

Taking Notes During Research

Taking notes is a very important and exciting part of the research process. With a well-formed thesis statement and a preliminary outline, note taking can be fun and rewarding. After all, this is when you will find exciting information about your topic. In addition, taking notes will save you time when you begin writing and will help you start to become an expert on your topic.

How do I take notes?

Taking notes is as unique and individual as a person's handwriting style. Some people like to write complete sentences when taking notes, some prefer short partial sentences and others prefer bullet points or writing lists. There is no one method that is better than the others because it is strictly a personal choice. However, there are some generally accepted tips that seasoned researchers have discovered.

- *Wherever you record your notes, keep them brief.*
- *Avoid cutting and pasting large amounts of information figuring you'll read it later.*
- *Use more of your own words than someone else's.*
- *Make a note if you paraphrased or directly quoted the information.*
- *If using note cards, use one note per card.*
- *If using electronic note cards, keep each note separated by a double space or bullet point.*

One approach you can use an aid in How to take notes, is the mnemonic:

S C R O L

S – Survey the material to be read

Survey the Section headings and Paragraph subheadings to get an idea of what will be covered in the chapter or the article. Read any introductions, summaries and side boxes included in the article or chapter to get additional information.

C – Connect the ideas

How do the various headings and subheadings relate to each other? Write down keywords that illustrate how the sections are connected.

R – Read the material

Read the information under each heading. Focus on words or phrases that are italicized or in bold print, because these words usually express important information about the article or heading.

O – Outline

Write down the main ideas and any supporting details in outline form. Use Section headings and subheadings as the main ideas in your outline whenever possible. Identify the topic sentence, usually the first sentence in each paragraph, because these sentences introduce the main idea for that section. Try to include at least two details under each main idea.

L – Look

Look back at each Section heading and paragraph heading to make sure they coordinate with the main headings in your outline. Make sure your outline contains each of the main ideas and supporting information from the chapter or article. Look for connections between notes from previous readings or articles.

Where do I record my notes?

It is important for you to keep all your project notes in one place. Some researchers use note cards, some make note taking templates on the computer, others simply word process their notes into an electronic folder. Below are some pros and cons to each method:

Method	Note Cards	Note Taking Template	Electronic Folder
Pros	Easy to sort and organize Easy to label Easy to color code Easy to transport Easy to manage	Easy to cut and paste information Easy to organize Easy to access	Easy to cut and paste information Easy to access Easy to organize
Cons	Might lose or misplace cards Small space to write in Bulky	May accidentally delete file May record too much information Difficult to sort information	May accidentally delete file May record too much information Difficult to sort information

What kind of notes should I take?

- Take only notes related to your keywords and thesis statement.
- Brief notes in your own words are better than long wordy passages.
- Skip words like *and, the, of, an, so, a, etc.* when paraphrasing information.
- Directly quote only brief amounts of information that is memorable, Remember to put quotation marks around it and record who said it and where you found it.
- Record bibliographic information exactly in your notes, so you can remember where you obtained the information.
- Label each note with a subtopic or heading to keep them organized.

How do I organize my notes?

- Color coding by subtopics helps visual learners assemble similar ideas quickly.
- Use between 5-7 subtopics per 10-15 page paper. Too many subtopics can lead to confusion and disorganization.
- Use bold headings at the top of each note.

Note Card Example:

Topic: ***Polar Bears in Captivity***

Subtopics or note card headings:

-Background/History

-Popular Captivity Locations

-Reasons for Captivity

-Quality of Life

-Economic Impact