



Study Starters

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Introduction and welcome

Welcome to Victoria! Study Starters aim to help you build your confidence as you prepare for university study and raise your awareness of the support on campus. Learning how to study effectively is a key skill that will help you reach your potential. Academic success is not just about how much you know but how well you can show what you know in your coursework assessments and exams.

Successful learning involves wanting to learn, needing to learn, learning by doing, learning from feedback and making sense of what's being learned. You need to attend lectures and tutorials but you will also be required to read widely and think critically to help you understand. At university you will not only be learning new information but also developing important skills that will be valued in the workplace. Remember to ask for advice if you are not sure!

To get you started, this session focuses on

- Time management
- Effective reading
- Note taking

Find out more about the services and workshops that Student Learning offers in the ***Student Guide***.



Being a Successful Student

A brief guide for first year students

What's different about university



University requires a more proactive and independent attitude to attendance, study and interaction with academic staff.

Independent learning environment

- lectures and tutorial format
- lectures can have up to 300 students
- only 12 to 15 contact hours per week, the rest of the time students are expected to do background reading, researching or writing on their own
- minimal contact with teaching staff – students are expected to approach them if they need to ask anything

Independent learning style

- lectures are just the beginning – students need to read, research, discuss and revise material outside contact times
- students should expect to spend two hours working independently for every one hour of lecture time – which adds up to between 36-45 hours a week for most first year students
- no-one checks up or reminds students of due dates or tells them where to find information. Students need to keep track of assignment dates and lecture and tutorial times and locations

Student survival

Develop **independent learning skills**. To succeed at university, it will help if you're well organised and know how to work independently. Study skills workshops and PASS study groups are offered by SL – so take advantage of these.

Motivation and focus will help to keep you on track. Know why you're at university, and understand your long-term goals, both career and personal.

Ask for help. There are many people employed here to help you succeed, including your lecturers and tutors. Learning to ask when you're not sure will help you both academically and when seeking information of a more personal nature, eg. financial advice or career counselling. Learn about and take advantage of the services the University provides.



Be resourceful and open to new ideas, concepts, people and change. University is your opportunity to get involved with different people and different activities, new subjects and challenging ideas.

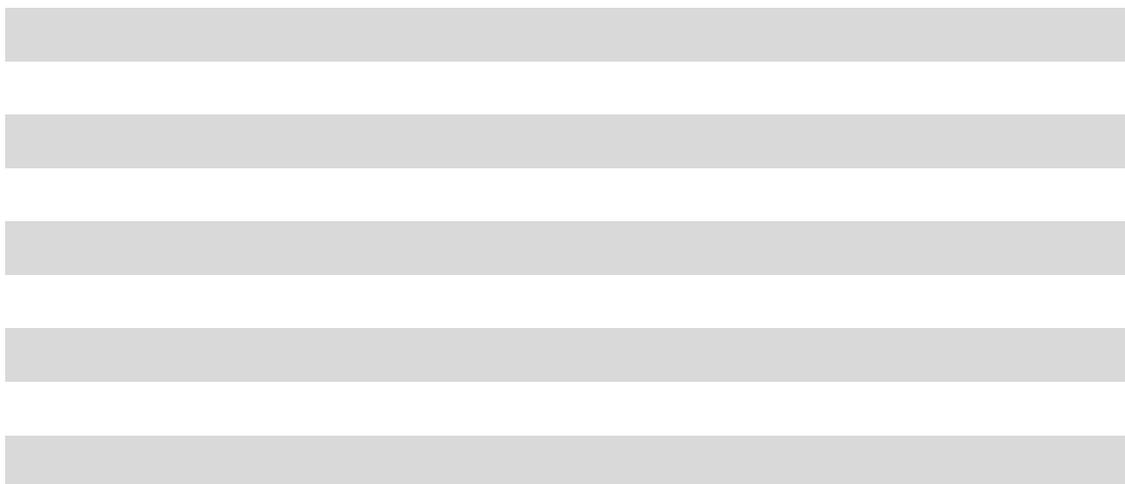
Keep your life in balance. Enjoy university. Join a club, get involved with student activities, keep up your physical fitness and eat well. We recommend no more than 15 hours a week of paid work, so you can balance your social life, employment and study commitments to stay healthy and on top of things.

Time management

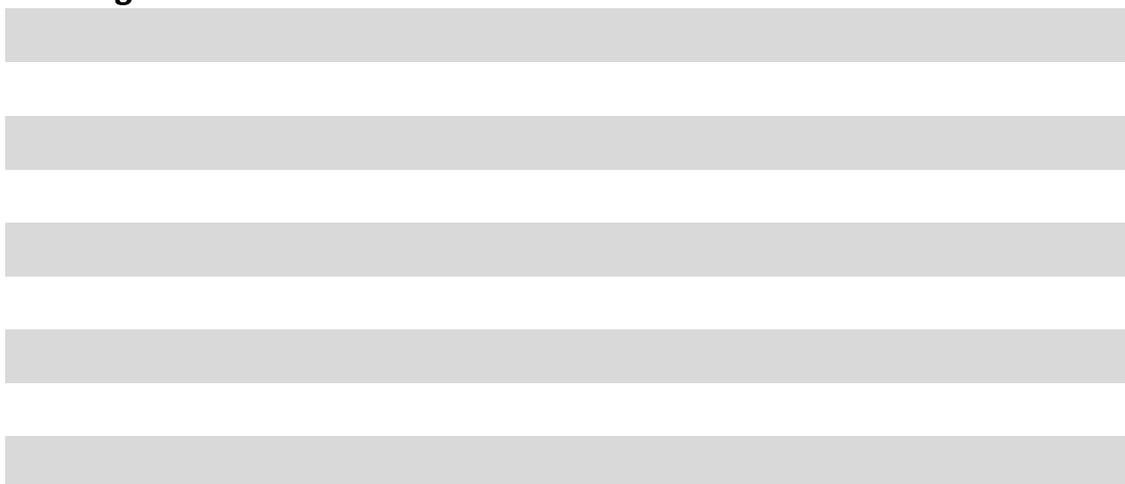
Being able to manage your time and set your own goals is a key skill you need to develop. Your success at university depends on your ability to be in control of your own learning, so making time to do the readings, hand in your assignments on the due date and revising for exams is very important.

Time management ideas:

What are the challenges?



Strategies



Time Management

Answers to some common questions

1. How much should I study?

As a general rule, allocate at least two hours of study time for every hour you spend in lectures. Allocate extra time for assignments (essays, lab reports, etc.).

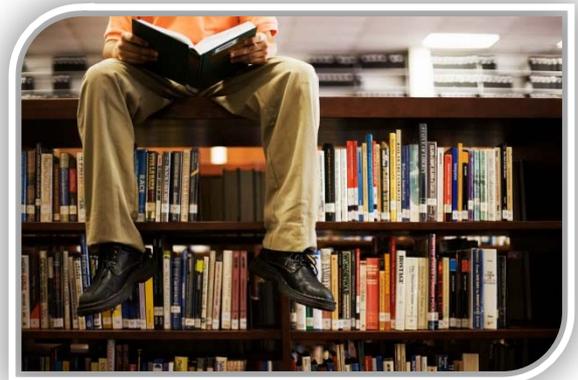


2. Does it matter *where* I study?

It is a good idea to have a regular study place and to study sitting at some sort of desk or table. Studying in the same place takes advantage of psychological and physiological conditioning – your mind and body become used to the idea that when you are in the study place you study (just like you become conditioned to sleeping in bed or relaxing on the sofa – for which reason neither are good places to study). Sitting up at a desk encourages note-making and allows for easy, organised access to texts, paper and/or your computer.

3. Why do so many people study in the library?

There are several advantages to studying in the library. First, research has shown that when people see others studying, it encourages them to keep going – it is a great psychological boost to know there are others in the same boat as you. Second, in the library you have easy access to texts, dictionaries and other useful resources, such as old exam papers, which help you to focus your study.



4. **When is the best time to study?**

- *Before and after lectures*

The most crucial study times are those immediately before and after lectures or tutorials. Preparation before (even if only for five minutes) ensures that you get the maximum information out of lectures and are ready to participate in tutorials. Revision as soon as possible after lectures improves retention and allows you to identify areas that need follow up.

- *Match tasks to daily rhythms*

Pay attention to your own physical state. Make sure that you tackle your most demanding study tasks (reading particularly difficult texts, researching or writing assignments, and so on) at times when you are at your physical and mental peak. If you regularly put these tasks off until 10.30 at night when you are tired from a long day, they will seem even more difficult and intimidating.

5. **What if I have trouble concentrating?**

Reason for concentration problem

Suggestions

Poor study environment

Study somewhere else.
Find a quiet space in the library.
Match difficulty of task to level of alertness.

Trying to take in too much at one time

Avoid sugary foods and drink plenty of water. Break text into chunks and pause after each chunk to make notes, mentally summarise information, and ask yourself questions.

Difficult texts

Take it a paragraph at a time and keep a dictionary handy, OR look for a more general text, which is easier to understand.

Distraction

Acknowledge the distraction, then set it aside, and refocus on the activity at hand. Remember to turn off your mobile phone. Use apps like SelfControl which block distracting websites like Facebook and Twitter.

Lack of purpose

Know why you are studying – i.e., to prepare for a lecture, research an essay, revise material learned in the course so far. Work toward a specific goal.

Boredom

Add a different activity to your study. Make mind-maps or flash cards. Join a study group and discuss what you are learning. Try to relate what you are learning to your own life situation and opinions.

Week Planner

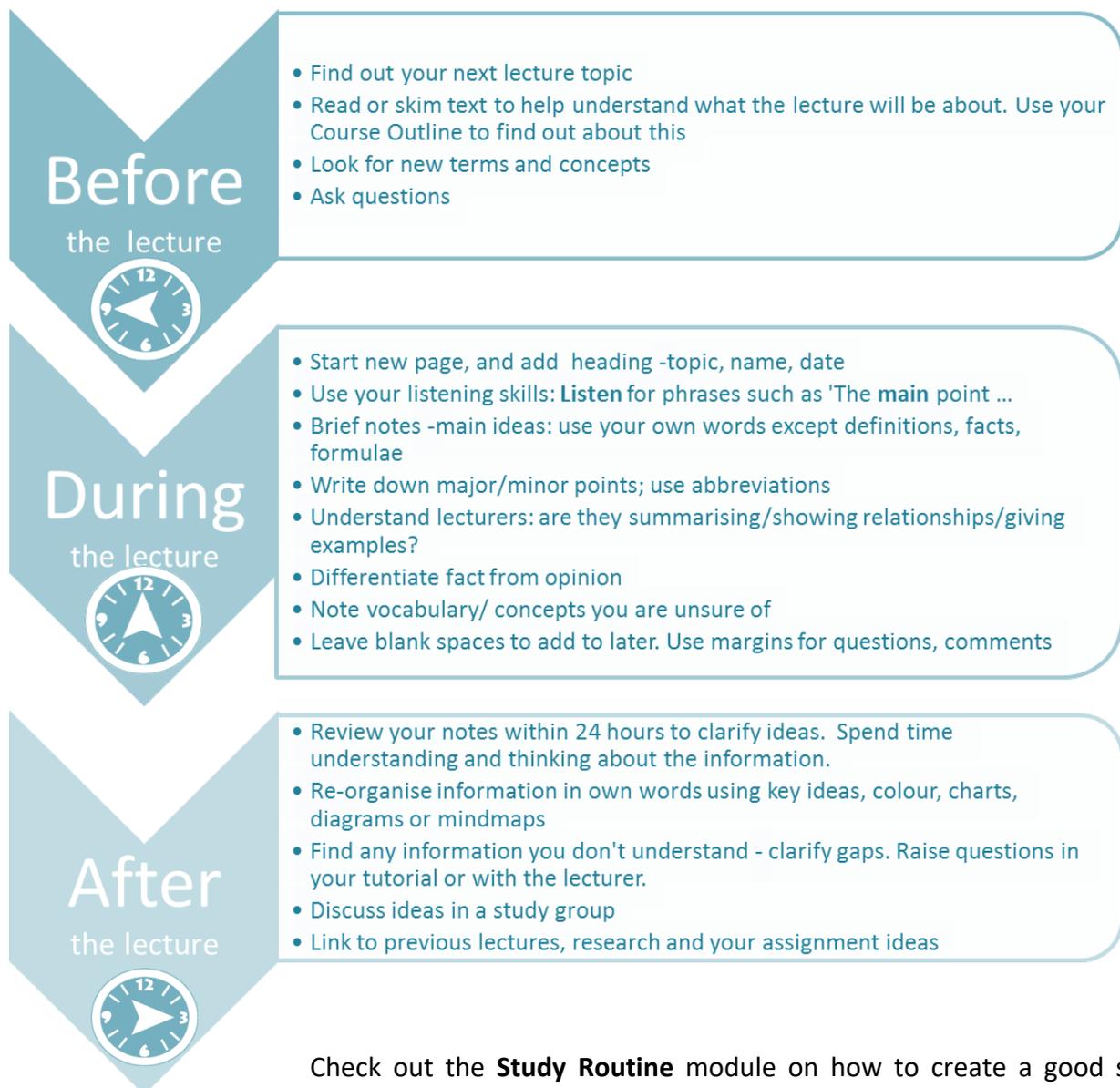
Use this to plan your week

	TIME	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
1. Most Important	7 am							
	8 am							
	9 am							
2. Important	10 am							
	11 am							
	12 pm							
3. Less Important	1 pm							
	2 pm							
	3 pm							
After I've completed my work I will reward myself by	4 pm							
	5 pm							
	6 pm							
	7 pm							
	8 pm							
	9 pm							

Suggested Study Routine

Some preparation before the lecture will improve your understanding of what the lecture is about.

Preparation time will vary from week to week and for each subject. While the following method is recommended, you will need to try these ideas for yourself and see what works for you. Time spent reviewing your notes **within 24 hours** of the lecture will assist your understanding and memory.



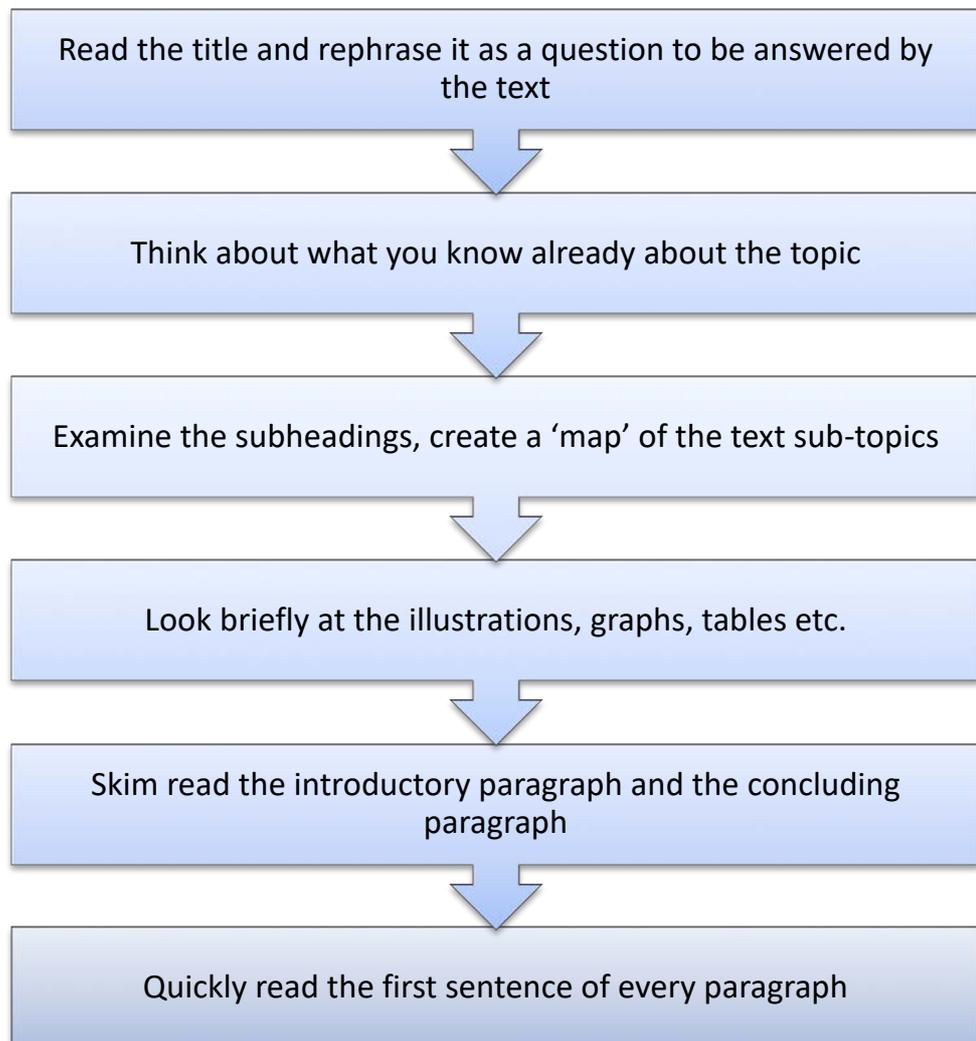
Check out the **Study Routine** module on how to create a good study routine for university: www.victoria.ac.nz/modules/routine/

Academic Reading

Reading is a key part of study at university. You will be expected to develop your understanding of a subject beyond what is given in lectures and tutorials. The readings we are given at university are challenging as they can be lengthy and may contain difficult vocabulary and grammar as well as complex ideas and arguments. However, reading is essential for finding out what other thinkers and experts have to say about a subject, for gathering information and for shaping our own thinking. This section includes some strategies for developing effective reading skills.

Previewing Text

This is an activity you can do before you start reading:



Now decide if it is relevant to your purpose. If yes, use the critical reading tips on page 14.

Effective Reading

How to use the SQ3R System and preview text



Survey

Skim read and look for **signposts**.

Signposts in a book chapter or journal article might include:

- The abstract and/or introduction;
- The conclusion or summary;
- Subheadings (usually in **bold** or *italic*)
- If there are no subheadings, look for topic sentences in paragraphs (often the first sentence.)

Signposts in a book might include:

- The preface and/or introduction;
- The table of contents;
- The index (look for key words from lectures or essay topics);
- Charts, tables, figures and photographs and their captions.

Question

Samples of general questions:

- Why am I reading this text?
- Where do I expect to find the information I need?
- Which parts interest me?

Ways to generate specific questions include:

- Using essay or assignment questions;
- Paying attention to questions the author generates (you may have come across these in your survey of the text);
- Looking for definitions
- Rephrasing titles, chapter headings and subheadings as questions by adding question words – who, what, where, when, why and how – or even “so what?”

Write all your questions down before you move on to the next stage.

Read

- 1 Read the text at your own speed, pausing to think when a concept is difficult or when you recognise the answers to one of your questions.
- 2 It's best not to take notes at this stage – concentrate on reading and thinking. If you must take notes, use key words – don't copy out screeds of text.

Recall

- 1 This is where the note taking begins. Close the book and, using your own words, try to answer the questions you posed earlier, or, if none of your questions were answered, try to recall the MAIN POINTS of what you have just read. You can do this in writing, of course, but recitation – saying it out loud or talking it over with a fellow student – is also effective.
- 2 When to pause from reading and start recalling depends on the difficulty of the text. Very difficult reading or material that is entirely new to you may require a recall session after every paragraph.

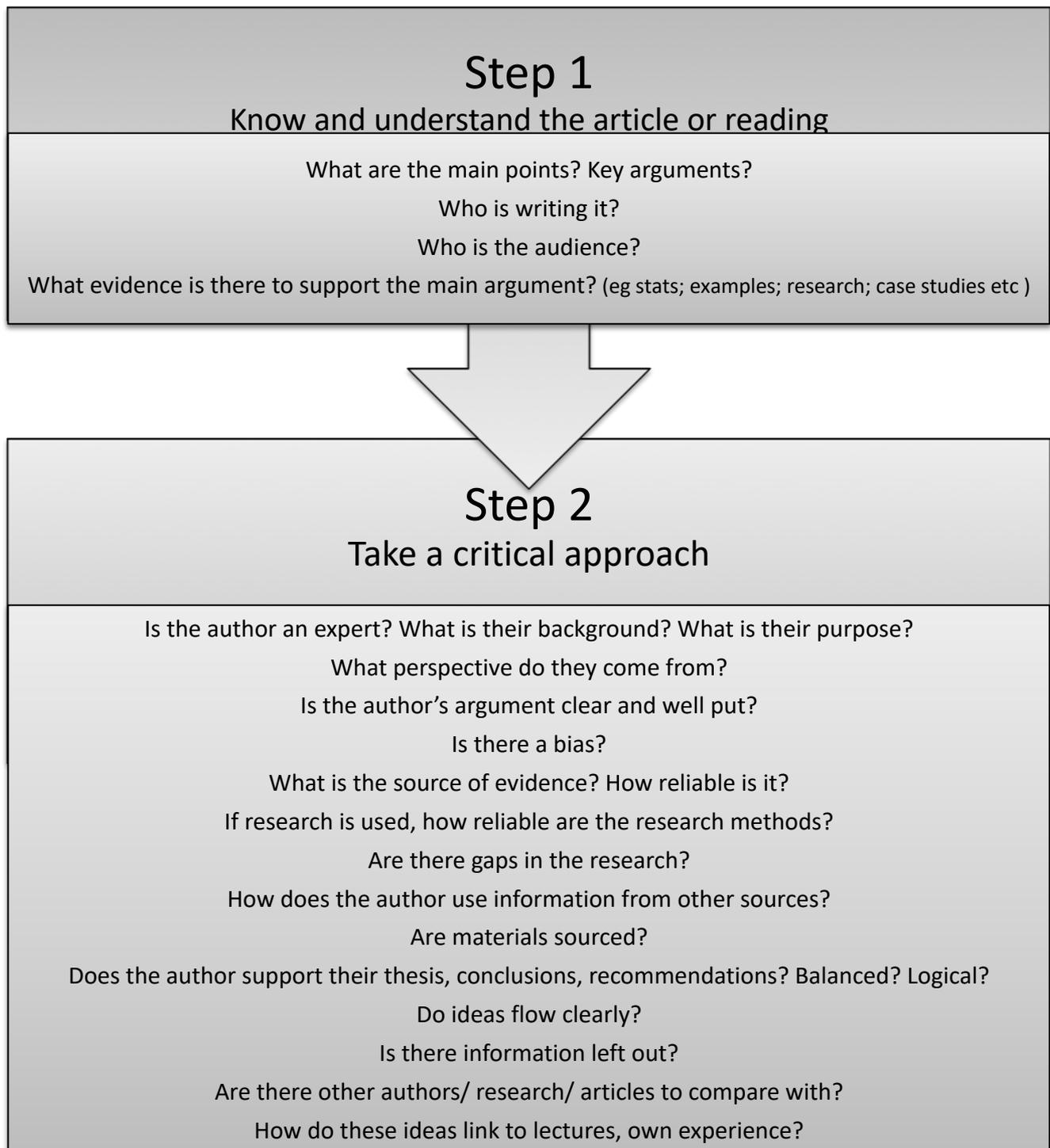
Review

Go back to the text to check whether your recall was accurate and complete:

- Add to or correct your notes as necessary;
- Do this as many times as you need to, to recall and understand the relevant information

Critical Reading and Thinking

Reading and thinking critically are key skills because they help you explore alternative approaches and evaluate strengths and weaknesses in arguments and ideas. They also enable you to learn and understand at a deeper level.



Note taking

The notes you take in lectures, tutorials and labs are important resources while you are studying. They will form a record of what you have learnt and help you to remember the key points. Your notes help keep you actively engaged with your learning. Remember to review your notes regularly.

Why take notes?

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Ideas for taking lecture notes

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.....

Using your notes

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.....
.....

Other tips

- Write the name of the lecturer, date and topic at the top of your notes
- Keep your notes organised online or on paper
- Review your notes within 24 hours. Do it! Review it!
- Practise ten-minute note taking with television and radio programmes
- You can make them interesting and memorable by using colour and diagrams, especially if you are a visual learner
- It gets easier with practice!

Effective Listening

Effective note makers spend most of their lecture time *listening* and *thinking*. The quality of your listening will affect the quality of your notes.

Aids to effective Listening

✓ Prepare **BEFORE** the lecture

- Check Blackboard for lecture slides/information
- Check course outline; know lecture topic
- Skim read recommended texts on the topic
- Revise notes from previous lectures -
- Be familiar with vocabulary - look up unfamiliar words from your readings or previous lecture
- Actively think about the lecturer's questions
- Raise 3 or 4 questions of your own on the lecture topic. These "tune" you into the lecture - actively seek answers

✓ Act like a **LISTENER**

- Sit near the front of the room
- Concentrate on listening
- Make eye contact with the lecturer
- Ask questions if permitted

✓ Focus on **KEY** ideas and structure.

- What are the main ideas of the lecture? (Clues to these come from your pre-reading and the lecturer's verbal and non-verbal cues).
- Distinguish principles from examples and identify primary ideas

✓ Use your mind

- Question and evaluate (make judgements about) material presented. Do you agree with it? Does it relate to the pre-reading you did? Is it difficult to understand?
- Does it relate to something you have learned in another class or elsewhere?
- Attempt to answer the lecturer's questions (even if it's only to yourself).
- Identify issues that can be raised in tutorials. Note down your thoughts

✓ Know the lecturer

- Work out your lecturer's format
- How does the lecture begin?
- Are there diagrams to copy?
- Does he/she reiterate key points?
- Does he/she summarise at the end?

Note Taking Tips

Clearly **LABEL** your notes. This also applies when you are taking notes digitally.

If using pen and paper, use white space within your notes at the top/sides/bottom and in between chunks.

SPACE enables you to learn from and process information later. An ideal white space is a margin to add...

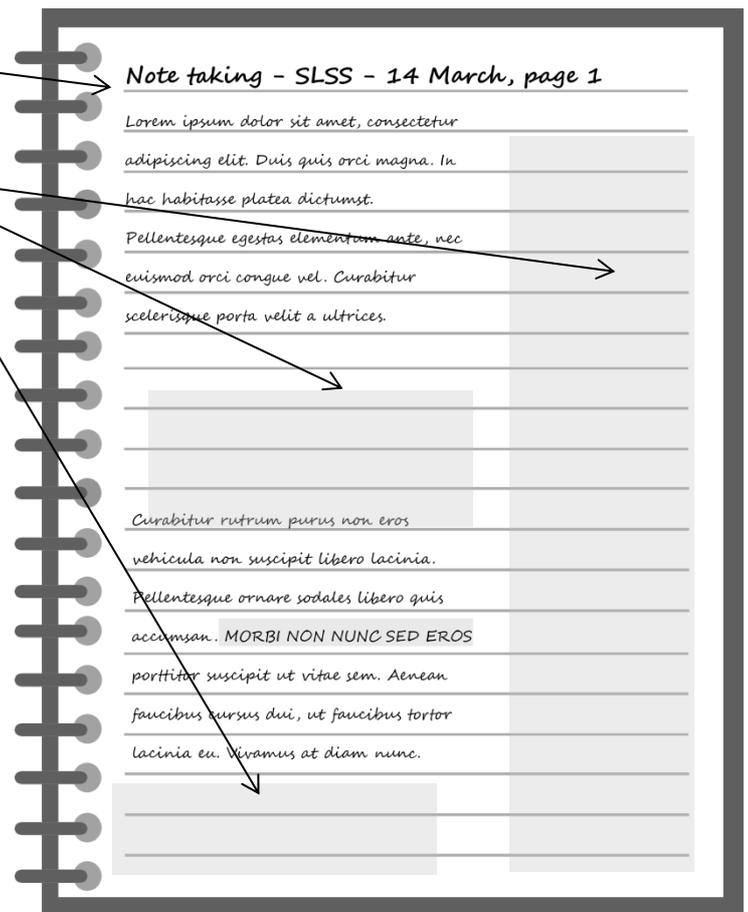
- content
- extra notes later, during revision
- supplementary points or meanings or examples
- references
- notices e.g. exam hints

Leaving blanks helps you find and fill in missing points later and/ or a chance to draw diagrams, visuals etc.

STRUCTURE the information
Work out a numbering/ lettering system that identifies main headings, sub-headings, and points related to each idea.

LISTEN and expect these in any lecture:

- Preamble
- Key points
- Extensions
- Examples/ definitions/ references
- Asides
- Questions/ answers
- Observations
- Summaries/ conclusions



A. (Main)

1. (Intermediate)

a. (minor)

i. (point)

ii. (point)

b. (minor)

i. (point)

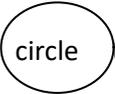
c. (minor)

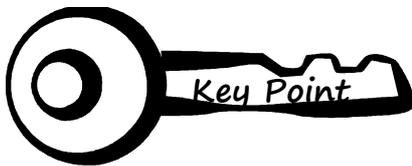
i. (point)

ii. (point)

Follow consistent symbols or structure. Note that you may not be able to structure your lecture until the conclusion of the class - often the margin (white space) can be useful for this.

Vary the **FORMAT** within the structure, but try to be consistent across all your notes.

- Underline
-  circle the important points
-  box definitions
- Use CAPITALS to clarify points
- Highlight/ colour
- Symbols e.g.



CONVENTIONS

- Start a new line for each new point
- Delete mistakes with a single line
- Use common abbreviations, and your own shorthand (but remember to be consistent)
- Use examples and diagrams whenever possible

RE-WORK YOUR NOTES

Preferably within 24 hours - this will establish a sound recall and help develop your thinking and understanding of the topics and issues discussed.

What to do?

- * Fill in any gaps in your notes
- * Clarify definitions, terms etc.
- * Finish diagrams
- * Raise questions and seek answers from your tutor or lecturer
- * Find areas that you don't understand and need to follow-up in tutorials
- * Rework notes that are unclear
- * Learn as you go

How to create a study routine for university



Check out the Study Routine module on how to create a good study routine for university: wgt.ac.nz/modules/routine

Finding answers on campus—just ask

If you have queries, the place to ask is *Victoria Info Ihonui* at the Kelburn Library entrances on Levels 1 and 2 of the Hub. Friendly staff are available to answer general queries and questions about:

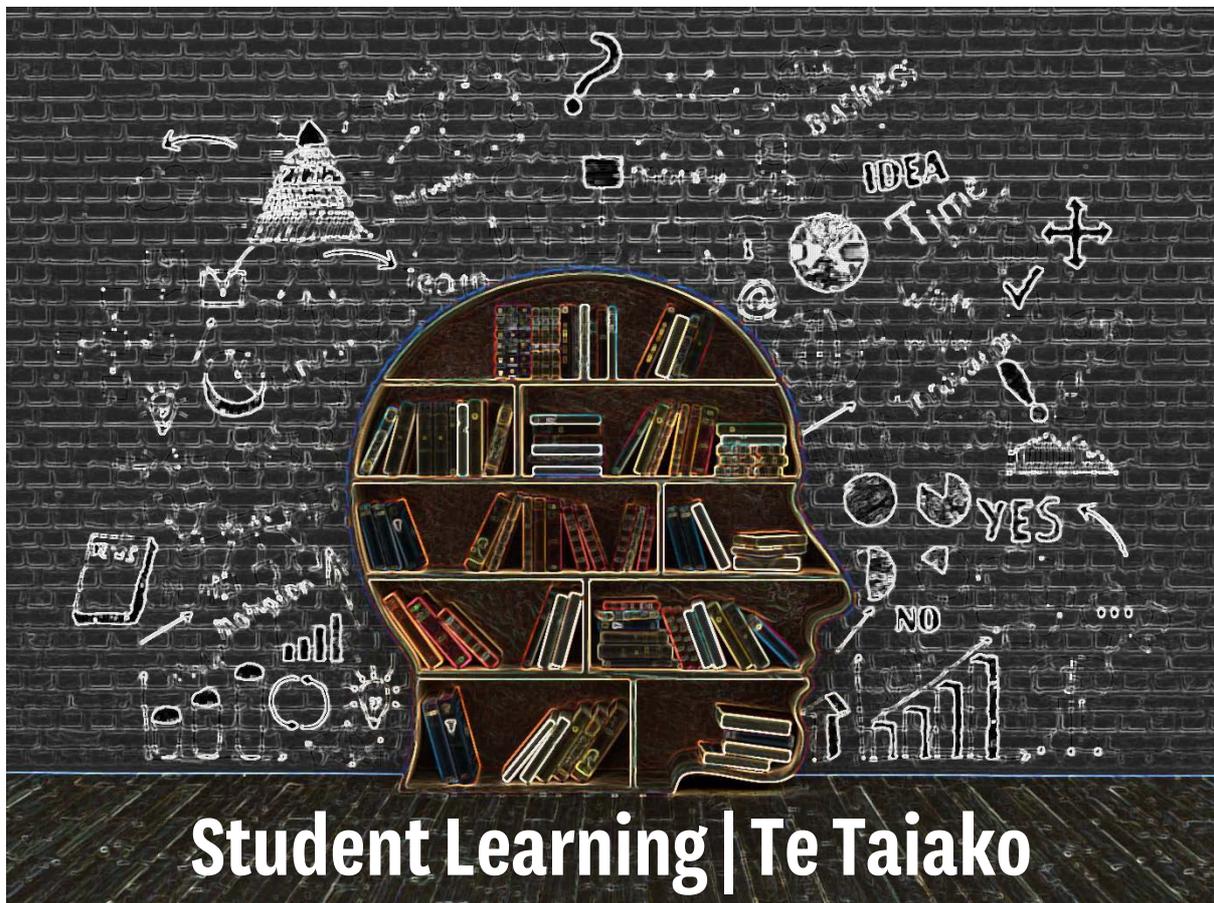
- Student services
- Library services
- Finding your way around
- 15-minute Study and Writing Help Desk appointments with learning advisers
- Referrals for longer consultations with Student Services staff or librarians

wgt.ac.nz/infoihonui



Notes

A series of 20 horizontal dotted lines for writing notes.



Student Learning | Te Taiako

Make an appointment with a Learning Adviser at any stage during the essay-writing process, to discuss your studies.

If you want to know more about...

- ⇒ Plagiarism
- ⇒ Referencing
- ⇒ Essay writing
- ⇒ Exam skills
- ⇒ Grammar
- ⇒ Note taking
- ⇒ Reading
- ⇒ Learning strategies
- ⇒ Maths and Statistics
- ⇒ PASS
- ⇒ Postgraduate support
- ⇒ One-to-one appointments
- ⇒ Workshops

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Phone : +64 4-463 5999

Email : student-learning@vuw.ac.nz

Web : wgt.ac.nz/student-learning

StudyHub : wgt.ac.nz/studyhub

(self-access handouts on various study skills)