FOR STUDENTS

# METHODS OF EFFECTIVE NOTE-TAKING

Recommendations and practical exercises

Social, pedagogical and psychological sector

64-15-52

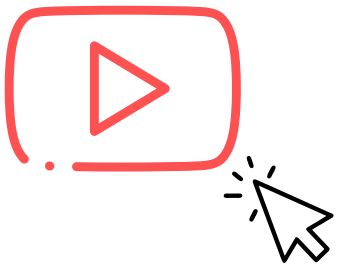
psyconsult@grsmu.by

# Methods of taking notes for students

| Method | Where can use it |
|---|---|
| **The Cornell method** | Lectures with a clear structure, exam preparation. |
| **Mind Maps** | Visualization of complex topics with multiple connections, brainstorming, planning. |
| **Linear method (with improvements)** | Quick lectures, where information is presented sequentially. |
| **Tables and diagrams** | Comparison of concepts, classification, topics “pros and cons", “causes and effects". |
| **The Flow Method** | Lectures are discussions where the train of thought is important, for deep understanding. |

## Practical exercises

# 1. The Cornell method



The page is divided into three unequal parts.
Algorithm:

- Right column ("Notes"): During the lecture, write down the main ideas, facts, formulas. Use abbreviations and symbols.
- The left column ("Signals/Questions"): After the lecture (preferably on the same day), you formulate questions about the material from the right column or keyword signals. It helps to actively comprehend the material.
- The last block ("Summary"): After the lesson, you write 2-3 sentences that summarize the whole essence of what is written on the page. This helps to highlight the main thing.

| Date | Heading |
|---|---|
| Keywords, dates, surnames | Notes |
| | Summary (2-3 sentences) |

| + | - |
|---|---|
| • A great instrument for repetition<br>• The structure helps to highlight the main thing | • It takes time for registration after the lecture.<br>• Not suitable for very dynamic lectures. |

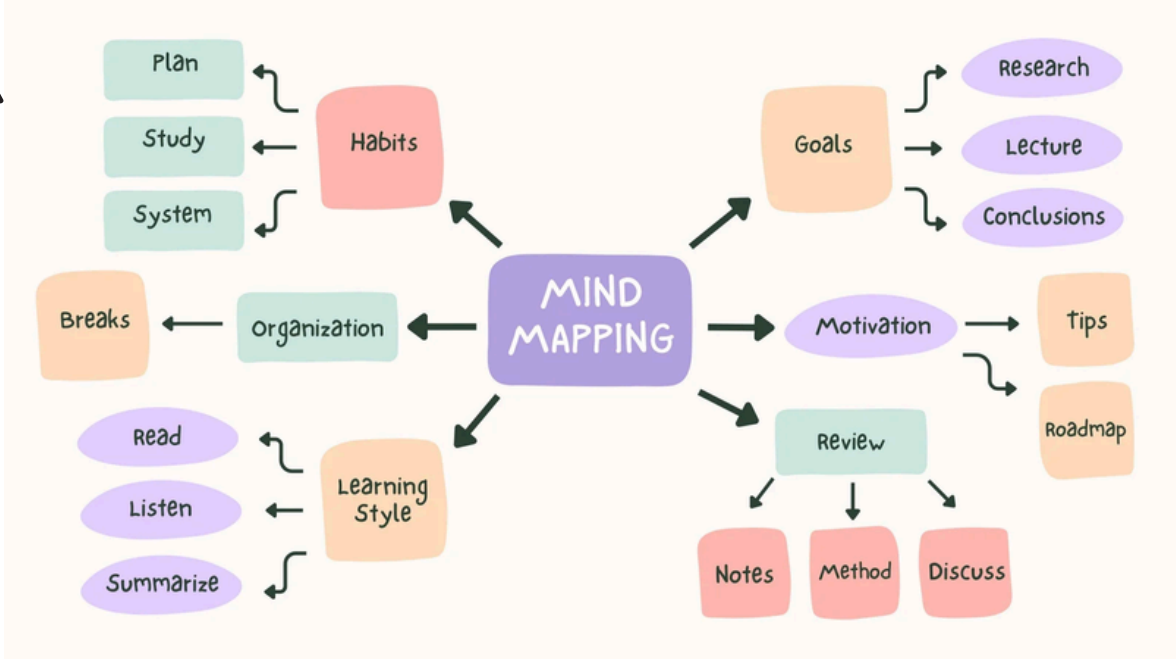
# 2. Mind Maps

The main theme is placed in the center of the page. Lines are drawn from it to the key concepts (1st level), from which, in turn, smaller details (2nd level) depart.
Algorithm:

- Start from the center with the main theme (use an image).
- Add lines with key sections (in different colors).
- From each line, add lines with details, examples, and definitions.

Use keywords (not sentences), symbols, arrows, and colors.

EXAMPLE




| + | - |
|---|---|
| • Allows you to see the whole picture and connections.<br>• Easy to remember. | • It is inconvenient to write down detailed facts, numbers, formulas.<br>• It can be chaotic. |

**Online resources for maps** 1 2

# 3. Linear method (with improvements)

The most famous, but not the most effective method.
Information is recorded in text in the form of theses and sentences.
How to improve (turn from simple to effective):

- Use paragraphs and indents.
- Use a system of abbreviations and symbols (→, ∴, ≈, i.e., etc.).
- Number the points (1., 2., 3.) and sub-items (a, b, c).
- Highlight definitions, names, and dates in color.
- Leave placefor further notes and questions.

## General recommendations

1. Start with a headline that reflects the main theme. Use subheadings to divide information into logical blocks.
2. Use different font styles: highlight key terms in **bold**, use *italics* for accents and underscores for important points.
3. Use different colors to highlight sections or themes, but don't overdo it. Two or three colors are enough.
4. Write briefly and to the point. Use markers and numbering to simplify perception.
5. Add your notes, comments, or thoughts to make the synopsis more unique and personalized.

| + | - |
| --- | --- |
| • It is universal and familiar.<br>• Allows you to quickly fix information. | • The risk of mechanical writing without thinking.<br>• A synopsis can turn into a text that is difficult to read. |

# 4. The method of tables and diagrams

You draw a table with the necessary columns before or right during the lecture.

Algorithm:

1. Determine the basis for comparison (for example, “theory"” “founder", “main idea").
2. Draw a table with the appropriate column headings.
3. Write it down during the lecture.

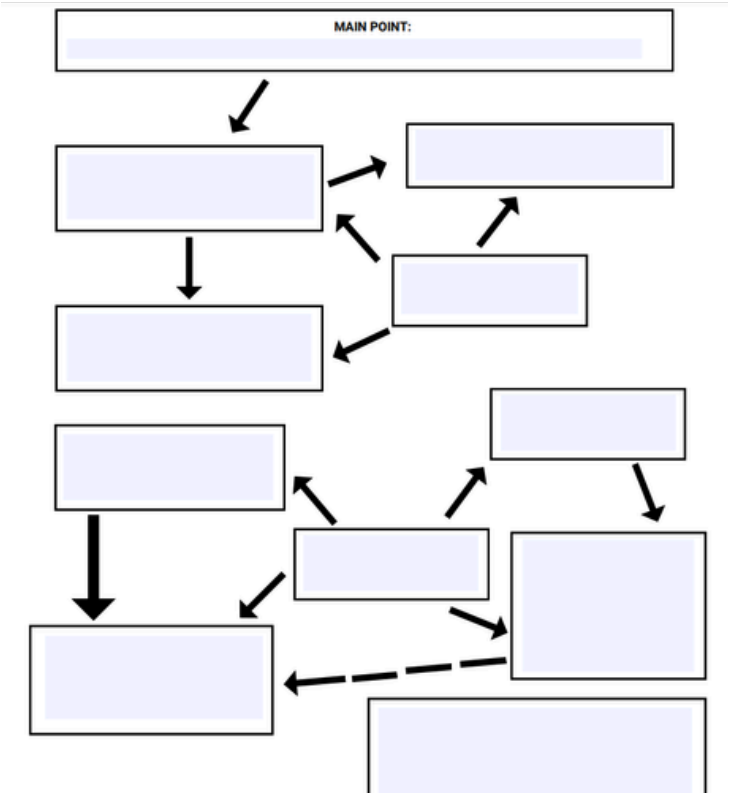
| Criteria | Criteria | Criteria | Criteria |
|---|---|---|---|
| ... | | | |
| ... | | | |
| ... | | | |

| + | - |
|---|---|
| • The information is presented clearly and in a structured manner.<br>• Ideal for comparative analysis. | • It is not suitable for descriptive lectures without a clear structure.<br>• You need to understand the logic of the material in advance. |

# 5. Flow Method

You don't write down everything, but only key ideas and concepts, and then connect them with arrows, showing connections and the process of thinking. The emphasis is on understanding rather than literally writing.

- Algorithm:
  - Listen and try to understand the meaning, not write down the words.
  - Write down the key terms.
  - Use arrows to connect them, and draw diagrams to show how the ideas relate to each other.
  - Write your thoughts and questions directly in the summary.




| + | - |
|---|---|
| • It involves you in the thinking process as much as possible.<br>• It helps to create deep personal associations. | • The notes can only be understood by you.<br>• It requires high concentration and the ability to quickly understand the essence. |

# Practical exercises

**1.**

1. Take your previous lecture.
2. Rewrite it using the Cornell method: in the right column — the main theses, in the left — formulate clarifying questions to them, at the end — a summary of 2-3 sentences.

**2.**

1. Choose a topic to compare (for example, two theories, systems).
2. Draw a table with columns: Criteria for comparison.
3. Fill it out by finding the information in a textbook or lecture.

**3.**

1. Listen up a short lecture or podcast.
2. Instead of writing down, write keywords on a page and immediately connect them with arrows, showing how they are related to each other. Add your questions and comments.

**4.**

1. Take a page of text from a textbook or an article.
2. Your task is to rework it into a thesis using:
   - Abbreviations (→, i.e.)
   - Bulleted lists
   - Highlighting key terms in color
   - Subheadings

**Advice**:
*Start training with the help of educational materials (textbook, lectures on YouTube, podcasts). This way you can safely practice the skill without stress.*