

Note Cards for Learning

Because kinesthetic learners do best when they are moving or doing something, 3x5 cards are usually preferable to a notebook for taking notes. There are two basic ways to use them, either for memorization and quick reference, or as the boxes of an essay outline. In the first case, as flash cards, the questions, topics, problems, or categories go on one side and the answers, supporting details, solutions, or examples on the other. This easily becomes a game of "flip the card." In the second case, as parts of an essay diagram, the note cards are physically arranged on the desk to suggest the order in which you will explore your ideas in the essay. For more about note cards, here's Grace Fleming:

10 Tips for Taking Notes: Your research note cards should include all the information necessary to write your term paper. You should take extreme care as you create these note cards.

1. Start with a fresh pack of research note cards. Large, lined cards are best, so that you can make your own detailed notes. Consider color coding your cards by topic to keep your paper organized.
2. Devote an entire note card to each idea or note. Don't try to fit two sources \ notes on one card.
3. Gather more than you need. Use the library and the Internet to find potential sources for your research paper. Research until you have about three times as many as your teacher recommends.
4. Narrow down your sources. As you read your potential sources, you will find that some are helpful, others are not, and some will repeat the same information you already have. Keep only solid sources.
5. Record as you go. From each source, write down any notes or quotes that could be useful in your paper. As you take notes, paraphrase all information to reduce the chances of committing plagiarism.
6. Include everything. For each note you will need to record:

Author's name \ Title of reference (book, article, interview, etc.) \ Publisher, date, place, year \ issue, volume \ page number \ Your own personal comments
7. Create your own system and stick to it. For instance, you may want to pre-mark each card with spaces for each category, just to make sure you don't leave anything out.
8. Be exact. If at any time you write down information word for word, be sure to include all punctuation marks, capitalizations, and breaks exactly as they appear, and double-check for accuracy.
9. If you think it might be useful, write it down. Don't ever pass over information because you're not sure whether it will be useful! This is a common and costly mistake in research. More often than not, you find that the passed-over tidbit is critical to your paper, and then you won't find it again.
10. Avoid using abbreviations and code words as you record notes, especially if you plan to quote. Your own writing can look completely foreign to you later. You may not be able to understand your own clever codes after a day or two, either.