

# Learner Study Guide

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## About this guide

This guide provides some suggestions on how you can reflect on your learning and how you might improve your learning.

There are tick boxes and text boxes throughout to help you record your progress. You can either print this guide to write on it, or use it electronically and type directly into text boxes. Make sure you don't forget to save this file to your device.

**You should use this guide alongside the support of your teacher.**

You might also find the Cambridge *Learner Revision Guide* and the subject-specific Cambridge *Learner Guides* helpful. You can find these on our website, [here](#), under 'Study Resources'.

By the end of this guide, you should understand how to:

- reflect on your own learning
- improve your learning
- be more organised
- take notes successfully.

## Getting started

Your teacher will help you to get the best out of your course, however, you also need to take **responsibility** for your own learning.

reflection  
innovative  
engage      responsibility  
confidence

### Reflect on your learning

The methods you use to remember and understand new knowledge are how you learn. Your methods might include making lists of information, asking questions or drawing diagrams.

In order to actively **engage** in your learning, you need to think deeply about the ways you learn, and whether you can improve your learning by using different methods. This process of thinking deeply about your approach and changing it when you need to is known as **reflection**.

Reflecting on your learning in this way will help you to develop into an effective learner with **confidence** in your skills and knowledge, which in turn can lead to **innovative** thinking.

Use this guide to help you reflect on your learning, and to find ways that you can improve your methods of learning, your organisation and your note-taking skills. Print this document to keep a record of your progress. If you prefer to work electronically, you can type in text and tick boxes directly in this PDF file, just don't forget to save it to your device each time you make changes.

### Do you think about how you learn?

**A**, **B**, **C** and **D** in the list below represent different ways of reflecting on your learning. Tick the statement that best describes the way you reflect on your learning.

**A:** I do not think about how I learn, I just accept if I know something or not.

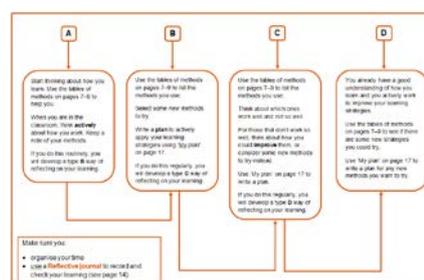
**B:** I am aware of some of the ways I learn, but I do not plan my learning.

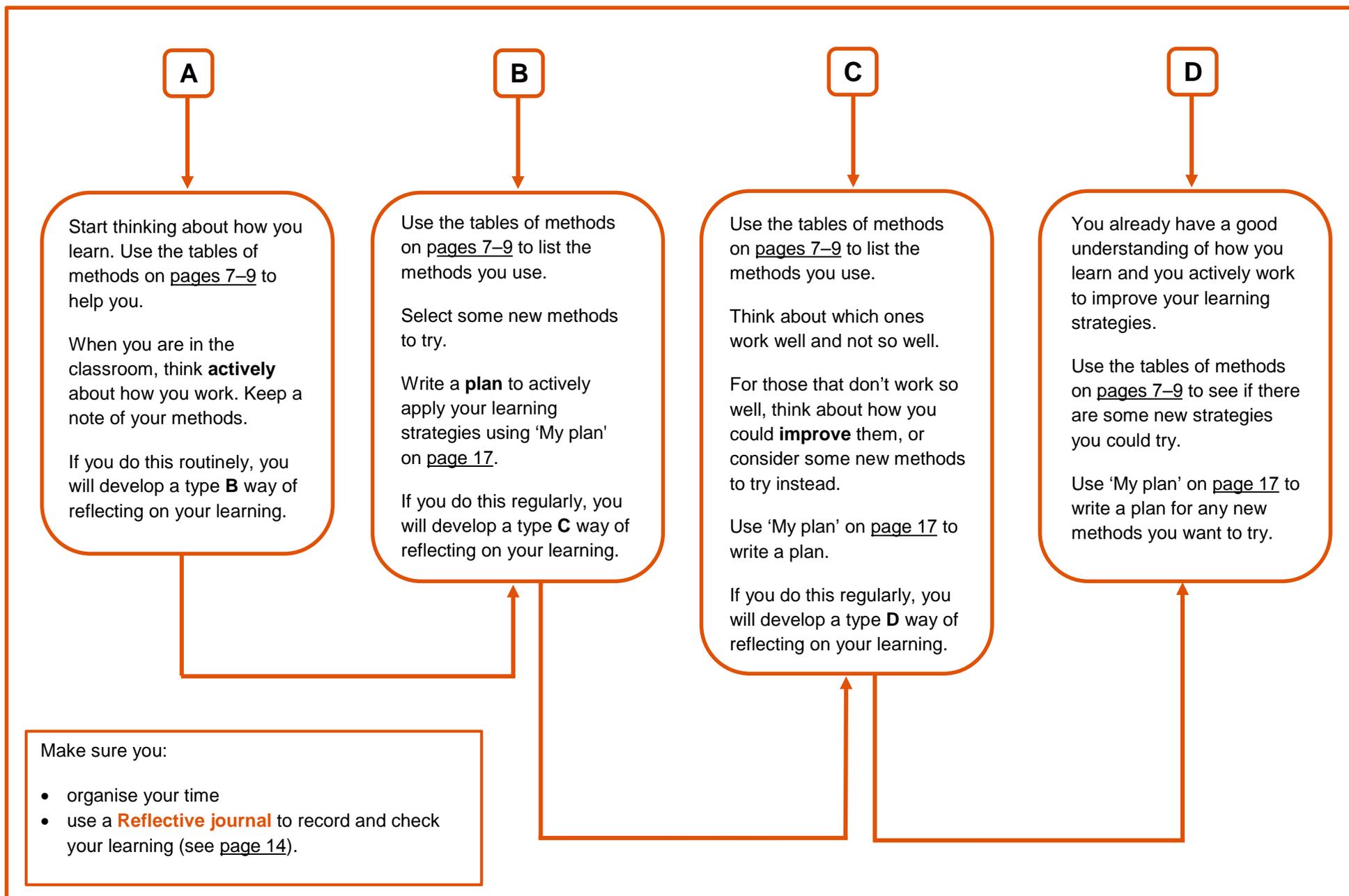
**C:** I know which methods I use to learn and I actively apply them.

**D:** I know which methods I use to learn and I actively apply them. I also change them if I need to.

*Don't forget to save this file to keep a record of your progress.*

**D** describes a reflective process that is considered to be the most effective way to learn. Use the diagram on the next page to help you develop how you reflect on your learning.





## Methods to help you learn

The way you remember new information is unique to you. Some common ways to learn (known as learning styles) are:

- **SEEING** the new information
- **SPEAKING AND LISTENING** (to) the new information
- **READING AND WRITING** the new information
- **DOING** something with the new information

You might learn using just one style, or you might learn using a combination of different styles. You and your friends will probably have different styles. There is no right way, just the way that works best for you.

### Which learning style(s) do you use?

The tables on the next pages list some of the methods that work well for each learning style. Some methods work for more than one style and are repeated in the different tables.

**I already know which learning style(s) work best for me:** go to the appropriate table to pick some new methods to try in order to improve.

**I am unsure how I learn best:** try different methods from different tables to see which ones work for you.

You can try as many or as few methods as you like and they don't all need to be in the same table. You might find that different styles work better for different things you are learning. Repeat this process as many times as you need to in order to feel confident in your learning. You might even develop your own methods.

Click in the empty boxes of each table to add a tick electronically. *Don't forget to save this file so you can reflect on your methods later.*

### SEEING METHODS

Methods of learning	I will try	Worked well	Did not work well
Draw information in my notebook; replace words with pictures or symbols			
Highlight important details (in my notes or handouts) by colour-coding, circling, highlighting or underlining			
Make lists			
Write detailed notes			
Watch videos on the topics I am studying			
Use mind maps, systems diagrams or other organisations of information			
Think in pictures and/or form a picture in my mind to imagine the new information			

**SPEAKING AND LISTENING METHODS**

Methods of learning	I will try	Worked well	Did not work well
Ask if I can record my lessons so I can play them back at my own speed			
Watch videos on the topics I am studying			
Record myself reading my notes and play them back to myself			
Repeat facts and information out loud			
Read notes out loud, trying to include rhyming or other techniques to make them dramatic and varied			
Use word association, poems, rhymes, phrases or word puzzles to help me remember facts, lists or important information			
Discuss topics with my teacher and classmates			
Ask and answer questions in the classroom			
Talk about new information			

**READING AND WRITING METHODS**

Methods of learning	I will try	Worked well	Did not work well
Copy down information from the board			
Write summaries of what I have learned			
Use quizzes			
Write notes			
Write key information in lists			
Read my notes and rewrite them			
Write the information from books and other resources in my own words			
Write information from my teacher in my own words			

**DOING METHODS**

Methods of learning	I will try	Worked well	Did not work well
Ask and answer questions in the classroom			
Start and contribute to discussions			
Use large sheets of paper and large marker pens to feel more active when writing and drawing			
Use physical objects as much as possible; for example flashcards that I can hold and move around			
Use visualisation techniques to imagine the sensations I would expect in different scenarios (what would I see, hear, smell, feel?)			
Use short definitions when writing notes			
Try to apply the information to real life			

All the methods from one learning style might work best for you, or a combination of methods from different learning styles. You can summarise which methods you plan to use in the box below.

Click in the box to type in text if you are working electronically. *Don't forget to save this file so you can reflect on your methods later.*

*For example:*

*September: I think I learn by seeing and sometimes by actively doing. So I will try: making lists, writing notes using mind maps, highlighting important details and asking and answering questions in the classroom.*

*October: I didn't find making lists during lessons helpful, so I will try replacing words with pictures in my notes instead.*

**Getting organised**

Being organised has many benefits.

helps you to **PRIORITISE** improves **TIME MANAGEMENT** reduces **STRESS**

helps you to **FOCUS** increases **PRODUCTIVITY** better **BALANCE**  
between work and play

increases **CONFIDENCE** increases **EFFICIENCY**

**How organised are you?**

Tick the statements that apply to you.

<b>A</b> I always know where everything I need is, such as my notes, books, pens, highlighter pens, paper and a ruler	<b>B</b> I get overwhelmed by how much work I have and I avoid starting large tasks	<b>A</b> I get my homework done on time
<b>B</b> I hand in my homework late	<b>B</b> I leave homework to the last minute	<b>B</b> I often forget what homework I have
<b>A</b> I write down homework and the deadlines in one place, such as a planner	<b>A</b> I do my homework the day I get it	<b>B</b> I always rush my work
<b>A</b> I never need to rush my work	<b>B</b> I never know where everything I need is, such as my notes, books, pens, highlighter pens, paper and a ruler	<b>A</b> I break down large tasks into smaller tasks and tick these off when I complete them

Count the number of A statements you ticked and the number of B statements you ticked. Read the appropriate advice below. If you ticked an equal number of each, read both sets of advice.

**Mostly A:** You are a well-organised person who has developed strategies that work for you.

Be careful if you agreed with 'I do my homework the day I get it' as this might not be the most efficient strategy; you need to prioritise homework according to deadline and how long it will take, and also make sure you allow time for fun and relaxation. See the table on the next page for more ideas of how to be organised.

**Mostly B:** You could use some support in being more organised in order to make life easier for yourself. Try some of the suggested methods for being organised in the table on the next page, then return to the activity above at a later date to see if you score differently.

**If you do some work each day, rather than leaving it all to the last minute, you will feel more in control.**

Tick the boxes in the table to reflect on how you already work and what you will try in order to improve. Aim to try at least some of these methods. Click in the boxes if working electronically.

Ways to be organised	I already do this	I will try this
Keep all my pens, paper and other equipment together in one place so I always know where everything is		
Keep my notes together and ordered by date as I go along; I will file them as soon as they are completed		
Use one place such as a planner to record each homework or assignment deadline as soon as I get it		
Include all activities in my planner so that I know what time I have available to work		
Estimate how long a given task will take me, then work backwards from the deadline and include some extra time to give me the date that I should start the work		
Be realistic about what I have time for		
Keep my planner up to date and check it every day		
Have a set time each day or week for completing homework or study so that it becomes part of my routine		
Prioritise homework or study according to which needs to be done first and not just which I like doing best		
Rank my homework as 1 (do it now), 2 (do it tomorrow), 3 (do it later in the week) and update the rank each day		
Break down any large assignments into smaller, more manageable tasks; each task will have its own deadline		
Tick off each homework or task once I have completed it		

Don't forget to save this file so you can reflect on your methods later.

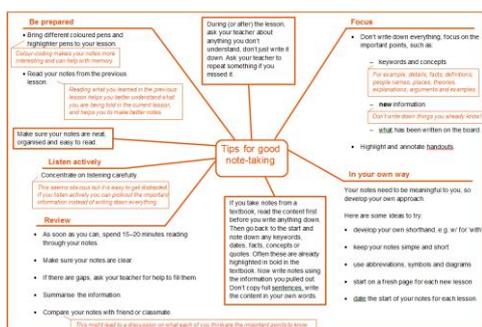
## Taking notes

The process of writing and reviewing your classroom or lesson notes helps you to remember information. Making notes as you go along, little and often, will make it easier when you come to revise later.

It is also really important to ask your teacher or classmates questions if you are unsure about anything or if you have missed something. Do this during the lesson or at the end of the lesson.

### Tips for good note-taking

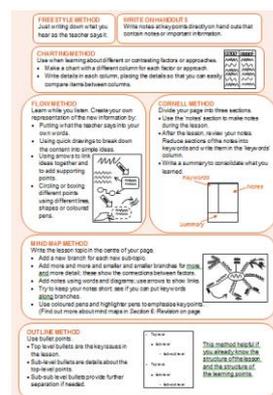
Note-taking is a skill that can be developed and improved. Look at the tips for good note-taking on page 12.

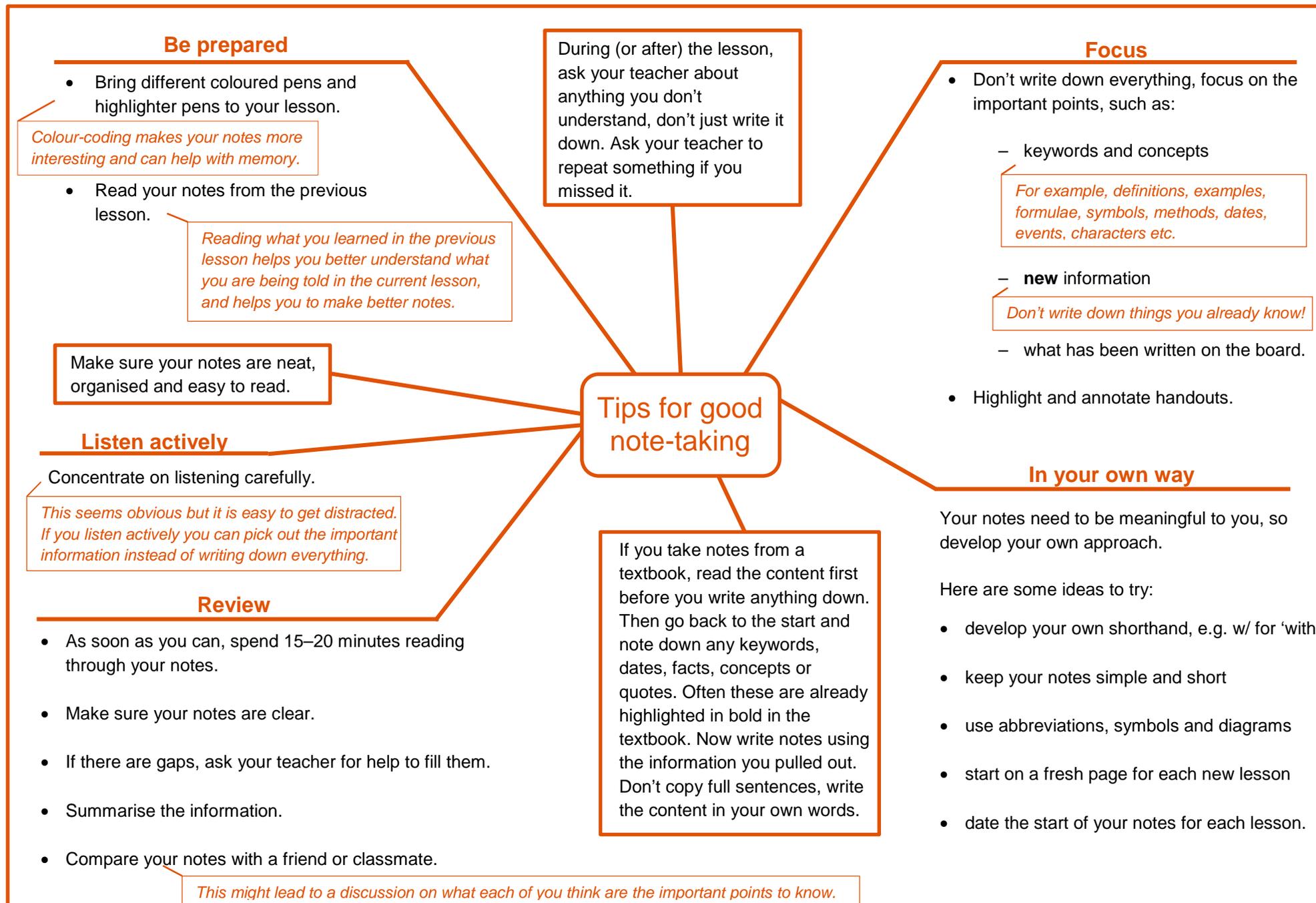


### Formatting your notes

If you are unsure how best to write notes, try some of the suggested methods on page 13.

You might find that different methods work better for different types of task.





Here are some useful ways to format your notes:

**FREESTYLE METHOD**

Just write down what you hear as the teacher says it.

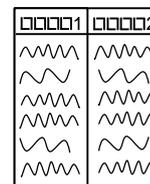
**WRITE ON HANDOUTS**

Write notes at key points directly on handouts that contain notes or important information.

**CHARTING METHOD**

Use when learning about different or contrasting factors or approaches.

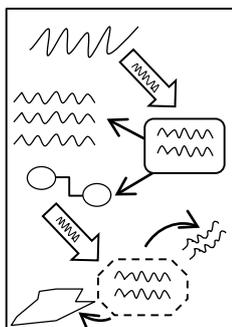
- Make a chart with a different column for each factor or approach.
- Write details in each column, placing the details so that you can easily compare items between columns.



**FLOW METHOD**

Learn while you listen. Create your own representation of the new information by:

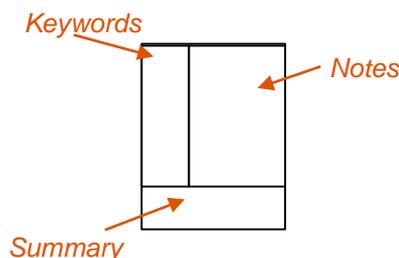
- putting what the teacher says into your own words
- using quick drawings to break down the content into simple ideas
- using arrows to link ideas together and to add supporting points
- circling or boxing different points using different lines, shapes or coloured pens.



**CORNELL METHOD**

Divide your page into three sections.

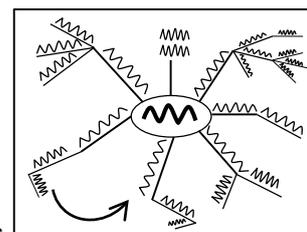
- Use the 'notes' section to make notes during the lesson.
- After the lesson, review your notes. Reduce sections of the notes into keywords and write them in the 'keywords' column.
- Write a summary to consolidate what you learned.



**MIND MAP METHOD**

Write the lesson topic in the centre of your page.

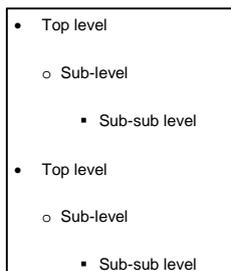
- Add a new branch for each new sub-topic.
- Add extra smaller and smaller branches for more detail; these show the connections between facts or ideas.
- Add notes using words and diagrams; use arrows to show links.
- Keep your notes short and put key words along branches.
- Use coloured pens and highlighter pens to emphasise key points.



**OUTLINE METHOD**

Use bullet points.

- Top level bullets are the key issues in the lesson.
- Sub-level bullets are details about the top-level points.
- Sub-sub level bullets provide more separation if needed.



This method is helpful if you already know the structure of the lesson and the structure of the learning points.

## Reflective journal

Keeping a reflective journal is a useful way to record, analyse and reflect on how you learn. Here are some questions to get you thinking.  
Write in the orange boxes, or create your own journal somewhere else.

*Don't forget to save this file to keep a record of your progress.*

I am studying the subject ... because: *(Which subjects are you studying? Think about what you want to achieve by studying each subject?)*

I like ... because: *(What did you like about the subjects when you have studied them in the past? Or what about a new subject interested you?)*

... is a good subject to learn because: *(What skills will each subject help you develop? Are there any uses in the real world?)*

Useful skills for studying ... are: (*What skills are useful to each subject? For example, 'remembering formulae' might be useful for Chemistry, 'interpreting graphs' for maths, 'evaluating events' in History, 'analysing texts' in English. Ask your teacher for help creating this list.*)

These skills are also useful for: (*Are there skills that are common to more than one of your subjects?*)

I am good at: (*Think about the skills relevant to each of your subjects.*)

I need to improve: (*What skills do you need to work on?*)

I learn best in: (*Think about the kind of environment you work best in, for example quiet, noisy, alone, with friends. You might like working with friends in a café, but do you learn best in this environment?*)

Other thoughts:

## My plan

Based on the work you have done in this section, write a summary plan for your learning. Include *what* skills you want to develop and *how* you hope to do this. You could include your thoughts on your approach to learning, your learning style and a plan of which learning and organisation strategies you will try.

Write your plan in the box below, or you could create your plan somewhere else. Make sure you date your entries and include a date for review.

Don't forget to save this file to keep a record of your progress.

For example ...

**October 1:**

*I have a type B approach to reflecting on my learning, I will try to develop a type C approach by actively applying the learning strategies I know work for me: making detailed notes; visualising the information I am being told; using rhymes; answering questions in the classroom; and copying down information from the board. I also want to try the speaking and listening technique where I discuss topics with classmates after some lessons. I need to ensure I write all homework down and split large tasks into smaller ones, and tick each one off as I complete it. I will try using more mind maps and the charting method when I'm taking notes in class. Check progress on November 1.*

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