

NOTETAKING: ACADEMIC READING

Why should you note take?

As a third level student, it is essential to develop effective note making skills to make sure that **you get the most out of the time** that you spend reading. Your reading requirements will become more extensive, and in turn, become a bit confusing and cluttered. Hence, it is well worth your while to **spend time to write effective notes that will save you time down the research/writing track.**

Good note taking records the useful information which helps you to do the following:

- **increase your understanding** of the area or text you are studying.
- **develop your memory skills.**
- **develop your writing skills.**
- **prepare for exams.**

Tracking your Reading Material

As you progress in your academic career or even as the terms go along, you are going to be reading more and more material. **You have a couple of choice of how to track your reading. For example, by concept, or by book.**

TOP TIP

Using a chart with columns and rows to track your reading is the best way to help you track your reading and allow you to develop the concepts that you are examining.

Biographical Details

You can do this via **Excel or in a notebook** or even **inserting a table in Microsoft Word.** This will allow you to **easily find the material again** but it will also be useful when you are **referencing and/ or creating a bibliography.**

You need to track the following biographical details:

- **Author's surname and initial**
- **Title of book / article**
- **Title of the journal**
- **Publisher**
- **Place of publication**
- **Page numbers**
- **Website details** (including web address etc.)
- **Library call number** e.g. Q+3 801.53

Charting/ Notetaking

TOP TIP

Organisation is key and it will help you to complete assignments! You should separate your reading notes from your lecture notes, both on your PC or if they are in paperback form. Highlighting randomly will NOT help you remember.

Page No.	Concept	Notes	Observations
Page 1	Identify Concept	Summary of the reading	Your response to the reading
Page 17	Note down key ideas and theories.	Paraphrasing should form the bulk of this section. References are needed here even if you are not directly quoting.	Does it relate to other material you have read? If so, how?
Page 89		Note down direct quotes.	Additional insights Further reading

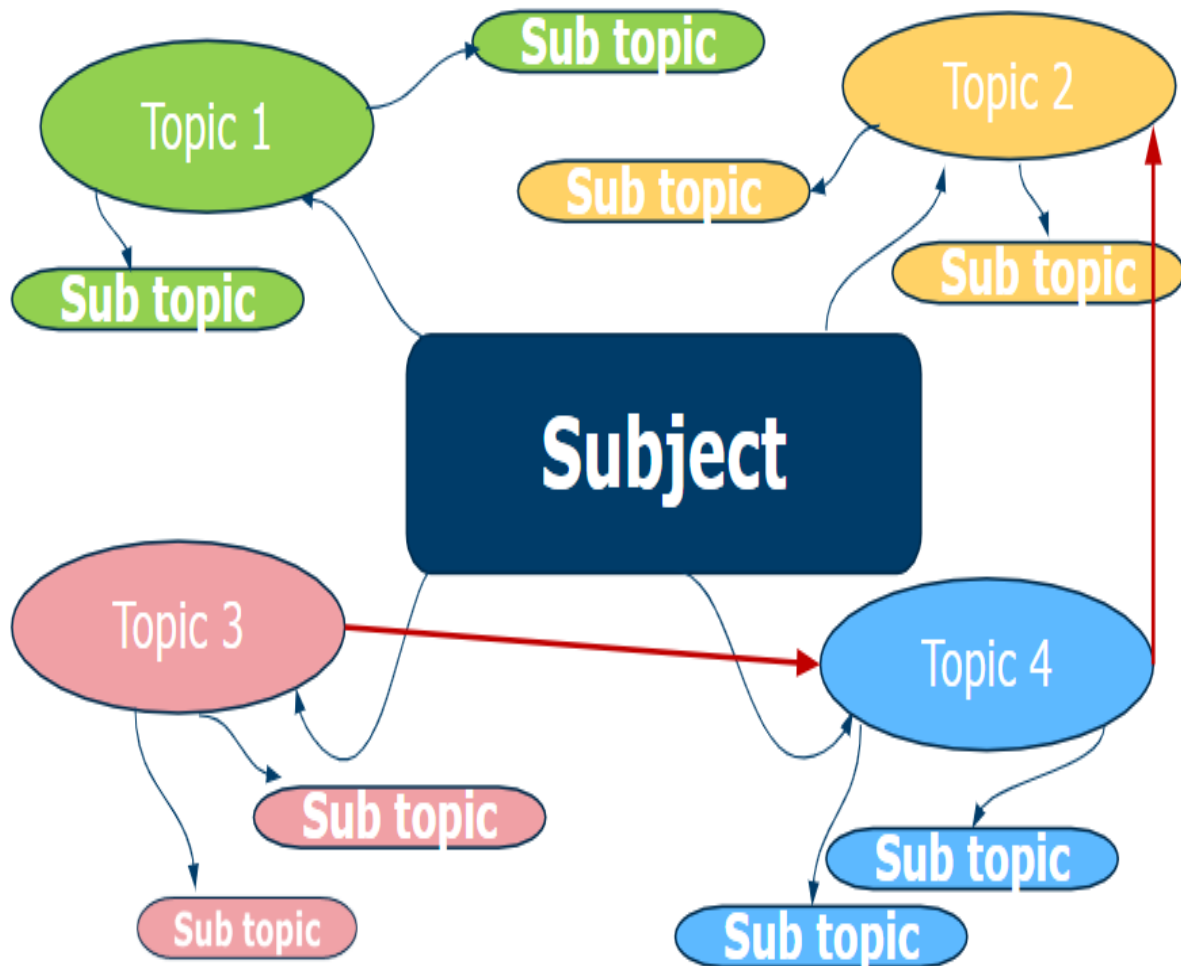
Planning to Write and Using your Reading Notes

TOP TIP

There are many planning templates online, but whichever system you use, just make sure to stick to it and make it part of your planning process. Please see the 'Essay Planning & Structuring' PDF.

Mind Mapping

The basic principle of mind mapping is instead of lined paper, you start on a blank paper or digital canvas. **The subject (e.g. essay question) goes in the centre of the canvas, where it's always clearly visible** and this should help your train of thought to stay on track.



🔍 TOP TIP

Colour Coding your notes can break them down into ideas which can then be linked to spider diagrams or planning templates. For example, colour coding the bubbles and ideas as shown above. The information in these bubbles can become your paragraph ideas. This will help you plan to write in a more effective way.

Tips for Color-Coding Your Notes

Colour-Code after Initial Notetaking

Don't highlight while reading and making notes. This is when you are understanding the subject matter rather than answering the specific question asked. **Wait till you need to use those notes to write an essay on that topic or once you have unpacked the question (see the PDF online).** For instance, if you were dealing with this question:

Discuss why more Irish women joined the political system and legislature during the 1970's/80s?

Conclusion

Notetaking is a great skill and you will feel that you have achieved so much by taking good notes. You will be delighted with yourself, but **they are no good to you unless you can access them. It is vital to file them correctly to be able to retrieve them for your assignments or revision.** Get into good housekeeping habits for the very beginning by creating folders on your PC/ USB stick and filing them correctly if they are in paperback form.

Useful Links

- <https://libguides.ucc.ie/academicintegrity/referencing>
- <https://writingcenter.gmu.edu/guides/writing-an-abstract>
- <https://libguides.usc.edu/writingguide/abstract>
- https://services.unimelb.edu.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0007/471274/Writing_an_Abstract_Update_051112.pdf
- <https://advice.writing.utoronto.ca/types-of-writing/abstract/>
- <https://www.aises.org/sites/default/files/documents/National%20Conference/Abstract%20Guidelines%20and%20Samples.pdf>

Other Relevant Online PDFs

- Notetaking for Lectures
- Planning & Essay Templates
- Unpacking the Question
- Plagiarism
- Cite-Seeing: Guide to Correct Referencing
- Evidence & Incorporating Research
- Critical Reading
- Critical Thinking