

Tips on Taking Notes during Lectures, Classes and Presentations

These tips follow discussions in class with students (in early April 2026) and use other material. They reflect the impact which new technologies (previously, the use of PowerPoint/slideshow presentations, and more recently, AI) have on the ability to take better and more complete notes.

Types of note-taking vary depending on students' disciplines.

1/ Fairly extensive note-taking by hand is common in maths classes, as teachers set out theorems and proofs.

(Note: some tablets easily convert handwritten formulas into text:

<https://www.youtube.com/shorts/TVZtGXqBmW8>)

2/ Fairly extensive note-taking by hand in humanities, when teachers do not use supports (e.g. PPTs). Using standard abbreviations helps taking notes more quickly. See examples from the [University of Portsmouth here](#).

Writing notes by hand can help to memorise classes better.

3/ Annotating supports like PowerPoint (PPT)/slideshows. Depending on the detail and the density of information given in lectures, students may “simply” add comments to PPTs, distributed before a class.

4/ If teachers speak very quickly, some students record lectures while listening as closely as possible to the teacher, just taking general notes (like writing keywords). The recordings are then summarised, sometimes using AI. Subsequently, students may make compilations at home (with or without AI).

5/ (Some law) students work together in tandem and take notes during class on Google Docs, to obtain a fuller, more accurate (precise) and more detailed record of the lecture.

6/ Augmenting lecture notes and summarising supports (PPTs) with AI. Also, using notes online from previous years.

Students vary their note-taking depending on the teacher, the style of the lecture and the supports given, and what works best for them.

7/ Students go over, and possibly complete notes, in the evening or at the weekend.

Some additional suggestions:

8/ **The Cornell Method** helps structure notes, as each page is divided into 3 parts: i) a narrow column on the left (to note cues/main ideas and questions *later*; ii) a wide column on the right to take detailed notes *in class*; and iii) space at the bottom for a page summary written *later*. See this video:

<https://www.youtube.com/shorts/GZ2URIC3PzQ>

9/ **Creating mind-maps** can be done either in class, but is especially useful when revising and reworking notes. This consists of creating linkages between concepts, beginning with the key concept in the middle of the page, and then connecting other concepts to it. See video <https://www.youtube.com/shorts/ol-l01Jhb4o>

10/ It is very important to review notes shortly after a class (in the evening or maybe at the weekend). This helps assimilate the knowledge (i.e. understand the reasoning and arguments) and remember specific information. This is called “[spaced repetition](#)” (thank you Noémie for mentioning the term in class).

To conclude:

- **There is no one best way of taking notes.** It depends on the subject, the teacher and the supports provided by the teacher. And it depends on your time and your personal preferences: **do what works best for you.**
- **Try always to develop and adapt your note-taking**, especially now that AI can help expand, complement, reorganise and summarise information. **But remain in control** of the process, when using AI.
- **Review and supplement notes after class**, in the evening or within a few days: **work on “spaced repetition”**.