

Working around note-taking

Taking notes in lectures can be difficult if you have weak spelling skills (e.g. if you have dyslexia) or if you have a mobility difficulty such as RSI or arthritis. There are ways of avoiding note-taking, or at least minimising the amount of notes you need to take. For example, you could:

- Have someone else take notes for you.
- Use technological aids.
- Use shorthand note-taking techniques, so you do less writing.

Note-taking strategies.

Note-taking can be difficult for some learners – particularly those with dyslexia. Those with more severe difficulties may benefit from having someone take notes for them in lectures or seminars. However, consider the following:

Some students take very few notes during lectures. Some take none at all. This does not necessarily mean that they are not paying attention. They may find it more helpful to listen to the lecture carefully and then write up notes afterwards. Furthermore, if you know beforehand what the subject of the lecture will be, a little bit of pre-reading (or discussion with peers) can prepare you so that you only need to jot down a few key words during the lecture. You can then write up your notes afterwards.

If you still experience problems:

- Practice taking notes in a risk-free way (e.g. take notes from a radio programme).
- Avoid taking too many notes: it is never a good idea to try write down everything that the lecturer says.
- Use a spider diagram or bullet points and expand on the notes soon after the lecture, while it is still fresh in your mind.

If note-taking is still difficult, possible alternatives include taking a copy of a friend's notes or audio recording the lecture.

Some students prefer to type notes during lectures - rather than writing them by hand. Obviously, you will need to use a laptop computer for this - or a lightweight portable keyboard such as the Alphasmart. The Alphasmart enables you to transfer your notes to a computer, so you can print them or edit them in the normal way.

If you are a 'heavy-handed' typist, you may need to develop a softer touch. Keep in mind that the loud 'clacking' of keys can interfere with the concentration of the lecturer and other students.

If you use an audio recorder or a keyboard, remember to carry spare batteries.

Note too that you may be asked not to record discussions where group members are revealing personal information. This can be an issue on courses relating to social care, sociology, psychology, nursing and some others.

Links to further information about keyboards and audio recorders:

Dyslexic.com

<http://www.dyslexic.com/products.asp>

MKC Learning

<http://www.mkclearning.co.uk/>

Alphasmart Keyboard

<http://www.alphasmart.co.uk/>