

Tips for Taking Concise Notes

Note taking methods

Hint – Good note takers are good listeners.

Sentence Method – Write each thought/issue in a full sentence. Each new sentence should be on a new line. This is a method for those who are quick writers.

Point Form Method – Write each thought/issue in point form on a new line. This ensures key issues are documented but is less demanding on the note-taker.

White Spacing – Leave a 1 inch to 1.5 inch column on the left side of your note pad. Use this space to identify who is speaking, add information about a concept or the speaker, and summarize concepts as they become clear, and so on.

Use different symbols, colours, fonts, etc. to highlight your notes. For instance – each new topic could be written in capital letters, underlined, and numbered; all decisions could be highlighted or boxed in red ink; a large red box (for checking when follow-up is completed at a later date), could be inserted before each issue requiring action or follow-up. Whatever system you choose, make it one that is consistent, easy to remember and easy to incorporate into your notes.

Capturing information

Be sure to **title and date** each set of notes you take.

Write the **full names** of each party attending a meeting and/or the names of speakers, guests, resource persons, etc at the top of the page for each new session.

Do not write verbatim notes. Capture **key discussion items, contentious issues, decisions, and follow-up items** in your notes.

If there are portions of a discussion that you missed, indicate this in your notes so that you can follow-up with someone else later. You can also ask a participant to repeat what they said during the meeting so you can be sure to capture it correctly.

You can also take notes using **key words** and **hand-drawn graphics** to draw connections and emphasize key points. Check out the internet for ideas on how to do this on paper or on a tablet.

Accuracy

Review your notes **as soon as possible** after each meeting/session. You may want to incorporate additions to your notes to **ensure they will be fully understood at a later date**. Alternatively, you could re-write/type your notes, weeding out unnecessary information and ensuring all relevant information, decisions, and follow-up are clearly captured.

