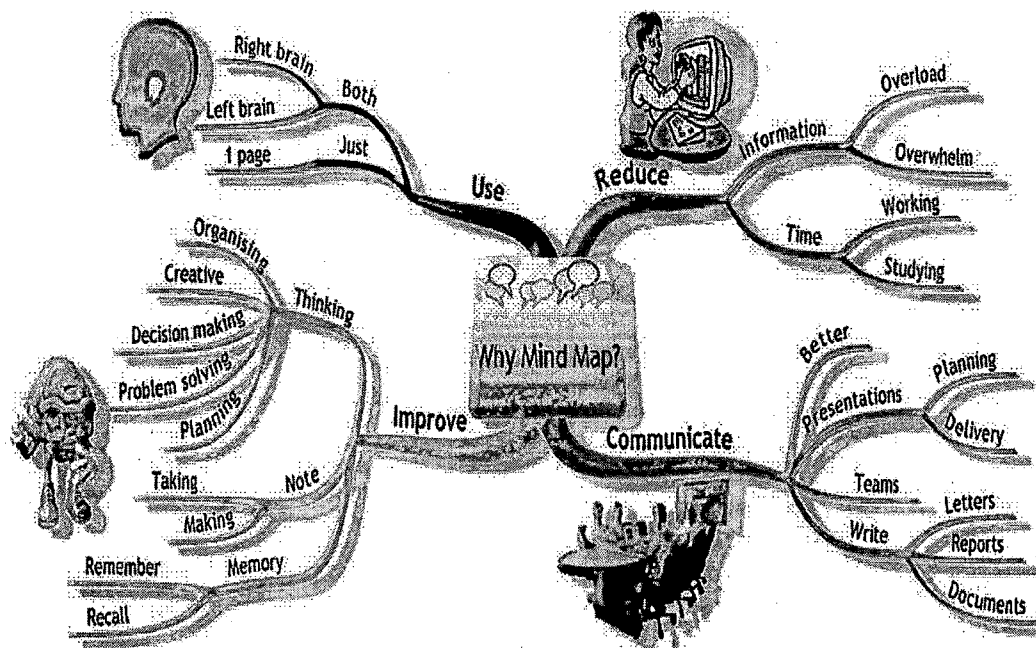
How to use the method?

1. Divide the record sheet into two columns as shown below.
2. Fill up the preliminary entries like date, Unit, Lecturer, etc on the top of the record sheet.
3. Take your notes on the right hand column of the page during class. Leave the left hand column empty.
4. Review your notes within 24 hrs of its original creation.

idea, often expressed as an image. Branches flow backwards and forwards from and to the central idea.

It is similar as a technique to concept mapping and spider diagrams, the difference being that true mind mapping involves constructing a hierarchy of ideas instead of pure random association.

Following is an example of a mind map which explains the *uses and advantages of mind mapping*.



Source: www.illumine.co.uk

Uses of mind maps:

Mind maps can be used in a wide range of situations. Most useful to you as students are:

- Making notes from books and other secondary sources
- Making notes from lectures
- Making notes for essays or presentations

Making notes from books and other secondary sources

As a student you will need to browse a large number of secondary sources - textbooks, journal articles, web sites. Sometime, the amount of material can seem daunting. The benefits of mind maps, however, is that rather than working through

the material from beginning to end in a chronological sequence, you proceed in a more "spiral" fashion from firstly having an overview to looking in greater and greater depth.

Making notes from lectures

Lectures lend themselves less easily to the mind mapping technique because their structure is inherently linear. However, you should be able to get a good idea of the "basic organizing ideas" from the scheme of work for the course, or from the notes which the lecturer gives out at the beginning of the lecture. Try and search for the BOIs as the lecture progresses.

Making notes for essays or presentations

The basic difference here is in the preposition: you are making notes for something rather than from something, so you will need to draw together your existing mind map notes and prepare a new mind map covering what you are going to write or present.

How to mind map

Steps involved in creating a mind map may be summarized as follows:

Step 1 - Determine your central image or concept.

Step 2 - Create the basic structure for organizing your ideas: these are the main branches and are known as the Basic Organizing Ideas (BOIs), and are represented by branches radiating outwards from the main concept.

Step 3 - Put down keywords associated with the BOIs, which should sit on smaller branches connected to the main branch.

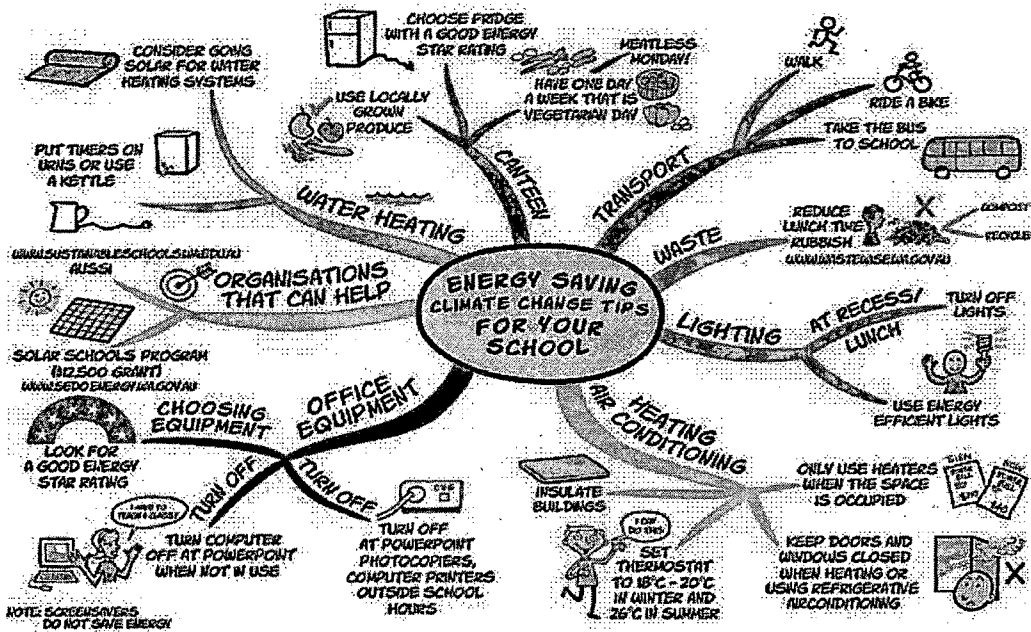
Step 4 - Revisit your mind map, putting things in order, and numbering the branches. If necessary, revise it on another piece of paper.

Your completed mind - map or diagram should be:

- Bright
- Colourful
- Visually bold
- Aesthetically pleasing
- Ordered
- Meaningful to you

Example

Following is an example of a mind map showing the energy saving tips you may use in your school.



Source: www.gyanpedia.in

Activity

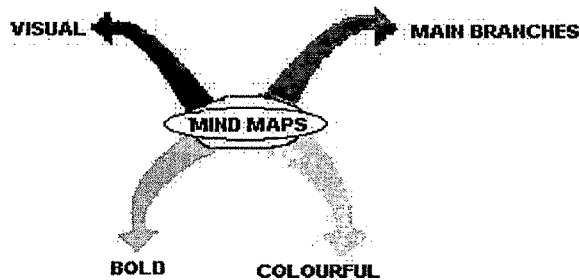
Select a topic of your choice and use the following steps to mind map.

1. Take a blank piece of paper, A4 or larger.
2. Use the paper in landscape orientation so that we have more space to add words and images.
3. Make an image at the centre of the page which represents the topic. Keep the height and width of the central image to approx. 2" or 5cm. Write the topic at the centre of the image. E.G.

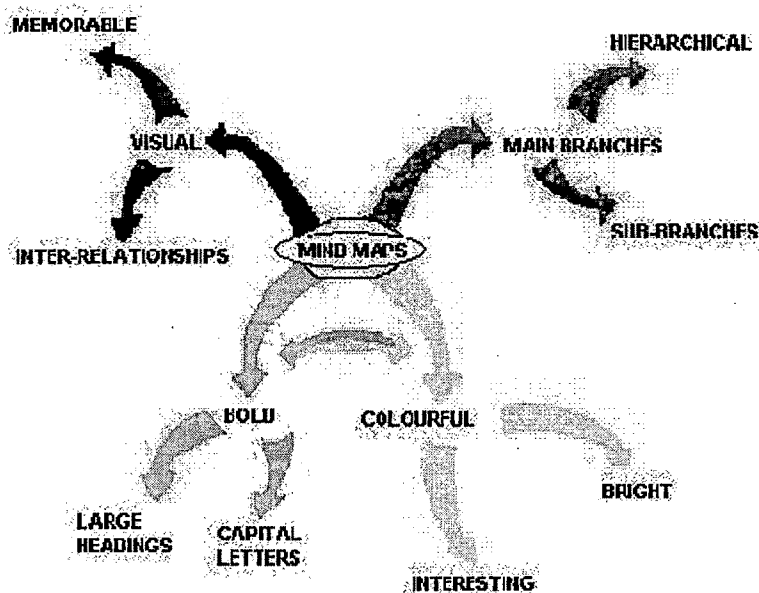


4. The next stage involves adding main branches to your diagram that represent each of the areas of the topic being studied, or its related topics. The branches should extend far enough from your central image to avoid overcrowding the page and confusing information. Ideally, pictures should be

used to represent themes and concepts. It helps if the branches are different colours and/or shapes. The branches should be: bold, bright and colourful.



5. The next stage involves adding sub-branches to your hierarchical diagram. These branches are also coloured. You may find it helpful to use different shades of the colour used for the main branches. Continue to label in bold, colourful lettering. Continue using simple images to represent concepts and to make sense of your mind map.



6. Revisit your mind map, putting things in order, and numbering the branches. If necessary, revise it on another piece of paper.

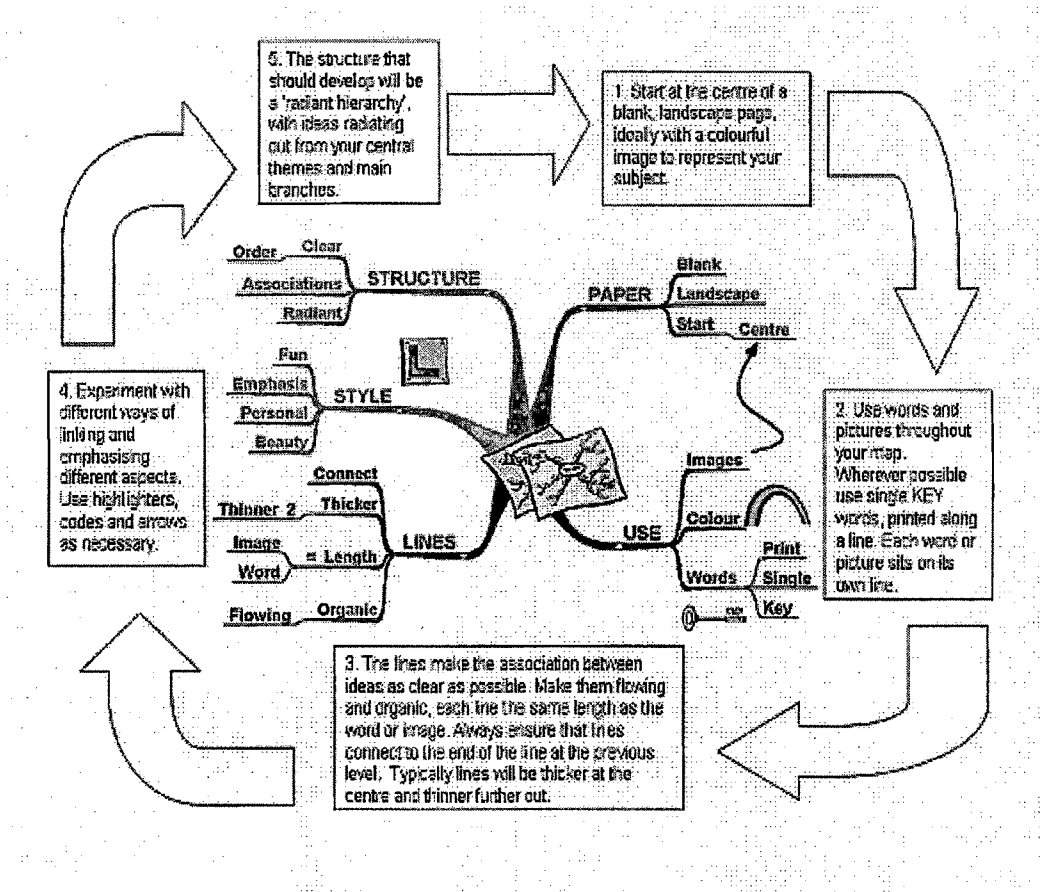
How to Read A Mind Map

1. Start in the centre - that is the FOCUS of the Mind Map.
2. Words/Images closest to the central image show the MAIN THEMES of the Mind Map. This is the start of the radiant hierarchical structure.

3. Select one main theme and read out from the centre along the branch. This provides greater levels of associated detail. Proceed around the Mind Map, either in the order of your choice or as suggested by the author.

Activity

Following mind map gives some tips to make your mind map more effective. Read the Mind Map and answer the following questions.



- Q.1. What kind of paper should you use for mind mapping?
-
-
- Q.2. From where should you start to draw your mind map on the paper?
-
-

Q.3. What should you use to make your mind map more attractive and meaningful to you?

.....
.....

Q.4. How should the lines or branches in a mind map be drawn ?

.....
.....

Q.5. What kind of a structure will develop as a result of mind mapping ?

.....
.....

(4-7) TEST YOURSELF

Q.1. What is mind mapping?

.....

Q.2. Write down the uses of a mind map

.....

4.8 SUMMING UP

Information storing skill mainly involves note taking and note making.

Note taking implies taking notes during a lecture sometimes copying down what is written on the blackboard or dictated. One may also take notes from books, copying chunks of important matter or summarizing. These notes are usually unorganized.

Note making implies organizing your rough notes, by combining notes taken during lectures with those taken during study from various reference books. You put together all related ideas in a particular order, and in an easy to read format.

Once you become efficient at note taking and note making your notes will be easy to read from, brief to the point, well organized, easy to learn from, well abbreviated, important ideas stand out clearly and will be in your own words. These are some of the characteristics of a good note.

A good way to increase your note taking speed is to use abbreviations and symbols. Use common abbreviations and symbols of words whenever you recognize them. For other words, form abbreviations by using one of the following three ways:

- 1. Writing just the beginning of long words
- 2. Leaving out the vowels and
- 3. Writing just the first and last letter of the word

Another interesting technique for note taking and note making involves the use of Mind mapping which uses the powers of visualization and association, and thereby improves both memory and creative thinking.

REFLECTIONS:

- 1. Think about what you have learned in this unit. Write about it here.
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
- 2. How will this make you a better student?
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
- 3. How will this make you a better teacher ?
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

ANSWER KEY

4-3.

Ans.1. Note taking implies taking notes during a lecture sometimes copying down what is written on the blackboard or dictated. One may also take notes from books, copying chunks of important matter or summarizing.

Note making implies organizing your rough notes, by combining notes taken during lectures with those taken during study from various reference books. You put together all related ideas in a particular order, and in an easy to read format.

Ans.2. Good notes are easy to read, easy to understand, to the point, well organized and well abbreviated.

Ans.3. Lecture notes constitute a permanent record for revision and subsequent study. Also preparing lecture notes keeps one alert in class and increases his/her participation.

4-4.

Ans.1. Refer pg.5

Ans.2. Refer pg.6

Ans.3. Refer pg.7

4-5

Ans.1. Abbreviations are shortened versions of words.

Ans.2. symbols: ∴, ↑, ©

Ans.3. Abbreviations can be formed by writing just the beginning of the word, leaving out the vowels when writing a word and by writing just the first and last letter of a word.

4-6.

Ans.1. Get ready to listen as soon as the bell has rung and listen purposefully, thoughtfully and critically.

Ans.2. The Cornell system of note taking offers an easy way to review lecture. It does not require to re-write notes thus saving time.

4-7.

Ans.1. Mind mapping is a way of linking key concepts using images, lines and links.

Ans.2. Refer pg.14

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