

Note-taking Abbreviations

Writing Centre Learning Guide

Note-taking needs to be concise. You do not need to write down everything word for word. Using symbols and abbreviations when you take notes can allow you to take more accurate notes more quickly.

Why make notes?

In lectures, note taking helps you to concentrate on what the lecturer is saying and provides you with a summary. Taking your own notes will promote a deeper understanding of the content of the lecture. You can also take notes from a written source which will help you in writing an essay. You can include notes showing your own thoughts about a written source or a lecture to ascertain how you are going to use the information in your essay. For more information on good note-taking skills, see the Writing Centre learning guide [Making Notes](#).

Using abbreviations

When taking notes, you can reduce the amount of language by shortening words and sentences. Some ways of abbreviating are:

- leaving out most articles and conjunctions (the, a, and, but)
- shorten words by leaving out vowels or other letters (also known as “word truncation”)
- using abbreviations and symbols for commonly used words and phrases

It is important to remember that you will need to know what the abbreviations and symbols stand for when you review your notes later. Here are some strategies for making this more likely:

- Use only abbreviations and symbols that fit your needs and that you will remember easily. Too many can make your notes difficult to understand.
- Be consistent, so that the same symbol or abbreviation always means the same thing. Otherwise your notes may become ambiguous.
- Keep a separate list of your abbreviations and their meanings so that you can refer to them if you need to in the future. If you start using a new abbreviation, add it to the list.

Some other helpful hints for note-taking are:

- Use special symbols or colouring to mark structure. For example, you may use blue for the title of a section and green for examples.
- Use special symbols for when you were not able to write down important information, so that you can fill in the details later. For example, putting a long dash ----- to indicate missing information.
- Develop new symbols specific to your course content. For example, in a literature course, you could place the first few letters of a character’s name in a box to refer to this character.

WRITING CENTRE

Level 3 East, Hub Central
North Terrace campus, The University of Adelaide

ph +61 8 8313 3021
writingcentre@adelaide.edu.au
www.adelaide.edu.au/writingcentre/

Examples of word truncations

ppl	people
res	research
natl	national
eqn	equation
ed	education
gov	government
dep	department
esp	especially
ustand	understand

Common symbols and abbreviations

∴		because
∴		therefore OR consequently
+	&	and OR plus
?		question OR doubt OR possibility
>		greater than
<		less than
#	no.	number
\$		dollars OR money OR cost
Δ		change
/		per OR each
↑		increase OR improvement
→		leads to OR causes
↓		decrease OR deterioration
↔		linked OR interrelated OR connected
↗		does not lead to
=		equal OR the same as
~		approximately OR around OR similar to
≠		not equal OR not the same as
X	strikethrough	not
∞		varies with OR related to
...		etc. OR missing words
etc.		etcetera; and so on
et al.		and the other authors
eg		for example
ie		that is

NB	*	note well OR remember this
♂ / ♀		male / female
§		section
¶	para	paragraph
p. / pp.		page / pages
c		with / about (circa)
w/o	̄	without
1 st / 2 nd / 3 rd / 4 th		first / second / third / fourth
@		at
cf.		compare to
am		morning
pm		afternoon
viz		namely
asap		as soon as possible
wrt		with respect to

Other useful resources

Websites

<http://www.dartmouth.edu/~acskills/success/notes.html>

<http://tutorials.istudy.psu.edu/notetaking/>

Printables

http://www.sfu.ca/content/dam/sfu/computing/Undergraduate_students/AEP-files/NoteTaking.pdf

www.dlsweb.rmit.edu.au/lisu/content/1_StudySkills/study_pdf/notetaking_lecture.pdf

www.sl.psu.edu/Documents/Note_Taking_Strategies.pdf

See also the Writing Centre learning guide [Making Notes](#).