Effective note-making is an essential skill for successful research. Good note taking allows for a record for final presentation and revision of a unit of work.

Good note-making reduces the risk of plagiarism.

It also helps you distinguish where your ideas came from and how you think about those ideas.

Effective note-making requires:

- recognising the main ideas
- identifying what information is relevant to your task
- having a system of note taking that works for you
- reducing the information to note and diagram format
- putting the information in your own words for presentations
- recording the source of the information

**Be Selective and Systematic**

As you take notes from a written source, keep in mind that not all of a text may be relevant to your needs. Think about your purpose for reading.

- Are you reading for a general understanding of a topic or concept?
- Are you reading for some specific information that may relate to the topic of an assignment?

Before you start to take notes, skim the text, then note the main points and any relevant information you may need to take notes from.

**Identify the Purpose and Function of a Text**

Whether you need to make notes on a whole text or just part of it, identifying the main purpose and function of a text is invaluable for clarifying your note-taking purposes and saving time.

- Read the title and the abstract or preface (if there is one)
- Read the introduction or first paragraph
- Skim the text to read topic headings and notice how the text is organized
- Read graphic material and predict its purpose in the text

Your aim is to identify potentially useful information by getting an initial overview of the text (chapter, article, pages ...) that you have selected to read.

**A Few Tips About Format**

Set out your notes so that you have a similar format each time you take notes using your notebook or a notemaking sheet.

- Headings that include bibliographic reference details of the sources of information are also important.
- Columns that distinguish the source information and your thoughts can be helpful.
- The use of colour to highlight major sections, main points and diagrams makes notes easy to access.
Identify How Information is Organised

Most texts use a range of organising principles to develop ideas. While most good writing will have a logical order, not all writers will use an organising principle.

Organising principles tend to sequence information into a logical hierarchy, some of which are:

- Past ideas to present ideas
- The steps or stages of a process or event
- Most important point to least important point
- Well known ideas to least known ideas
- Simple ideas to complex ideas
- General ideas to specific ideas
- The largest parts to the smallest parts of something
- Problems and solutions
- Causes and results

Below is an example of information copied and then made into notes which will then be rewritten to form an essay:

THREATENED ECOSYSTEMS AND SPECIES IN AUSTRALIA 2002

Copied Text –

A vital indicator of the health of Australia’s biodiversity is the status of its ecosystems and species. The Audit’s Terrestrial Biodiversity Assessment provides the first comprehensive compilation of Australia’s threatened ecosystems. Australia has 2891 threatened ecosystems. 39% of bioregions have more than 30% of their ecosystems threatened. The highest number of threatened ecosystems occurs in southern and eastern Australia (Map 1). Nearly half of the threatened ecosystems are forest and woodland with shrubby or grassy understorey. Vegetation clearing and increased fragmentation of vegetation remnants are the most significant threats in eastern Australia. Additional threatening processes are firewood collection in parts of southern Australia, salinity and other changed hydrology, and exotic weeds.

My Notemaking points from copied text

- 2891 threatened ecosystems in Australia.
- 39% of bioregions have more than 30% of their ecosystems threatened.
- highest number of threatened ecosystems is in southern and eastern Australia
- nearly half are forest and woodland with shrubby or grassy understorey.
- significant threats are
  - Vegetation clearing
  - firewood collection
  - salinity
  - exotic weeds.