

What are the different techniques for reading and note making?

Bullet point lists of the main points

Left brained people like lists, and work best with them. Make bullet point lists of the main points while you read. Don't just copy things out – read a paragraph or section, then write it out in your own words as far as possible.

Mind maps

Some people find these really helpful – by laying out the ideas on a map, and showing the links between them, you have to think hard and clearly. As well, you are making both sides of your brain work together, and that helps you remember.

Charts and diagrams

Some right-brained people remember better from pictures, charts and diagrams – read the notes and books, and turn the information into charts, diagrams or pictures. If it works for you, do it!

Split lists

This is a refinement of the bullet point lists: split your page in two, with a line down the middle. On the left, make notes about stuff you understand when you read about it. On the right, make notes about stuff you still don't understand, and need to ask about. Then, when you've asked about it and understood it, you can shift it across to the left.

'Boiling down' lists

This is another refinement of the bullet point list. Rule a line down the middle, and make your list of points on the left. When you've finished it, boil it down again by making it into an even more summarised list on the right. Then maybe you can summarise it still further – turn the page over, and make an even more concise list of notes on the back.

It may not work out – some stuff you can't keep on 'boiling down' – but I promise you you'll remember it all much more easily if you've tried!

Question and answer flashcards

Cut up pieces of paper into postcard size. As you read, turn the information into questions on the front of the cards, and write the answers on the back. You can then use these to test yourself, or get someone else to test you.

Read/ Cover/ Write/ Check/ Correct

Read some pages from your notes or books, then turn them face down, and write notes of the main points. Then check back to see what you missed or got wrong, and make any corrections to your notes that you need to make.

Again, hard work, but I promise you you'll remember it all much more easily if you've tried!

Don't try to do too much – it will make it all seem impossibly long and dreary. Give yourself a reasonable time frame: half an hour after your homework each day, and a couple of hours a day at weekends and holidays is actually a lot – if you really are working at it, and not kidding yourself.