

Taking Effective Notes

What should my notes look like?

- Decide a method that works best for you:
- Index cards
- Loose-leaf paper
- Photocopy/print out information. Write notes and summarize in margins
- Photocopy/print out information. Using highlighters of different colors to represent specific concepts (i.e., blue = fact, yellow = opinion, green = quotation).

What should I write down?

- Start by recording all the bibliographical information you will need for your citations.
- Jotting down the book's call number, the search terms you used in a particular database, and web sites' addresses comes in handy if you need to return to the resources.
- Be succinct and specific. Use short phrases to summarize and paraphrase.
- Collect data that supports your position but include opposing viewpoints.
- Record statistics, thought-provoking quotes, and unfamiliar facts.

What is plagiarism?

- Submitting a paper, examination, or other assignment as your own when it was written or created by another.
- Verbatim copying of portions of another's writing without enclosing the copied passage in quotation marks and acknowledging the source on your Works Cited page.
- Using a unique term or concept which one has discovered in reading, without acknowledging its author or source.
- Paraphrasing or restating someone else's ideas without acknowledging that this other person's text was the basis for that paraphrase.
- Presenting false data – for example, data that has been fabricated, or altered, or borrowed from someone else without permission to do so.
- Submitting the same paper for more than one class.

How do I avoid plagiarism?

- Highlighting text is a good first step, but translate and rewrite the information in your own words immediately. If you wait too long, you'll be tempted to copy the highlighted text word-for-word.
- You must cite not only direct quotations and statistics, but also *any* facts that are not well known to the average person.
- Make sure you know where every note comes from – record the source, page number, web site address, etc.

- If you are recording the author's opinion, be sure to note, "Dr. Z believes..."
- Limit the number of direct quotations you use. If you must quote someone (1) change to a different colored highlighter or pen, (2) put huge quotation marks around the statement, (3) record the page number and source.

How will I understand all my notes once I am ready to create my final product?

- If you use abbreviations, symbols, or shorthand while note taking, make a key with their meanings so that you can interpret your notes.
- If you don't understand what a particular resource is saying, don't use it. You'll risk misinterpreting the information.
- If you have ideas or reactions coming to you while researching, record your thoughts, insights, and opinions separate from your factual notes.

Adapted from:

Writing a Research Paper. Purdue University. 15 October 2001.

<<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/workshops/hypertext/ResearchW/notes.html>>.