

MAKING THE
DAYS COUNT

**SPECIAL
POINTS OF
INTEREST:**

- How to make good lecture notes
- How to review, revise and reduce your lecture notes
- How to condense your notes for studying
- How revision and repetition improves your knowledge retention

Key Words

How to, condensing lecture notes, knowledge retention, independent learner

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How to make, revise and condense lecture notes

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How to Take Good Lecture Notes

Lectures are much more complex than those in secondary school. Taking notes is critical as is making sense of your notes the next day. Believe it or not there are 6 stages of taking good lecture notes. Note taking is an active process with only the 1st step done in class.

Tips for Step One

Date all your notes, keep them in the correct sequence (number the pages) and end your notes with a line or a distinct mark that makes sense to you.

What is the lecture theme? This is the big picture. Lectures typically have an outline and one or a few themes. If your lecturer gets on a roll and you are unsure how it relates to the lecture, ask a question to gain clarity.



Underline new vocabulary so you can look up the definition later and see how it fits into the big picture of the lecture and subject.

Look for code or signal words that can indicate relevant context. Code words can indicate relationships, significance or order. For example: There are 3 causes... / The first reason.../ In the lead up to... / some view this as...while others believed... / there are 4 steps to the process... / the relation to x was...

Compare your notes to the subject text and with others in your study group (don't have a study group? Get one!). If your notes seem confusing with no pattern, go directly to the textbook to compare chapter titles and subtitles and content with your notes.

Develop your own shorthand that will allow you to write faster. For example: ch = chapter; pg = page; def = definition; sp = spelling; @ = at/about/around; # = number/amount; ↑ = increase; ↓ = decreases; bf = before; bc = because and etc. = ex-cetera ;o)



“The roots of education are bitter, but the fruit is sweet.”

- Aristotle (philosopher)



Become an Independent Learner

- * Attend classes, participate, think, wonder, question and critique
- * Read and reflect on assigned readings
- * Think, wonder, question and critique (I know this is in the first point but it is worth repeating)
- * Strive to know more than what you think is required to pass
- * Be open-minded to new learning opportunities which can be disguised and fun
- * Plan and prepare for assignments, read and utilize all relevant assignment feedback to improve your work and your grades.



*“Success is not final,
failure is not fatal: it is
the courage to continue
that counts.”*

*- Winston Churchill
(statesman)*

The Five R's to Great Lecture Notes

Record your lectures if you have trouble writing it all down. Some lecturers record their lectures and post them (so far so good).

Reduce and summarize the main points with key words. Try to recall the information presented in class.

Reflect and think about the

subject ideas in your notes. Think about applications and examples of these ideas and how you may use them. Try to relate the concept to something you are familiar with.

Review your notes weekly and recite (your pet would love to hear about your rivet-

ing lectures). Try colour coding your notes for easy linking of themes and ideas.

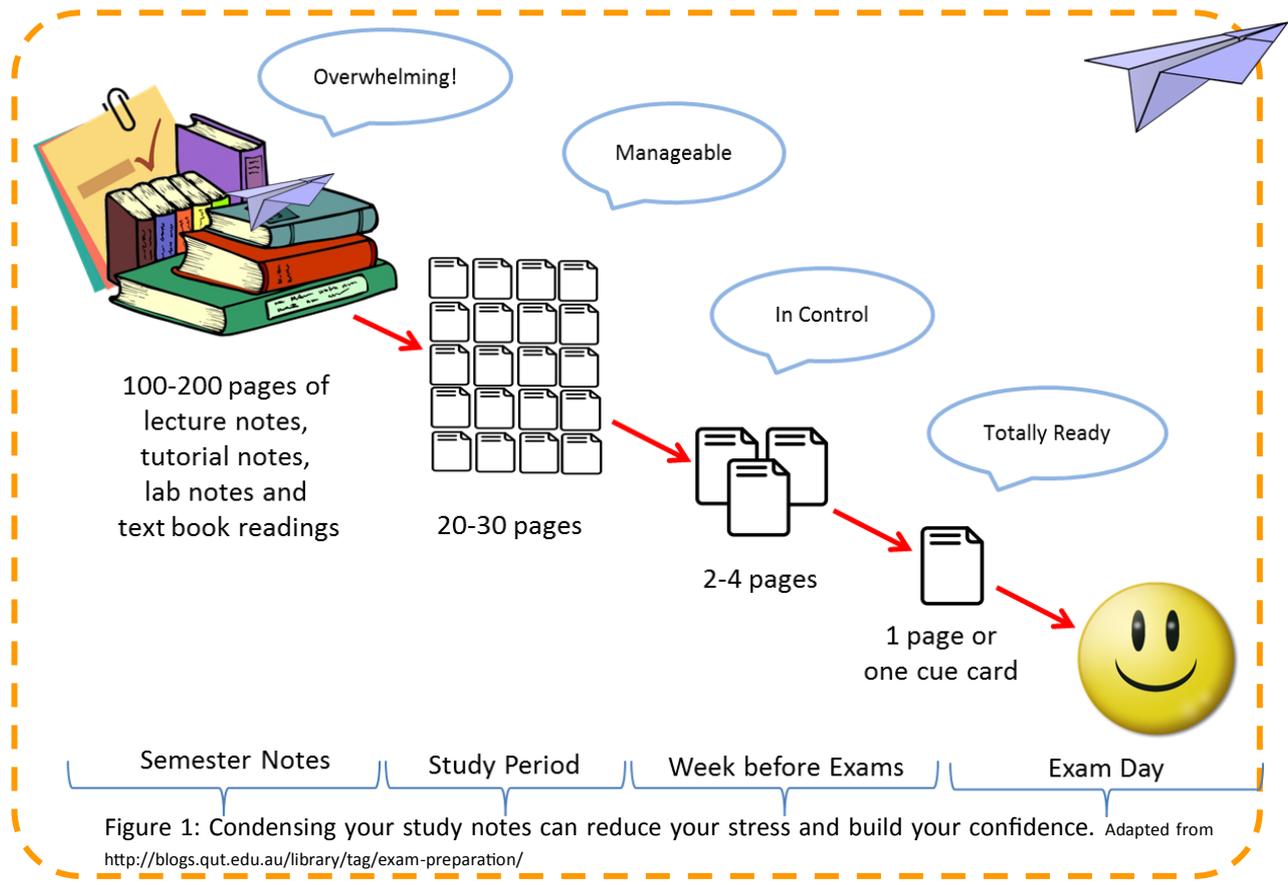
Re-reduce and briefly summarize your notes again (see figure 1).

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Condensing Your Notes

Typically students leave condensing their notes till the end of the semester or the week before exams. A mountain of notes can be overwhelming and intimidating. The key to success is to continually condense and review your notes throughout the semester. If you condense your notes throughout the semester you will be more prepared for your exams and by study week you will already know most of it. Being organized and proactive in condensing your notes (figure 1) will reduce stress and build your confidence.





Knowledge Retention and Repetition

The number of times material is reviewed improves the retention level and reduces the amount of effort required to gain that knowledge. The reduction in effort required to gain knowledge (represented by the purple arrow in figure 2) after three reviews compared to the retention level after one review (depicted by the red arrow) is considerable. Much more effort is required to gain knowledge after one review compared to post three reviews. The more effort and time required to gain knowledge particularly in a short timeframe before an exam will increase stress and frustration. Preparation is key!

“Nothing is impossible, the word itself spells I’m possible !”

- Audrey Hepburn
(actress)

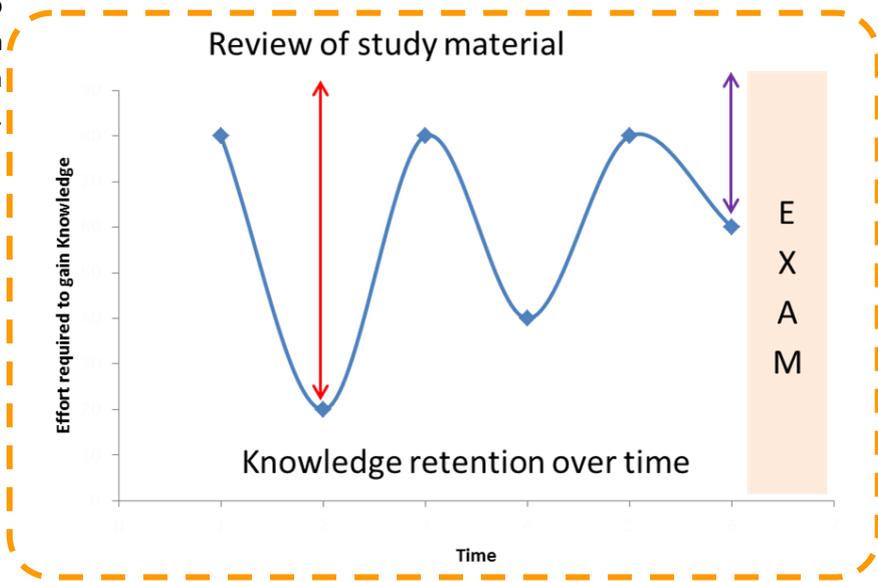


Figure 2: The amount of knowledge retained over time in comparison to the amount of effort required to gain knowledge. Adapted from centre of student development, McMaster University 2004.

