

SUMMARISING

Why make study notes?

- Summarising and condensing the information makes it easier to learn and remember for tests and exams. It is a great way to start your study as you are thinking about the information as you try to understand it and put it into your own words.

Advantages of making study notes:

- you are checking your understanding of the material in a timely manner
- it will highlight any problems in understanding
- you are revising as you go when making study notes
- it gives you a great time advantage if you have blocks of exams
- it is a great way to study for tests so you remember the information
- you are condensing and organizing the material to learn for tests and exams

What are study notes?

You have your notes and handouts from class. You also have a textbook and maybe other resources. Your study notes are where you get a separate piece of paper, and in point form combine the information on the topic from different sources in order to create a condensed and organised version of the topic that is then easier to learn and remember.

When should I do study notes?

- If you are having a topic test, make the study notes as a way of studying for the test.
- If you are going to have exams on a number of topics, make study notes at the end of each topic or end of a big section. Don't wait until just before exams. When the exams approach, improve and add more to your study notes.

What format should study notes be?

You can keep study notes in any of the following:

- Have a separate exercise book or lecture pad for the summaries of each subject.
- Use loose leaf paper and store the notes in the back of your folder.
- Buy a display folder for each subject (the ones with plastic sleeves) or a separate folder and write your summaries on loose leaf paper and file them into the display folder for this subject.

The actual format of the pages can be:

- Mind maps or other forms of graphical note-taking.
- Linear note-making where the information is presented in a structured point form format.

How do I make study notes?

- Gather all information on the topic.
- Work out the main sections or headings of the topic.
- Do a 1 page overview (see mind map section below).
- Work on one section at a time – skim the info first.
- Start making point form notes on this section.
- Make your notes visual and memorable.
- Update and add to your notes.
- Consider making an executive summary.

Where do mind maps fit in?

Mind maps can be used for sections of a topic to create visual or diagrammatic notes on that section.

Mind maps are also great for doing a one page overview of the topic so you can see how the topic fits together and how all the information is linked. It gives the brain the big picture about the topic and allows you to see how everything is connected together. You then can clearly see what the different sections are and then take each section one by one and do point form notes on that section.

Steps to making a mind map:

- Take a blank piece of scrap paper and write the topic in the centre or at the top of the page. Put a box around this heading.
- Now on a separate piece of scrap paper, write down a list of the main headings by looking through all the textbook, class notes and handouts.
- For each heading, jot down any subheadings that are related to this heading.
- See if there are any links between any of these headings.
- See if the headings should be in any particular order.
- On your mind map page, draw lines or arrows out from the topic showing the main headings for this topic. Put circles around each of these headings.
- For each heading, draw other arrows coming out for the sub-headings for each of these topics. You can also put point form notes under these headings but don't make the page too cluttered.
- You may find it is a good idea to do a rough draft of the mind map first as until you know how many headings and sub-headings there are it is difficult to ensure your layout for the mind map is spaced out properly.

How can I improve study notes?

- Space out work adequately.
- Re-do sections of the notes that are hard to understand.
- Make sure headings and sub-headings are clear and stand out.
- Make your notes visual, lots of colour, diagrams and tables.
- Photocopy and include good diagrams from textbooks.
- Underline or highlight key words or important points - use colour for emphasis.
- Keep work neat with consistent neat handwriting and colours.
- Develop a system of abbreviations for regular use and use point form and key phrases.
- After tests or exams, add to your study notes based on what you learnt in the exam.
- Highlight or box key points or formulas so that they stand out and are memorable.
- Incorporate good handouts into your study notes.
- Check your textbook to ensure you have included everything you need to know.
- Use lists or numbering where possible.
- Use wide margins so you can add in extra information as your understanding grows.
- Use sub headings, indenting, numbering: the more sections are broken down, the easier to learn.
- Complete sentences should be rare – key phrases and point form is more effective.
- Include diagrams whenever possible as they are easier to remember than lots of words.
- Make sure your notes are comprehensive (include everything you need to know from a variety of sources) and memorable.

What do I do with the study notes after I have done them?

1. Read a section, put them aside, then see what you can write out without looking at them (you don't even have to be able to read what you write - it is just seeing if you can recall it without the notes in front of you). Check what you got right and wrong and what you remembered against your notes then test yourself again on the bits you got wrong.
2. Read a section out loud, put them aside, then see what you can say out loud without looking at the notes. Check what you got right and wrong and what you remembered against your notes then test yourself again on the bits you got wrong.
3. Read a section while you pace around your room, put them aside, then see what you can type onto a blank word document without looking at the notes (only do this if you can type fast). Check what you got right and wrong and what you remembered against your notes then test yourself again on the bits you got wrong.



*So what do you need to do
or remember about
summarising and study notes?*



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