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National Open University
School of Humanities

BEGS 183
WRITING AND STUDY SKILLS

BLOCK

3

NOTE TAKING

UNIT 1

Learning Study Skills **04**

UNIT 2

Techniques of Note Taking – Main and Subordinate Points **22**

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Making Effective Summaries **55**

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BLOCK 3 NOTE TAKING

Introduction:

Block 3 also has 4 units. The focus of Unit 1 **Learning Study Skills** is on different types of strategies by which we are able to gather, store and retrieve material/texts whenever required, especially for assignments, tests and examinations. Unit 2 **Techniques of Note-taking – Main and Subordinate Points** helps you with note-taking and making skills. How to distinguish main points from subordinate information, the shortening devices that you should use and why they are necessary – these are some of the issues we take up for discussion here. We also discuss the efficacy of the Cornell method of note-taking/ making. In the next unit **Techniques of Note Taking – Use of Tables and Diagrams** we suggest ways of organising your notes, such as using tables, tree diagrams, flow charts, pie charts and so on. Finally, in unit 4 **Making Effective Summaries**, we take you through the summarizing process. We make you aware of the condensation techniques which involve identifying the topic sentence, the key ideas, the main claim and supporting arguments, etc. We also show you ways of summarizing a text.

As you will notice, the units are strewn with activities. Do practise them, they will certainly help you, not only in your student life, but even later at the workplace, when you need to take notes at meetings and discussions. Perhaps these skills will come in handy when you make minutes of meetings or write reports and proposals.

Hope you enjoyed the course and found it useful.

Acknowledgement

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UNIT 1: LEARNING STUDY SKILLS

Structure

- 1.0 Objectives
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- 1.2 What are Study Skills?
 - 1.2.1 Gathering Skills
 - 1.2.2 Reference Skills
 - 1.2.3 Skimming and Scanning
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 - 1.3.1 Retrieval Skills
- 1.4 Why do Students Need Training in Study Skills?
- 1.5 Let Us Sum Up
- 1.6 Suggested Reading
- 1.7 Answers

1.0 OBJECTIVES

This unit aims to introduce you to the concept of study skills. At the end of this unit, you will know: What study skills are, the various types of study skills, and why is it necessary to develop your study skills.

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Today language is viewed as a 'skill' rather than as 'knowledge'. What does this mean? If you want to acquire knowledge about any subject; you read books or listen to lectures. For example, if you want to know about the Moghul rule in India, you read history books, or you listen to talks/lectures on this topic. Thus, you acquire more knowledge. On the other hand, if you want to learn singing, you don't read books on singing, you practice singing until you attain competence. The same is true of dancing, painting, cycling or swimming. These are known as 'skills'. Skills are acquired through practice. Language is also regarded as a skill by experts. The more you speak, the more fluent you become. The more you read, the faster you can read. There are, as you know, four linguistic skills: listening, speaking, reading and writing. These four skills have to be mastered by any user of the language. If you want to study anything through a language, you have to master what are known as study skills. In the next section we shall make an attempt to define study skills and also look at the various types of study skills.

1.2 WHAT ARE STUDY SKILLS?

In very simple terms, 'study skills' may be defined as skills which help learners to study more efficiently. There are two ways of being more effective learners: (a) **Directly**—by studying to increase your knowledge of the subject matter. b) **Indirectly**—by improving your ability to learn independently and at will.

We must be careful to distinguish linguistic skills from study skills. Linguistic skills help you to ‘communicate’; study skills, on the other hand, enable you to ‘study’; and the process of study involves four operations: perception, comprehension, retention and retrieval. In other words you should first perceive what is relevant to your needs, and select only those areas which are important. You cannot study everything available in every book/every internet site you can lay hands on. Your study must be focused and for this you need to develop the skill of reading with comprehension. What is not understood is not learnt. Comprehension thus constitutes an important stage in the process of learning. However, mere comprehension does not guarantee mastery of the subject; for human memory is so transient, that, what is understood, may easily be forgotten, hence you have to make special efforts to retain what you have learnt. Different students adopt different means towards retention. Some students blindly memorize the whole lesson; brighter learners, however, try to remember the basic principles in the form of short notes, which could be paraphrased later. The last stage in the learning process involves the retrieval of what has been learnt. When required, for example, in the examination hall, you should be able to retrieve all that you have learnt throughout the year. We shall look at each of these sub-skills of study in greater detail.

In the literature on study skills, we refer to three major types of study skills corresponding to the four operations in the process of study. They are:

- (a) Gathering skills (perception, comprehension)
- (b) Storing skills (Retention)
- (c) Retrieval skills (Retrieval)

1.2.1 Gathering Skills

These skills enable learners to identify and locate relevant information. These skills include **reference** skills and sub-skills of reading viz. scanning and skimming. Together they equip the learner with the tools to find sources of information. Reference skills can be further subdivided according to the material to be consulted into the following:

- i use of dictionary, thesaurus, etc.
- ii use of library

1.2.2 Reference Skills

Use of dictionary, thesaurus, etc.

As we know, a very important source of information in ESL (English as a second language) teaching/learning situation is the dictionary. Most of our learners use a bilingual dictionary and consult the dictionary when they encounter a problem with the meaning of a word. The use of a dictionary just to check the meaning is a valid use but also one of the many uses a dictionary can be put to. A good monolingual dictionary of English for learners is the most invaluable source of information regarding the knowledge of a word, which involves pronunciation, spelling, meaning (core meaning and extended meanings), grammar, collocations, idiomatic expressions, associations, etc. (Refer to the unit on ‘Enhancing Vocabulary Skills’).

The dictionary remains an under-utilized source of information, if it is used at all. Every dictionary comes with a section at the beginning telling us how to use it with detailed annotated examples. However, these introductory sections often remain unread. Yet it is almost

peremptory that learners know that an entry for a word is made up of several parts. Different symbols and typefaces indicate key features of the word –its pronunciation, for example and how to spell its various forms – as well as its definitions and grammatical information. Here is an entry from the Longman Active Study Dictionary of English for *accessible*:

Accessible/ək' sɛsɪb(ə)//*ad* easy to get or get into, to, or at
The island is accessible only by boat. – opposite – inaccessible – accessibility
/əksɛsɪ' bɪlɪti/n [U]

The headword is **accessible**, the space within the two slanting lines tells us about the pronunciation, for which phonetic symbols are used. After the pronunciation comes the information about the word class (i.e. the part of speech) it belongs to. The abbreviation *adj* tells us that *accessible* is an adjective. This is followed by the meaning after which is given an example illustrating the use of the word in a particular context. Then we get the opposite of the word. Last of all another word *accessibility* is mentioned, which is a derivative from *accessible*. We are given information about its word class, i.e. n(oun) and are told that it is an uncountable noun, indicated by [U] in square brackets. The meaning is not repeated.

We give below a few tasks through which learners can be taught how to exploit the full potential of a dictionary. (We are using the Longman Active Study Dictionary of English for the tasks.)

Task 1 Alphabetical ordering

The words are given in the dictionary in simple alphabetical order. You should be able to decide which word comes after or before another word.

Find the word in each column, which is not in alphabetical order. Put it in its correct place.

A	B
Behalf	sector
Bellyful	secondly
believe	secret
behave	second nature
belly button	Santa Claus

Task 2 Spelling and Pronunciation

The dictionary gives the spelling and pronunciation of the words. The pronunciation is given in phonetic script. You should make yourself familiar with the phonetic symbols and the sounds they represent.

i In two of the following words *i.e. has been wrongly used* in place of *ei*. Use a dictionary to find them:

believe, recieve, retrieve, percieve, grieve

ii Use a dictionary to find the silent letters in the words given below, i.e. the letters which are not pronounced. For example, the letter *b* is not pronounced in *climb*.

comb, island, knife, palm, psychology

Task 3 Word Class Labels

The dictionary mentions the word class for every entry, which tells us whether a word is *an adjective, a verb or a preposition*.

Consult a dictionary to see which word class the following words belong to (some of the words may belong to more than one word class):

mind, chair, please, in, vegetable, game

Task 4 Grammar

The dictionary gives us the information whether a particular noun is countable or uncountable. It tells us whether a verb is used with or without an object, or whether an adjective is or is not followed by a noun and many other kinds of information about the grammar of a word.

i Use a dictionary to find out which of the following words are used in singular, in plural or both (if in plural, then also find the spelling and the pronunciation):

house, milk, news, progress, in-laws

ii Look up the following verbs in a dictionary and say whether they are used with an object, without an object or in either way

bring, cross, fill, keep, remain

Task 5 Meaning

The dictionary may give more than one meaning for an entry. When consulting a dictionary, you should be able to find the right meaning for the word used in a text.

Look at the entry for the word 'free' taken from the Longman Active Study Dictionary of English, which has three different meanings. Below are also given three citations in which 'free' is used in different senses. Match the senses with the citations.

Free / fri: / adj	1	able to act as you wish, and not limited or controlled
	2	not a prisoner
	3	costing nothing
Citations:	1	all political prisoners will be set free next week.
	2	I've got a couple of free tickets for tonight's concert.
	3	People are demanding the right to free speech and a free press.

Task 6 Collocations and Idioms

The dictionary gives us information about the way certain words collocate with certain other words; the dictionary also makes available to us idioms (i.e. combinations of words with a fixed meaning in which the meaning is not deducible from the combination of the given words).

(i) Match the words or phrases in Column A with a word or phrase from Column B.

Column A

1. a series
2. to exert
3. a practical
4. a slight
5. to inflict
6. to serve

Column B

- a purpose
- pain
- improvement
- of events
- pressure
- suggestion

(ii) Read the following sentences and spot the idioms used in them. Make a guess at the key word and look up the idiom in a dictionary.

1. The island has been a bone of contention between the two countries for many years.
2. The little girl is the apple of her father's eye.
3. The man would hit the roof at the slightest provocation.
4. The boy keeps rubbing the teacher the wrong way.
5. You've had a hectic time, now it's time to let your hair down.

Using a Thesaurus

The word thesaurus means 'a treasure-house' in Latin. And it is indeed a treasure house of words for a writer. But it needs careful handling. The basic point to keep in mind is that a thesaurus is not a substitute for a dictionary. It is a word-finder. It is a handy tool to help recall a word that has slipped the mind and it gives us many alternative ways of writing when we want to express ourselves more elegantly and effectively. But we have to remember that a thesaurus does not tell us how to use a particular word or expression. For that we need a dictionary.

Use of Library

When using a library, learners should know how to use the catalogue to locate the book they are looking for. In modern times, catalogues are computerized – hence some knowledge of computers is essential. After they know how to locate the material, they should learn how to refer to the material. Every book that they think is relevant may not be really useful. Many times they have to make choices; they have to select not only relevant books but also relevant chapters of books and relevant articles for purposes of study. It is not possible to go through every book, every chapter, and every article in depth before they decide whether it contains useful information or not. So the learners have to know the techniques to make a quick survey and try to make a guess if the material is relevant to their specific need. This requires training in surveying skills. Some of the questions we can ask are:

- Is the material relevant to the subject I am interested in?
- Which parts are relevant?
- Is it a recent publication or an old one?
- If an old one, is it a reprint?
- Is it by a known author?
- What is the level at which it is pitched?
- What are the comments about it?

Parts of the book that may help you answer your questions are (as given in Wallace,1988):

1. the publisher's blurb (i.e. the publisher's description of what the book is about – usually to be found on the book-jacket).
2. reviewer's comments (often also found quoted on the book jacket but remember only the good reviews will be quoted!)
3. The foreword or preface.
4. The contents page.
5. The index.
6. The printing history (i.e. when the book was first published, reprinted, new edition issued – usually printed on one of the early pages).

Other parts worth looking at while surveying a book are the title and the sub-title, if any, which help us anticipate the main theme of the text, the first chapter, which contains the introduction, and the last chapter in which the author generally summarizes his/her arguments and presents his/her conclusion.

When reading a chapter or an article or a large passage, we must survey it by looking at the title which often hints at the main idea either directly or indirectly, and by reading the first sentence in each paragraph, which often contains the main idea to be developed in greater detail in subsequent sentences. Sometimes the first and the last paragraph of a chapter may also help you get at the main drift of the chapter.

1.2.3 Skimming and Scanning

The reference skills have to be complemented by training in skimming and scanning the two sub-skills of reading, which require a different reading style and speed, dictated by one's purpose in reading, Let us again understand what we mean by skimming and scanning.

Skimming involves searching for the main ideas of a text by reading the first and last paragraphs or by looking for the topic sentences in each paragraph, noting other organizational clues such as semantic markers or summaries used by the author. Skimming does not require reading each and every word of the text, because the purpose of the reading is looking for the main drift of the text.

Scanning involves rapidly glancing down the page looking for specific facts or key phrases.

Every text has an organizational framework and it is important to see how different parts of a text hang together. We can say that every text is based on a ground plan, which looks roughly like this:

Introduction- a general statement

The main idea- a hypothesis or a thesis statement

Elaboration and development - details, definitions, illustrations, comparisons, and contrasts

Conclusion- restating the thesis, finalizing discussion

All the parts are linked together through linking devices, through repetition of keywords and phrases, through semantic signals.

When reading a text, untrained learners sometimes get bogged down in detail and are not able to get to the main ideas. They are not able to follow the organizational clues and tend to plod through the text word for word, trying to cram it all in. For this reason, training in the skimming and scanning techniques is very crucial. Learners must understand thoroughly the main concepts of the text and then once they are familiar with the conceptual framework, they will be in a better position to master the details. Thus, a preliminary skimming builds the foundation of more intensive reading and maximum understanding. It gives the learner a logical framework to fit the details in.

Similarly, scanning skills are valuable as an aid to locating new terms, definitions, dates, or formulas as in a science textbook. The learner also needs to scan charts and figures for they present the facts in a graphic form. The use of these skills will help not only in reducing the time for intensive reading but also in retaining the details of the text.

Task 7

This exercise helps you trace the organization of a text and get to the main ideas. (This exercise is partly based on the exercise in *Study Skills in English*, Michael J. Wallace, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1980.)

1. *Using the title.* The passage given below is entitled 'The Surface of the Earth'. Does the title tell you something?
2. *Survey.* Survey the passage by reading the first sentence of every paragraph and the last paragraph. Very often the first sentence may contain the main idea – though sometimes the main idea may come in the middle or at the end.
3. *Anticipation.* Now you should be able to ask yourself anticipation questions, i.e. questions, which you think, should be answered by the text.
4. *Read.* Read through the passage quickly. Note your reading time.
5. Try to answer your anticipation questions. Refer back to the text to check your answers.
6. *Organisation.* Make an outline or draw a diagram to capture the main ideas. (We shall take this up in the next section when we talk of storage skills.)
7. *Summary.* Using your outline or diagram, write a summary of the passage. (We shall talk about the summarizing skill in the section on Retrieval skills.)

The following passage is taken from *Working with English*, Workbook for Class XI (Core Course), p88.

The Surface of the Earth

To most of us the face of the earth – with its mountains, rivers, plains, and seas – does not seem to change at all. But if we happen to live in certain places, perhaps near an active volcano, or a

powerful, swift-flowing river, or on the coast, we may be able to see some change taking place – the river changing its course, or the sea wearing down parts of the cliffs. In fact, these changes are going on all the time, but usually so slowly that there is hardly anything that can be measured in a man's lifetime. But a man's lifetime is so short that it hardly counts in the history of the earth, when a valley becomes deeper by only one inch each 100 years, and even that is only a comparatively short time in the whole life of the earth.

Running water, glaciers, the wind and currents of the seas, heat and cold, and plants have all been working together for billions of years changing the face of the earth. Changes begin with the breaking up of rock into pieces that can be moved. Rock becomes broken up either by force of one kind or another, or by being rotted by chemicals dissolved in rainwater, or in streams and rivers. When rock has been cracked or broken by force it is more easily rotted by chemical action, and rock that has been rotted is more easily broken by force.

All rocks cannot be broken equally easily by force since they are made of different materials and in different ways. Some began to break up deep underground: they were cracked and splintered as they cooled or as they were twisted and pushed by the forces which shaped the mountains. Those that were made in layers break most easily between the layers where they are weakest. Natural forces that break up rock masses use such cracks and lines of weakness.

Tiny plants may root themselves in the cracks of rocks, and as they grow, their roots grow too and push and push, opening the cracks and in time even splitting the rock. Water and frost are powerful rock splitters. Water may freeze in a crack and, as water expands when it turns into ice, the ice presses on the crack and makes it bigger. Most swift-flowing streams carry downstream rocks and boulders, and as these are rolled and swung along by the water, they strike the rock in the stream banks and bed and break off pieces. Forest fires often weaken and crack rocks, and rocks can also be shattered by lightning.

These many ways of breaking up rock go on everywhere in the world. They work most quickly in places where the rocks have cracks and weaknesses, where there are many trees and plants with strong, pushing roots, and in cold climates where there is frequent freezing and thawing.

Check Your Progress 1

1. How will you find out whether the word *bough* is pronounced as *rough* or as *dough* or as neither?

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

2. Given below is a part of the Content page and a part of the Index from the book, Study Skills. Look at both to answer the questions that follow.

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For the Learner

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a. What different kinds of information do you get from the Contents and the Index?

.....

b. Which pages give you information about skimming?

.....

c. Which topic is dealt with in greater length- self-evaluation or term papers? How do you infer?

.....

-
.....
3. This is to be done in 45 seconds. Look at the index given in question 2 and check the references for the following:
- Term papers
 - Stress
 - Tone
 - Short-answer tests
 - Validity

1.3 STORAGE SKILLS

In this section we shall consider the ways in which we can store the information/knowledge we have gathered for later use. The ways in which we do this are:

- a. note taking (in class), and
- b. note making (at home or in the library)

These skills are important as

- An aid to understanding and comprehension
- A record of facts and processes
- An aid to jog one's memory later on
- A record of different points of view
- An aid for further study
- A summary of arguments and ideas
- A check that one does not fall asleep!

As the name suggests, storage skills involve the ability to store information for ready retrieval and use. You may ask: What is so difficult about 'storing' information? Once we have read and understood some information, is it not automatically stored in the memory? I would say, 'partly yes' and 'partly no'. What does this mean? We do remember what we read/listen to; but not everything. So, most of us hasten to copy down important facts. If we are not properly trained, we would waste a lot of time in copying; further, just before the examination, when the students revise all the lessons, it would be just impossible for them to read through hundreds of pages. They should have the notes in a brief and precise form, ready for quick reference. In fact, each student adopts his/her own way of storing information. However, s/he will benefit greatly from a training in storing skills.

Storing skills are of two major categories:

- (a) **Note-taking** which involves listening to lectures and taking down notes –i.e. the main and subordinate points. This is a skill every student needs to master.
- (b) **Note-making** is very similar to note-taking, except for the fact that note-making involves reading books and making notes, whereas note-taking involves listening to a lecture and taking down notes. Note-making is a more leisurely activity.

Both the skills above may be divided into the following sub-skills.

- i. Comprehension of the text/lecture
- ii. Identification of the main points

- iii. Distinguishing main factors from subordinate ones
- iv. Deciding on the order of priority among the various points
- v. Identifying the organisation of points
- vi. Organising the points into a visual display.

Note-making and note-taking are meant only for the student's private use, hence s/he is free to use any abbreviation, symbol, etc. although it would be a good idea to use standard reduction devices. We will be discussing these skills in the next unit in detail. We have given you some tasks which you may attempt on your own to hone your skills.

(A) Note-Making

Task 8

Read the following passage and then fill in the notes below:

Up to the end of the eighteenth century, small-pox was a particularly dreaded disease, not only because it was often fatal but also because those who recovered were permanently disfigured. A very large proportion of the population bore the marks of small-pox on their faces.

In the seventeenth century, people in Turkey began to inject themselves deliberately with mild forms of small-pox with the hope of making themselves immune to severe attacks. Sometimes they developed a light infection as a reaction; sometimes they suffered the very disfigurement or death they had sought to avoid. It was a risky business, but people were willing to risk the horror in order to escape from it.

Certain country folk in England believed that a case of cow pox, a disease that attacked cows and sometimes people, would make a person immune to both cowpox and smallpox. An English doctor Edward Jenner decided that there might be some truth in this 'folk' superstition. Milkmaids, he noticed, were particularly prone not to be pockmarked by smallpox.

Very cautiously Dr. Jenner began to test this notion. In 1796, he decided to make the supreme test.

Now fill in the blanks in the notes below:

1. Small pox – a dreaded disease till the end of the 18th Century.

Reasons:

- (a).....
- (b)

2. Attempts to conquer smallpox - Turkey - 17th century - risky method - injecting mild forms of small pox.

- (a).....
- (b)

- 3.

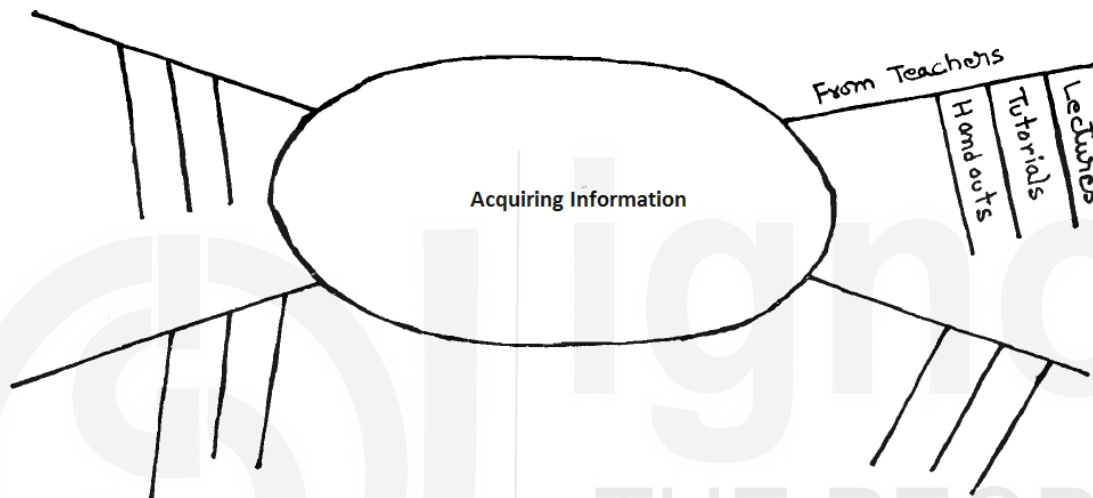
- (a).....
- (b)

Task 9

Notes may also be made diagrammatically. Read the passage below:

Students can acquire information in several ways. Their teachers give lectures, conduct tutorials and issue handouts. They can read library books, listen to the radio or watch TV and thus learn from other experts. They can get information from fellow students through seminars or informal conversations. They can also learn by themselves by thinking about the subject when they are alone.

Now fill in the diagram below:



(Adapted from *Study Skills in English*. Michael J. Wallace, Cambridge University Press, 1980.)

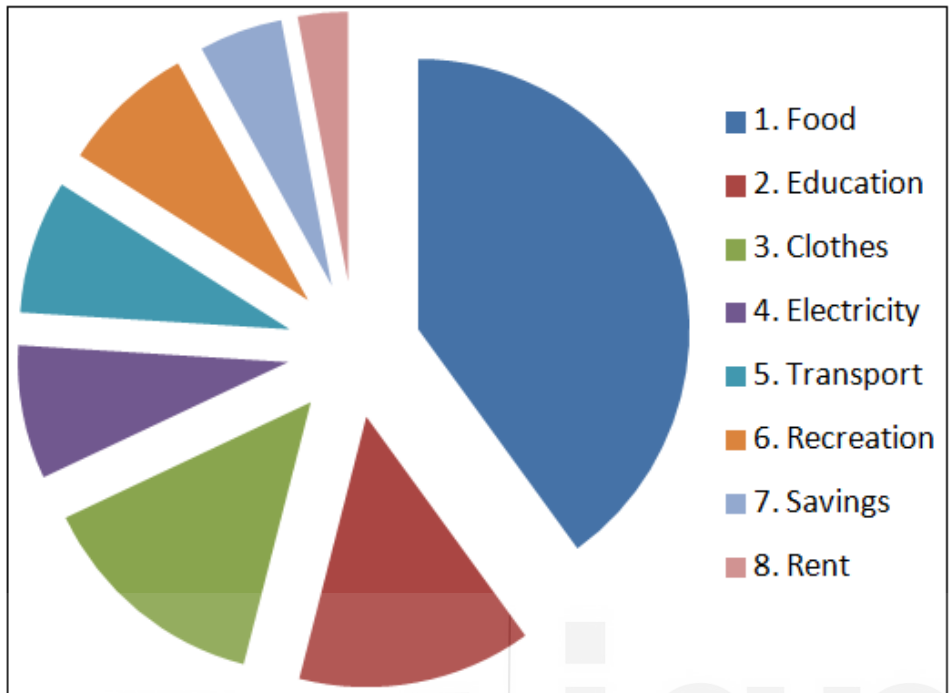
b) Diagramming/Information Transfer

The diagrammatic presentation of notes as seen in the task above is also known as diagramming. Diagrams are of various types: trees, pie charts, histograms, graphs, tables, etc. Such visual display can be grasped quickly and also facilitates retention. In most disciplines writers resort to such diagrammatic or visual presentation. e.g. labeling of the digestive system or genealogy of a king, etc.

‘Information Transfer’ means the restatement of verbal information in non-verbal form or vice-versa.

Task 10

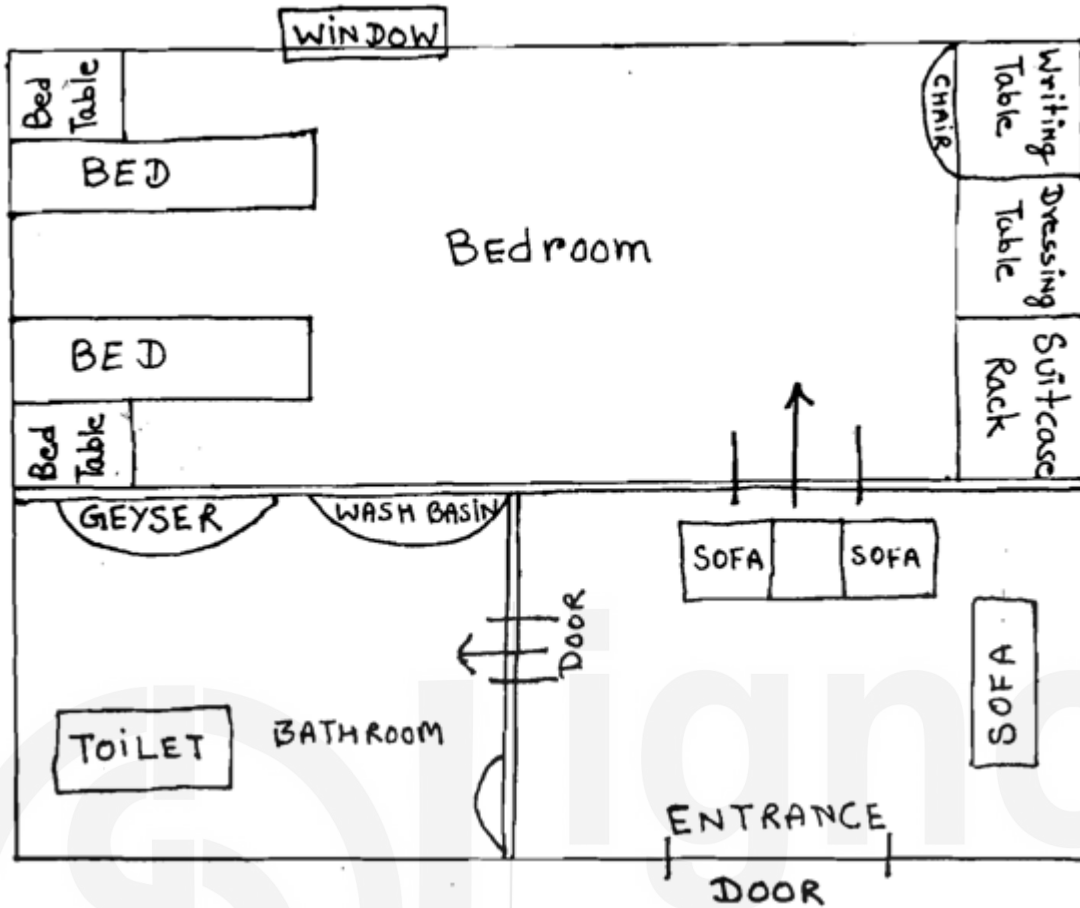
The following pie-chart represents the budget of the family of Mr. Iqbal. Study it carefully and rewrite it in the form of a paragraph



1. Food	40%	5. Transport	8%
2. Education	14%	6. Recreation	8%
3. Clothes	14%	7. Savings	5%
4. Electricity	8%	8. Rent	3%

Task 11

Given below is the floor plan of a deluxe room in Hotel Bombay International. Write a paragraph describing the room.



1.3.1 Retrieval Skills

While writing an examination, or participating in a conference or seminar, students need to **summarise** their ideas in a coherent form, so that their readers can understand them. Or sometimes they have to prepare a research abstract based on their reading.

The student will of course base their summary or abstract on the notes they had prepared earlier. The length of a summary may vary depending on the purpose for which it is intended. Generally, the precis in the examination papers is required to be one-third of the original; but all summaries need not be so.

Summarising is not an exercise to be learnt for use in the class room alone; it has relevance for life. We can summarise articles, chapters and even books for future reference. If you are a secretary, your boss may ask you to present the gist of a document. A newspaper reporter's job is to summarise speeches and reports. Scientists and researchers read abstracts of important

books/papers to keep themselves up-to-date and save time as well. A good summary requires several skills on the part of the student: reading, comprehension, analysis, judgment, clarity, brevity, etc.

Task12

Read the Editorial of today’s newspaper and summarise it in about 100 words, to be put upon the School News Bulletin board today

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

Check Your Progress 2

1. What are ‘skills’? How do they differ from ‘knowledge’??

.....
.....
.....
.....

2. What are the major study skills?

.....
.....
.....
.....

3. Distinguish between note-making and note-taking.

.....
.....
.....
.....

4. How does a summary benefit its reader?

.....
.....
.....
.....

5. What skills do you need in order to write a good summary?

.....
.....
.....

1.4 WHY DO STUDENTS NEED TRAINING IN STUDY SKILLS?

Students have two types of goals: the short-term goal is to pass the examination. The long-term goal, on the other hand, is to prepare for life; in other words, the second goal extends beyond examinations. In order to achieve both these goals you need to know how to study. Hence the importance of study skills.

It is a sad reflection on our education system that our learners do not know the study skills even in relation to their mother tongue. They do not know how to locate information or make notes even when they refer to books in the vernacular. Very often, the English teacher tells them what study skills are, as well as, how to develop them. By training them in study skills, the teacher indirectly helps them to study their other subjects more efficiently. Who taught you study skill?

Many students feel that conscious learning of study skills is not necessary. They think that study skills are learnt unconsciously. There is no need to be taught how to make notes. We can learn it on our own. There is no need to 'waste' precious class time on such trivialities.

There are two basic flaws in this argument. Firstly, we know from experience that most students do not learn study skills on their own. Even when they join the undergraduate course, they do not know how to make notes or how to write a summary. They lift words at random and string them together and call it a precis. The concept of note-making is totally strange to them.

Secondly, even learners who can learn these skills on their own, might take a long time doing so. In the absence of guidance, they have to adopt the 'trial and error' method to develop these skills. If, on the other hand, they are given some training, they will learn these quickly; this, in turn, will accelerate their pace of learning the other subjects as well. Instead of regarding the time spent on developing study skills as a waste of time, it is necessary to regard it as a wise investment, so expend some effort in developing study skills.

Study skills are needed at all levels. Even children at the primary level need them. For example, identifying the moral of a story is a study skill. Locating answers to questions is another study skill. As students go to higher classes the nature of study skills becomes more complex.

Learning to learn, as we pointed out earlier, is more important than learning per se.

1.5 LET US SUM UP

These are some of the points that you have been made aware of in this unit:

- Language is a skill, not knowledge.
- Skills are acquired through practice.
- Study skills are different from the four linguistic skills of Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing. Study skills enable learners to study more efficiently.
- The process of study involves three operations: perception, retention and retrieval.
- There are three study skills corresponding to the four operations, namely, Gathering skills, Storage skills and Retrieval skills.

- Gathering skills help learners to locate and comprehend sources of information, e.g. use of a dictionary, skimming, scanning, etc.
- Storage skills enable learners to store information for ready retrieval and use, e.g. Note-making, Note-taking, Diagramming.
- Retrieval skills help learners to retrieve information when they need it, e.g. summarising.
- Students need training in study skills.

1.6 SUGGESTING READING

Study Skills in English, Michael J. Wallace, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1980.

1.7 ANSWERS

Check Your Progress 1

1. We should look up a dictionary for the pronunciation.
- 2a. The Contents give us a general idea about the topics dealt with in the book whereas the Index tells us about specific items, or units dealt with along with their page numbers.
- b. Pages 74 to 76.
- c. If we look at the Index we see the number of pages devoted to a certain topic. This tells us that there is a more extensive treatment given to self-evaluation as compared to term papers
3. Term papers – pp 137-8
Stress – 141-2,191
Tone – 111, 113
Short answer tests – 136-7, 139
Validity – 121-5

Check Your Progress 2

1. ‘Skill’ is a special ability to do something, gained through practice. Knowledge refers to the information one has gained through learning.
2. The major study skills are of three categories: gathering skills, storing skills and retrieval skills.
3. Note-taking occurs when you take notes from a reading text or when you are listening to a lecture. Note-making happens when you fair up your notes for reference later.
4. A summary saves times for the reader.

5. Skills required for writing summary:
Comprehension: ability to identify major and minor points; ability to recognize the hierarchy of ideas in a text; ability to write a coherent piece of discourse.



UNIT 2 TECHNIQUES OF NOTE TAKING – MAIN AND SUBORDINATE POINTS

Structure

- 2.0 Objectives
- 2.1 Introduction
- 2.2 How to Read
- 2.3 Specimen Notes
- 2.4 Reduction Devices
- 2.5 Passage for Note-taking
- 2.6 Headings and Subordinate Points
- 2.7 Cornell Note Taking Method
- 2.8 Let Us Sum Up
- 2.9 Suggested Readings
- 2.10 Answers

2.0 OBJECTIVES

The aim of this unit is to help you take notes for the purpose of study. For this you require a) the ability to read with a purpose, and to separate the essential information in a text from that which is repetitive and irrelevant, b) shortening devices to save time and condense your material, and c) a proper organization of the ideas contained in the text in terms of main points and subordinate points.

After you have completed this unit, you should be able to use these skills in preparing your notes.

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Almost anyone who studies at a college or university or works in an office has to take notes sometimes. As a student you generally take notes while listening to a lecturer in the classroom or a speaker at a seminar, or when reading your course books. In an office you may need to take notes when the boss gives you instructions, or when you attend a meeting or a conference. Sometimes you may have to take an examination to improve your qualifications or to compete for a better job. Then you have to take notes from the books you read. While taking notes, have you ever asked yourself the reason for taking them? There are usually two main reasons:

- i) to keep a record of the speaker's or the writer's main ideas (not to take down or copy every word);
- ii) to help your memory when, for example, you are revising for an examination, or preparing a report.

The tendency of many students is to try to write down as much as possible of what the teacher is saying. In this process, they often miss the main points of the lecture, but, on the other hand, take down a lot of unimportant information. Similarly, when you are taking notes from a book

or an article, it is generally not a good idea to copy out large chunks of a text, unless you are going to quote from it.

In this Unit we shall deal with taking notes from a reading text from the point of view of the organization of notes. In the next unit on Note-taking we shall discuss the organization of notes in terms of Tables and Diagrams.

2.2 HOW TO READ

When we read, we generally have a purpose in mind. The purpose may be to spend some time on a rainy afternoon by reading a detective novel or a love story.

Often our purpose is to obtain information on a particular topic. When you read a passage in order to obtain specific information, it is a good idea to acquaint yourself with the text by quickly going through it. You will notice that some paragraphs will contain the information you want, and they must be read carefully. Other paragraphs may contain a lot of repetition, and they can be skimmed, i.e. read faster and more superficially. There may be some passages that are of no interest to us or are completely irrelevant for our purpose, and they can be skipped.

Example 1

In the passage that follows, your purpose in reading will be to obtain information about the various kinds of heart diseases, their causes and symptoms.

- A. Heart disease is the enemy number one of the human body in our time. It accounts for the largest number of deaths in all affluent societies outstripping cancer, accidents and infections as causes of death. In developing countries as well, this trend is apparent, now that fewer people die of infections, and more children survive the diseases of childhood.
- B. There are four important types of heart disease. Firstly, congenital heart disease, which is present at birth; an example of this is the so-called 'blue baby'. It accounts for 2 per cent of all heart diseases. The second type, rheumatic, is quite common in some developing countries among the young people, and accounts for some 30 to 40 per cent of all heart cases. It is caused by an infection of the throat which, if untreated, causes damage to the heart. The symptoms are a chronic sore throat, painful joints and high fever. This disease is widespread in many developing countries, due to poor living conditions and overcrowding.
- C. High blood pressure is also an important cause of heart disease, of the third type, hypertensive, and accounts for some 15 to 25 per cent of all heart cases. It is believed that among other factors such as stress and smoking, a higher salt intake in the diet leads to blood pressure.
- D. Degenerative heart disease, commonly known as ischaemic heart disease, is the cause of heart attacks, and is one of the most important health problems among adults throughout the world. Ischaemic heart disease is due to blocking of the two blood vessels which supply blood to the heart muscle. At birth they are wide open, but in a diseased state one or more of these vessels is completely blocked, leading to defective blood supply to various portions of the heart. This results in the well-known symptom of pain on emotional or

physical stress called angina. What causes this is the laying down of a fatty substance, called cholesterol, in the wall of the artery, which gradually blocks the vessel and may close it completely.

- E. How does cholesterol get into the blood? It results partly from a diet rich in fats of animal origin, such as butter, cream, cheese, rich cuts of beef, ham and bacon, egg yolk, and saturated cooking fats, such as ghee.

(Based on 'The Heart' in Sarah Freeman, *Study Strategies in English*)

Check Your Progress 1

Read the above passage carefully and answer the following questions:

1 In Paragraph A, the writer mainly wishes to inform the reader that:

- a) more children survive the diseases of childhood than ever before.
- b) heart disease is also quite prevalent in developing countries.
- c) heart disease is the world's major killer of our times.

(Choose the correct answer.)

2 State whether the following are true (T) or false (F):

- a) A congenital heart disease is something that a baby is born with.
- b) A continually bad throat and fever will always lead to a rheumatic heart disease.
- c) Rheumatic heart disease is common among young people in some countries.
- d) People who smoke, but take less salt in their diet, are not likely to get high blood pressure.
- e) Angina is a signal that a person has high blood pressure.

3a) In what types of heart disease does diet play an important role?

.....
.....

b) What are the food habits that contribute to heart disease in each case?

.....
.....

4 State the main idea of the passage. Write it as a title for the passage.

.....
.....

5a) The purpose in reading the passage was to find out details of the four types of heart disease in terms of their causes and symptoms. Which paragraphs do you think are unimportant for this purpose?

.....
.....
.....

b) Were they unimportant because

- i) they did not contain the information you wanted, or
- ii) the same information was repeated again and again.

6 Write a summary of the passage in the form of points keeping in mind the purpose stated above.

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2.3 SPECIMEN NOTES

Compare your account of the 4 types of heart disease (Question 6 of Check Your Progress 1) with the notes given below:

Notes (1)

Types of Heart Disease: their Causes and Symptoms

- 1. Congenital heart disease (h.d.) present at birth, e.g., blue baby
- 2. Rheumatic h.d.  (caused by) untreated infection of throat; symptoms - chronic sore throat, painful joints, and high fever. Widespread in developing countries, overcrowding + poor living conditions, accounts for 30-40% of all heart cases.
- 3. Hypertensive h.d.  = degenerative h.d. high blood pressure  stress, smoking + higher salt intake in diet.
- 4. Ischaemic h.d.  blockage of arteries by cholesterol+angina, heart attacks.

You will notice that the sentences and some of the words have been reduced, and certain symbols and abbreviations used. We give below a list of these reduction devices, which you can use while taking notes yourself.

2.4 REDUCTION DEVICES

Reduction devices are an important technique in note-taking. They help you save time when you are noting down something from a book. They are particularly useful when you are taking down notes from a lecture, because otherwise it will be difficult to keep pace with the speaker. Since notes do not contain repetitive and unnecessary information, reduction devices help to give a more organized picture of what the writer/ speaker is saying.

1. You can use **symbols** (lines, arrows, etc.) instead of words.

a) Arrows

Look at this passage from the text:

'Blockage of arteries leads to a defective blood supply to the heart. This results in the well-known symptom of pain on emotional or physical stress called angina.'

In the notes we can write:

Blockage of arteries → def. blood supply → angina.

An arrow can also mean 'changes into', 'causes', 'contributes to', etc.

An arrow in the reverse direction (←) means 'is attributed to', 'is caused by' as in the following example:

'Rheumatic heart disease is caused by an infection of the throat which is not treated.'

Rheumatic h.d. ← untreated throat infection.

An arrow with two heads ⇔ can mean 'related to'.

b) Underlining is used to show what is important.

c) Mathematical symbols:

i) Figures instead of words for numbers (26 instead of 'twenty-six', for example).

ii) 'the same as' becomes =

iii) 'not the same as' becomes #

iv) 'is less than' becomes <

v) 'is more than' becomes >

vi) 'therefore' becomes ∴

vii) 'because' becomes ∵

2. You can use **abbreviations** (a few letters instead of the whole word).

a) Units of measurement:

- i) second - sec.
- ii) minute - min.
- iii) hour - hr.
- iv) year - yr.
- v) month - mth.
- vi) meter - m.
- vii) kilogram - kg.

b) Useful abbreviations for words and phrases:

- i) and so on - etc.
- ii) compare - cf.
- iii) that is - i.e.
- iv) for example - e.g.
- v) about, approximately - ca.
- vi) twentieth century - C 20

c) Shortening *-tion* or *-sion* at the end of a word, e.g.

- i) reaction - reactⁿ.
- ii) conclusion - conclusⁿ.

You can usually shorten words by omitting or shortening the ending or suffix, and putting a full-stop to show that something has been omitted. There are some words which are shortened in a standard way and others which you will have to shorten yourself on the pattern of the common words. Here are some examples of abbreviations of words taken from Example 1, which follow the pattern shown above:

- developing - develop^g
- emotional - emot^{nl}.
- defective - defect^{ve}.
- important - import^{nt}.

d) Shortening long words or phrases for which there is no symbol or abbreviation, or even a pattern that can be followed. Here are some examples from the passage that you have read: d

- disease - dis.
- heart disease - h.d.
- blood pressure - b.p.
- cholesterol - cholestl.

Shortening of words as in (c) and (d) is probably more useful when you take down notes during a lecture, as it is difficult to keep pace otherwise.

Here it doesn't really matter what system you use, as long as you can understand your own notes when you return to them after some time. It may be a good idea when adopting your own abbreviations to write a word or a phrase in full with your abbreviation after it the first time it occurs. e.g., heart disease (h.d.)

The lists of symbols and abbreviations given here and the suggestions for shortening words and phrases are not, of course, complete and exhaustive. These are mere suggestions, which will enable you to use these abbreviations and symbols whenever you have to take down notes.

Check Your Progress 2

Shorten the following sentences, but do not shorten them so much that you may not understand your notes later.

- 1 At about the age of four, the school life of a child begins.
.....
- 2 For example, water covers seventy-one per cent of the earth's surface.
.....
- 3 Heart disease causes half a million deaths a year in the United States of America.
.....
- 4 Two important diseases caused by the deficiency of Vitamin A are exophthalmia and night blindness.
.....
- 5 Road conditions also contribute to higher fuel consumption and this increases pollution.
.....

2.5 PASSAGE FOR NOTE-TAKING

Now read the following passage. Your purpose will be to discover the different theories of aging. Once again, only some paragraphs in the passage will be useful to you.

Example 2

- A The average life span differs very widely for different organisms. While some live for short periods, others may have a life of several decades or even centuries. None, however, lives forever. Even if an individual meets with no fatal accident, is not eaten up by a predator, or does not suffer a killing disease, death still comes as the natural final result of old age.
- B Aging is defined as the process of progressive deterioration in the structure and function of the cells, tissues and organs of the organism as it grows older. The area of developmental biology which is concerned with the study of the processes of aging is known as gerontology.
- C Why should an animal age at all? Why do some animals age more rapidly and have a shorter life span than others? Why do different cell types and tissues within the same individual age at different rates? We still do not know enough about the process and causes of aging, although many theories have been proposed to explain this phenomenon.
- D Some biologists suggest that adverse changes in the environment are the causes of aging in the organisms. Others believe that aging is an intrinsic genetic property of the

cells of an organism. According to a compromise theory, aging is due to an interaction between hereditary factors (genes) and the environment. We know, for example, that domestication of animals increases their life span. Another theory proposes that the cells and organisms with a high rate of metabolism age more rapidly and die sooner than those with a relatively lower rate of metabolic activity.

- E A more recently proposed immunity theory of aging suggests that the decline and disappearance of the thymus gland by late middle age in man is the primary cause of aging. With the disappearance of this gland, the defences of the body against foreign invasion weaken, and, at the same time, the number of defective, abnormal and harmful cells produced in the body itself goes up. This results in increasing damage and destruction of the tissues.
- F While each theory of aging is supported by some evidence, none of them comprehensively explains this phenomenon. A theory which explains aging in all kinds of organisms can be formulated only when more facts are known about aging processes in a variety of species living under different conditions.

(Adapted from Biology, a textbook for Higher Secondary Schools, Classes XI-XII, NCERT.)

Check Your Progress 3

The following questions will help you to understand both the content and the organization of the passage better.

- 1 What title would you give this passage?
.....
- 2 What are the various causes of death mentioned in the passage?
.....
.....
- 3 Which theory, according to the author, explains aging' comprehensively'?
 - a) the 'compromise' theory according to which hereditary factors and environment play an important role in aging;
 - b) the immunity theory which suggests that the defence mechanism of a human being declines with the disappearance of the thymus gland in middle age;
 - c) the rate of metabolism theory, which proposes that organisms with a higher rate of metabolic activity die earlier than those with a lower rate of metabolic activity;
 - d) None of these.
- 4 What could be the 'foreign invaders' referred to in paragraph E?

Check Your Progress 4

Notes (2)

Fill in the gaps to complete the following notes:

Theories of Aging

- 1 adverse changes in envt.
- 2 intrinsic (i).....
- 3 (ii) + envt^l factors,
e.g. (iii)
- 4 (iv)metabolic activity → aging
- 5 immunity theory (v) disappear^{ce}
of..... (vi) in late middle age in man.
..... vii attack (vii).....+
greater productⁿ of (ix) →
(x)

You will notice that besides using symbols and abbreviations we have also omitted words like *the*, *a* and the verb *be* (*are*, *is*, *was*, *were*, etc.). In note-taking such omissions are quite common, because we want to save time. However, in normal writing you must not use any of these shortening devices.

2.6 HEADINGS AND SUBORDINATE POINTS

When the information content is small and not particularly well-organized, our notes may contain just a few phrases. However, when we study, our information content is often large and organized around a topic. In such a situation, it makes our notes clearer, if we have headings and subordinate points. For example, look at Notes (1) again.

Heading: Types of Heart Disease - Their Causes & Symptoms

- Subordinate points
- 1) Congenital h.d.
 - 2) Rheumatic h.d.
 - 3) Hypertensive h.d.
 - 4) Ischaemic h.d.

It is perhaps helpful to follow a pattern where

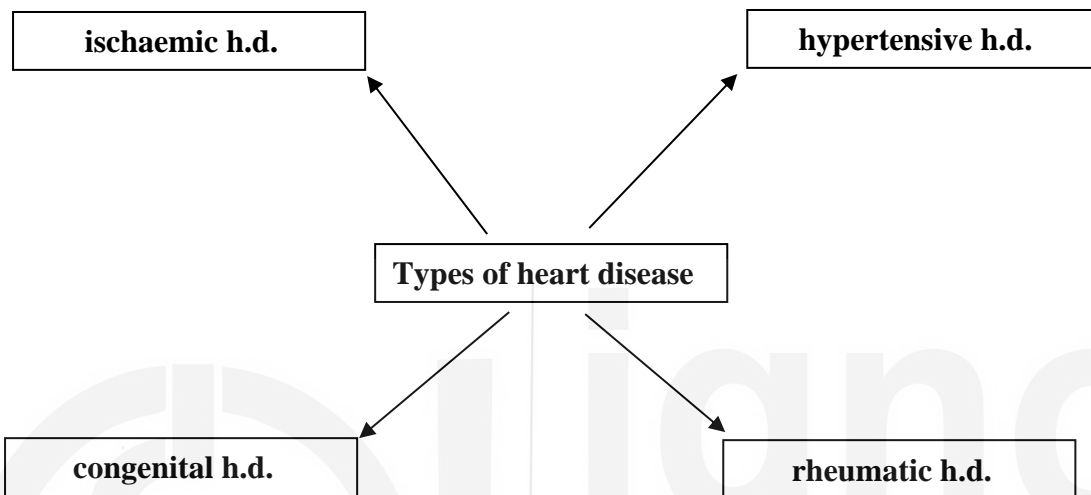
- a) the heading is underlined;
- b) the subordinate points are placed under the heading and indented, that is, the lines are started further into the page than the line for the heading. This shows that they are dependent on the main topic. The subordinate points are directly under each other. This shows they are of approximately the same importance.

Two Types of Subordinate Points

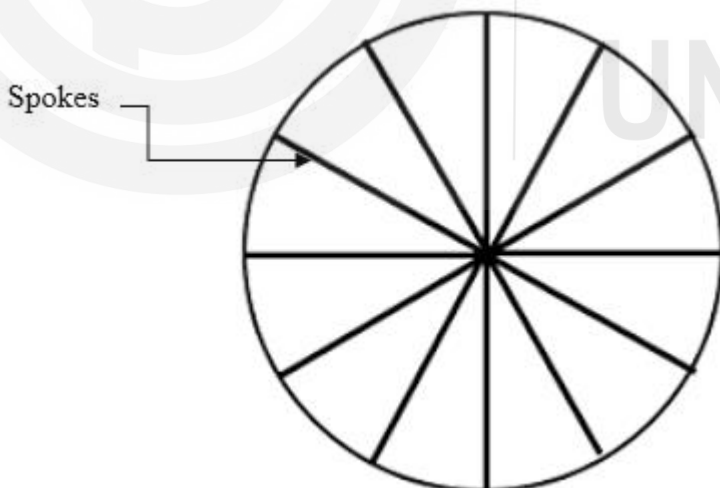
There are generally two types of subordinate points.

- a) Those that are independent of each other, depending only on the heading; for example, see Notes (1) and (2).
- b) Those that are related to each other, only the first depending directly on the heading.

If you look at Notes (1) again in Section 2.3, you will notice that the subordinate points can be reordered (e.g. 4 before 3 before 2, etc.). In fact, they can also be arranged like this:



These sub-points are all directly dependent on the heading. Some books call such sub-points – spokes, because they can be arranged like the spokes on the wheel of a bicycle, as shown in the following figure.



Example 3

Read the following passage carefully and find out where human settlements took place and why.

There is hardly any part of the globe in which people have not settled. In some cases the settlement may be no bigger than one or two families and their livestock, in others the settlement may be a city as large as New York.

There is always a good reason for a settlement being where it is. If you look in the atlas you will see that most of the world's major cities are located on an important river or on a coastline. This is because they grew up as trading centres, importing and exporting goods to serve their surrounding areas. Inland towns and cities are often at the meeting point of two or more land or river trading routes. With trade comes prosperity, so towns and cities can support increasing populations.

Agricultural settlements – farms and villages – need fertile soil and a supply of water for both crops and drinking. River valleys have both, and so are often densely settled – a large proportion of India's population, for example, lives in the plain of the Ganges River. Another factor determining the sitting of a settlement is that it can be easily defended against enemy attack in time of war. Many towns and villages were originally founded on hill sites for this reason.

Check Your Progress 5

- 1 If you were taking notes, what heading would you give this passage?
.....
- 2 Are the subordinate points of this passage dependent on each other?
.....
- 3 Take notes from the passage above, keeping in mind the heading and the subordinate points. Some help is provided for you.

Notes 3

-(i).....
- 1 Location.....(ii).....
- Reason(iii).....
- 2 Location.....(iv).....
- Reason(v).....
- 3 Location.....(vi).....
- Reason(vii).....

Example 4

Read the following paragraph on the formation of coal. The process of formation of coal is thought to have begun over 250 million years ago. At that time much of the world was covered with luxuriant vegetation growing in swamps. Many of these plants were types of ferns, some as large as trees. When this vegetation died, it sank into the muddy water, where it gradually decomposed. As decomposition took place, the vegetable matter lost oxygen and hydrogen atoms, leaving a deposit with a high percentage of carbon. In this way peat bogs were formed. As time passed, layers of sand and mud settled from the water over some of the peat deposits.

The pressure of these overlying layers, as well as movements of the earth's crust and sometimes volcanic heat, acted to compress and harden the deposits and raise the carbon content in them, thus producing coal.

(from Funk and Wagnall's New Encyclopedia, Harper and Row Publishers Inc.)

Check Your Progress 6

Read the passage carefully and take notes from it, keeping in mind the heading and the subordinate points. Some help is provided for you. Note how the relationship of the subordinate points here is different from that in Notes (3).

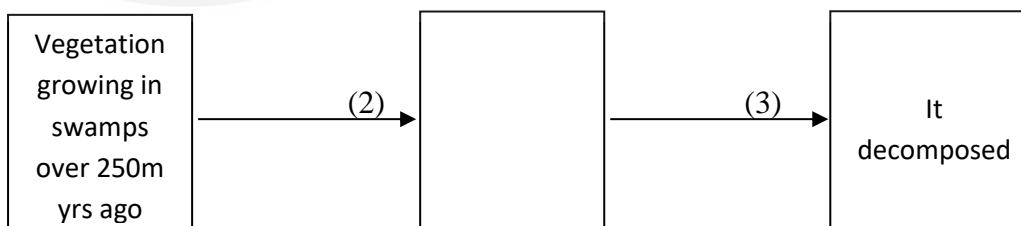
Notes 4

- (heading) (i).....
- 1 vegetation growing in swamps (over 250m. yrs ago).
 - 2 (ii)
 - 3 it decomposed
 - 4 decomposition →(iii)
 - 5 peat bogs formed
 - 6 (iv)
 - 7 (v)

Check your answers with those given by us at the end of the Unit.

In Notes (4) the sub-points are again arranged vertically, but they cannot be reordered, because each point leads to another. To show clearly that one point leads to another, they can be arranged horizontally, like this: I

Formation of Coal



Some books call these subordinate points links in a chain.

We would suggest that you arrange your notes vertically rather than in spokes or chains. It is, however, useful to know whether the subordinate points in a text are dependent or independent of each other.

This will help you read with greater understanding.

Subordinate points that are independent of each other need not all be noted. If one or more is omitted, it will not affect the rest.

Subordinate points that are dependent on each other must all be noted.

2.7 CORNELL NOTE TAKING METHOD

Another technique of note taking is the Cornell Note Taking Method. It is a system of taking, organizing and reviewing notes which was devised by Prof. Walter Pauk of Cornell University.

This method requires very little preparation – no tables or diagrams, which makes it ideal for note-taking during a lecture. The notes page can be divided into three-four different sections:

Title

Date

Key words

- Questions that connect points
- Diagrams
- Study prompts

Summary

Two columns, one at the bottom of the page, and one smaller area at the top of the page.

- All the actual notes from the lecture go into the main notes-taking column.
- The smaller column on the left side is about the questions, about the teacher's notes that can be answered when reviewing, and key words or comments that make the reviewing process and later the exam preparation easier. When reviewing the notes, it is suggested to write a brief summary of every page into the section at the bottom.

So much for the structure of the notes. However, these notes encourage you to go over your notes each day – reflect on them, since you need to summarise your notes. If you are working on your laptop, it could be useful to reorder information on the page.

According to this method these are 5 Rs of Note-Taking:

- **Record:** Write all meaningful information, using abbreviations and shortening devices.
- **Reduce:** After the lecture, write a summary of the ideas/facts using key words or cue words.
- **Recite:** Recite all the information in your own words without looking at the notes.
- **Reflect:** Think about your own opinions and ideas. Raise Questions
- **Review:** Before the next class, take 10 minutes to review your previous notes. (adapted from Pauk W,2001)

2.8 LET US SUM UP

In this unit we have suggested that it is necessary to read with a clear purpose in mind, so that you can separate the essential information in a text from what is repetitive or irrelevant. We have also told you about the techniques of note-taking in terms of shortening devices such as abbreviations and symbols, and the organization of notes in terms of headings and subordinate points. Finally, we have briefly looked at the Cornell Method.

2.9 SUGGESTED READINGS

Sarah Freeman: *Study Strategies in English*, Orient Longman.

Walter Pauk, 2001, *How to Study in College*, Houghton Mifflin Company.

2.10 ANSWERS

Check Your Progress 1

- 1 c)
- 2 a) T b) F c) T d) F e) F
- 3 a) Hypertensive and Ischaemic heart diseases.
b) A high intake of salt can lead to hypertensive heart disease. A diet rich in fats of animal origin, such as butter, cream, cheese, beef, ham, bacon, egg-yolk and ghee can increase the level of cholesterol in the blood and cause ischaemic heart disease.

4 Types of Heart Disease: Their Causes and Symptoms

5 a) Paragraphs A and E
b) (i) for both A and E.


6 Do it yourself.

Check Your Progress 2

1 At 4 child begins school.

2 e.g. water covers 71% of earth's surface.

3 Heart dis. → 1/2m. deaths p.a. in U.S.

4 def^y of Vit. A 
Xerophthalmia
Night blindness

5 Road conditions → higher fuel consumpⁿ → more pollution

Check Your Progress 3

1 Theories of Aging

2 accident, being eaten up by a predator, disease, old age.

3 (d)

4 These could be various kinds of disease-causing bacteria, germs, and virus.

Check Your Progress 4

- i) genetic property of cells
- ii) hereditary
- iii) domestication of animals increases life span
- iv) higher
- v) suggests
- vi) thymus gland
- vii) foreign invaders
- viii) body
- ix) defective, abnormal cells in body
- x) damage to tissues.

Check Your Progress 5

1 The Location of Human Settlement

2 No; they are dependent on the Heading.

3 i) The Location of Human Settlements v) agriculture

- ii) on rivers or coastlines
- iii) trading centres
- iv) in river valleys

- vi) hill sites
- vii) defence against enemy attack

Check Your Progress6

- i) Formation of Coal
- ii) when it died, it sank in muddy water
- iii) loss of O+H atoms in veg. matter → high % of C.
- iv) sand + mud settled on peat.
- v) pressure of overlying layers + movements of earth's crust + volcanic heat →, compressⁿ and harden^s of deposits + more C+ coal.



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UNIT 3 TECHNIQUES OF NOTE TAKING: USE OF TABLES AND DIAGRAMS

Structure

- 3.0 Objectives
- 3.1 Introduction
- 3.2 Organization of Notes: Tables
 - 3.2.1 A Passage Giving Information in the Form of Figures
 - 3.2.2 A Passage Giving a Contrastive Description
 - 3.2.3 A Passage Presenting Different Aspects of a Topic
- 3.3 Organization of Notes: Diagrams
 - 3.3.1 Flow Charts
 - 3.3.2 Tree Diagrams
 - 3.3.3 Other Diagrams
- 3.4 Let Us Sum Up
- 3.5 Answers

3.0 OBJECTIVES

The aim of this unit is to show you different ways of organizing notes, such as the use of tables and diagrams, and to make you aware that different types of texts require different note-taking techniques.

After you complete this unit, you will be able to decide on the type of note-taking technique you require for different types of passages, and use that technique successfully.

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This is the second unit on Note-taking. In Unit 2 (Block 3) we discussed the taking of notes from reading material and lectures in terms of the following:

- i) reading with a purpose in mind so as to differentiate between paragraphs that contain essential information and those that do not;
- ii) the use of shortening devices such as the use of abbreviations and symbols which will save time and effort;
- iii) the ability to organize the material in terms of main headings and subordinate points.

In this unit we shall continue our discussion on notes from reading material. We shall, however, concentrate on the organization of notes in terms of tables, charts, and diagrams.

3.2 ORGANIZATION OF NOTES: TABLES

We often have to take notes from passages which contain figures, contrasts (that is, differences between two things or persons), or different aspects of a single topic. It is then convenient to

organize your notes in the form of lists or tables. This will make it easier to read and use the information later.

3.2.1 A Passage Giving Information in the Form of Figures

Example 1

Your purpose in reading the following passage will be to find out in the quantity of the different varieties of cooking oil used in the country and the regions where different kinds of oil are used.

Edible oils are an important constituent of the Indian diet. Besides being a source of energy, they add a special flavour to food and provide a lubricating action to body tissues. In recent years, their association with different human diseases and their adulteration have become a health problem for people. A variety of cooking oils are commonly used in different parts of the country. The major sources are groundnut oil (14,00,000 tonnes), mustard oil (6,00,000 tonnes) and sesame and coconut oil (1,50,000 tonnes). Sunflower oil (1,00,000 tonnes), safflower oil (25,000 tonnes) and soya bean oil (10,000 tonnes) have also become popular. Groundnut and sesame oils are common in the west coast and central India; coconut oil in the south; mustard oil in Bengal, Bihar and Orissa in the east and Kashmir in the north. The annual per capita consumption of edible oils in the country was about 6 kg in 1984, which is lower than the world average of 11 kg and the average of 26 kg in developed countries. It is higher in the high socio-economic status group due to their use of fried preparations. It is however desirable that the daily intake of fat should not contribute more than 15%-20% calories in the diet. (from *Science Reporter*)

Check Your Progress 1

Answer the following questions.

- 1 Why are edible oils an important part of any diet?
.....
.....
.....
- 2 Why have edible oils become a health problem in recent years?
.....
.....
.....
- 3 Which social group has a higher per capita consumption of edible oils in India?
Why?
.....
.....
.....
- 4 The daily intake of fat in our diet should be
i) less than 20%. ii) more than 20%. iii) around 40%.

Choose the correct answer

Check your progress 2

The passage above has a lot of figures. These figures can be understood better if they are arranged in a table as shown below. Read the passage carefully again, and fill in the gaps in the table. Do not forget to write the main heading and the subordinate headings where required.

Notes – 1

	Name of oil	Quantity (tonnes)	Regions where used
1	Groundnut oil		
2		6,00,000	
3	Sesame oil		West coast and central India
4	Coconut oil		
5			
6			
7		10,000	

3.2.2 A Passage Giving a Contrastive Description

When you have to take notes from a passage which points out the differences between two things, it is often most convenient to write the notes in the form of a table.

Read the following passage carefully and take down notes while you read it:

Example 2

The two main kinds of grasslands are tropical grasslands and temperate grasslands. Tropical grasslands occur in Africa (the savannahs) and in parts of south-eastern Asia, northern Australia, India and South America. The major temperate grasslands are the North American prairies, the Russian steppes, the South African veld, the Australian and New Zealand downs and the South American pampas.

Most tropical grasslands lie between forests and semi-deserts. The annual rainfall, although confined to one season, is usually high. Savannahs grasslands are dotted with such trees as acacia and baobab. In moist areas, elephant grass may reach five meters but towards the deserts it becomes increasingly shorter.

Temperate grasslands have less rainfall than tropical grasslands, and winters that are often extremely cold and snowy. Trees are rare. Very little of true temperate grassland survives. Much is now farmland.

The major herbivores found in temperate grasslands are prong-horn, rodents and rabbits. Coyotes, badgers and snakes are also present and depend on the rodent population for food. However, herbivores such as bison, prairie chickens, and prairie dogs, as well as predatory wolves and mountain lions, have become almost extinct, and their range is greatly restricted.

The occupation of the prairies and plains by greater numbers of people and domestic livestock has reduced the number and extent of native animals.

Wild life has been left relatively undisturbed in the tropical grasslands. Wildebeests, zebras, gazelles, along with predatory lions, hyenas, cheetahs, leopards and other carnivores, share the plains with numerous species of birds, rodents, and insects.

(Adapted from Carton Atlas of the Earth)

Check your progress 3

Read the passage again and answer the following questions. These questions will help you understand the passage better.

- 1 What title would you give the passage?
.....
.....
.....
.....

- 2 The temperate grasslands have been indicated by different names in different parts of the world. Make a table showing the different names of the grasslands and the places where they are found. Write the appropriate headings. You may refer to Notes 1 to help you.
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

- 3 Why are the temperate grasslands gradually disappearing?
.....
.....
.....
.....

- 4a) Find a word in the passage somewhat similar in meaning to 'confined'.
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

- b) Find opposites of:

herbivores
- survive

Passages which give a contrastive description can most clearly be presented if they are arranged in the form of a table. It is, however, not enough that two items are contrasted – in this case the tropical and temperate grasslands. You should arrange your table in such a way that at a glance you are able to find out the basis on which the contrast is made. For instance, in the case of Notes 2 below, the contrast is on the basis of location, rainfall, vegetation, and animals. This method of organization helps you to present a clearer picture of the information, which will be useful to you when you have to revise your work later.

Check your progress 4

Read Example 2 again and fill in the gaps in the table below.

Notes – 2

Types of Grassland

	Tropical	Temperate
1 Location	(i)	N. America (prairies), Russia (steppes), S. Africa (veld), Australia and New Zealand (downs), and S. America (pampas)
2 Rainfall	High; occurs in one season	(ii)
3 Vegetation	(iii)	(iv)
4 Animals	Wild life undisturbed; wildebeests, gazelles, zebras, lions, hyenas, cheetahs, and leopards, birds, rodents, insects	(v)

Notice that we have arranged the notes in the same order in which the information is presented in the passage given as Example 2. It is, however, not necessary to do this. Often you may have to arrange the notes in an order different from what it is in the original text. This will probably happen if you wish to highlight some points.

3.2.3 Passage Presenting Different Aspects of a Topic

When taking notes on different aspects of a single topic, it is often helpful to write them out in the form of a list or a table. It is then much easier to read and use the information later.

Check your progress 5

Given below is a passage on the Maoris, an aboriginal tribe. Take down notes keeping in view the following items:

- 1 location, 2 physical features, 3 houses, 4 food, 5 clothing, 6 entertainment

The Maoris

When Cook first visited the islands of New Zealand he found there the people whom we call Maoris. They had come apparently from more northerly islands to New Zealand, probably about four centuries earlier, crossing the wide seas in their long double canoes. They were a tall, well-built people, with brownish skins and long, wavy, black hair. Though they knew nothing of metals or of the making of pottery, they were skilled workers in other ways. Their houses were built largely of timber and decorated with elaborate carving. Near at hand were little patches of garden in which they cultivated roots for their food. From the forest they brought other roots and berries and birds, whilst the rivers and seas supplied fish in great abundance. A kind of native flax from the swamps was woven and used with feathers, grasses, and bark in the making of clothing. They were also expert basket-makers. They knew nothing of the cultivation of cereals such as wheat, had no domestic animals, and found few wild ones to hunt. The families were grouped into clans and tribes which fought fiercely with one another, each group living in a stockade village in the midst of which was erected a tall look-out tower. Dancing was a favourite amusement of the women and girls whilst the men indulged in exciting canoe races.

(from *Geography for Today, Book I, The Southern Continents* by L. Dudley Stamp, Longman)

Check your progress 6

You have read the passage carefully and taken notes. Now arrange the notes that you have taken into a table. You may refer to Notes 2 to help you arrange your notes. After you finish, compare your notes with the specimen answer given at the end of the unit.

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

3.3 ORGANIZATION OF NOTES: DIAGRAMS

When the information in a paragraph can be presented visually, it is better to use a drawing, a flow chart, or a tree diagram. This is especially true of scientific material, where it is simpler and clearer to express information in the form of a labelled diagram than by using words only. The diagram should present a mental picture of what you understand from the paragraph. This will make it easier for you to understand the information given in the paragraph.

3.3.1 Flow-charts

Example 3

Your purpose in reading the passage below will be to learn about the process of photosynthesis. Take notes as you read.

Photosynthesis is the process by which chlorophyll-containing organisms – green plants and algae – capture energy in the form of light and convert it to chemical energy. Almost all the energy available for life in the earth's biosphere – the zone in which life can exist – is made available through photosynthesis.

In the first stage of photosynthesis, chlorophyll absorbs sunlight. Chlorophyll is the green substance in leaves, which is able to trap the energy of sunlight and use it in the process of making carbohydrates.

Within the leaf there is a small amount of water. The energy which the chlorophyll has trapped of the sun is used to split the water in the leaf into hydrogen and oxygen. Most of the oxygen is released into the air.

In the second stage, the chlorophyll uses the energy absorbed from sunlight to combine the hydrogen (which is obtained by splitting the water) with carbon dioxide (which the leaf obtained from the air). Then, after several complicated changes, the hydrogen and the carbon dioxide are combined in such a way that a carbohydrate is produced. This carbohydrate is called glucose.

Later, using glucose as its most important building material the plant can make substances called amino acids and proteins. These chemicals are needed for the growth of both plants and animals.

Something else happens during photosynthesis that is of the greatest importance to us. A constant supply of oxygen is released into the air by plants. At the same time, carbon dioxide, which would poison us if we breathed too much of it, is nearly all used up.

Photosynthesis is one of the most important chemical processes in the world. This is because it is the primary method of food manufacture, and the primary method of oxygen manufacture.

(Adapted from Funk and Wagnall's *New Encyclopaedia*)

Check your progress 7

Read the passage carefully and answer the following questions.

1 What is the earth's biosphere?

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

2 In the first stage of photosynthesis

- i) sunlight causes chlorophyll to turn into carbohydrates.
 - ii) sunlight causes chlorophyll to split water.
 - iii) chlorophyll absorbs the energy of the sun and uses it to produce carbohydrates.
- (Choose the correct answer.)

.....

3 Fill in the gaps with the words that seem most appropriate to you.

In the second stage of photosynthesis, the (i).....absorbed from (ii)..... is used to combine (iii)..... with carbon dioxide. Then, after some complicated changes a (iv)..... called (v)..... is produced.

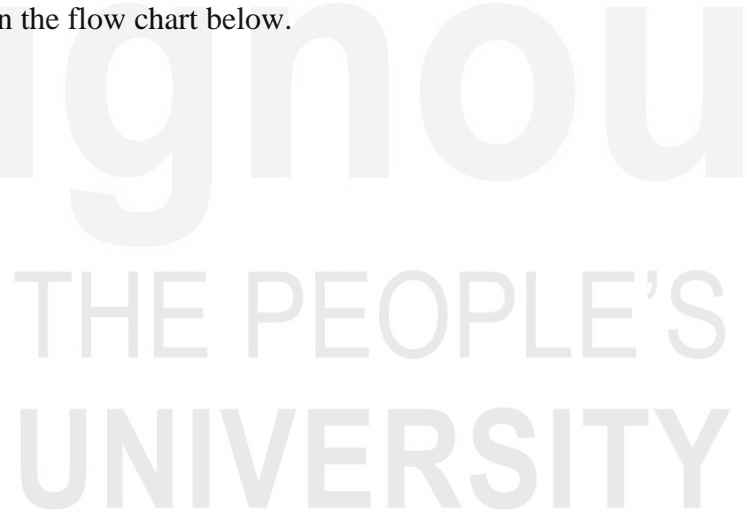
4 If the process of photosynthesis stopped, what would happen to animals and human beings? Why?

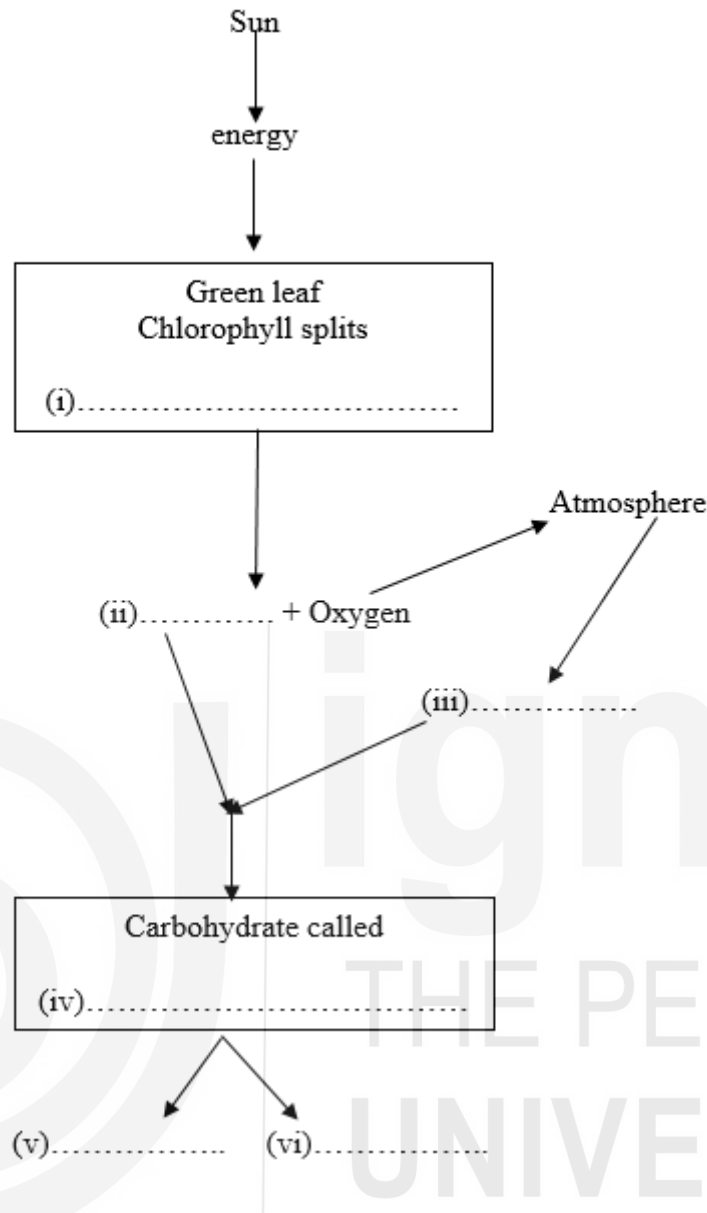
.....
.....
.....

Check your progress 8

Notes 3 below presents the information taken from Example 3 in the form of a flow chart. Preparing a flow chart especially for descriptions of processes, will help you to understand the texts. Later, when you are revising your work, it will be easier to recollect the information if it is available in a visual form. Fill in the gaps in the flow chart below.

Notes – 3





3.3.2 Tree Diagrams

You already know that different kinds of passages lend themselves to different kinds of organization when we take notes. Passages that have information of a classificatory nature, for instance, can be analysed by means of tree diagrams. Such diagrams are useful both in classifying the information, and presenting it in the right order.

The passage below deals with different modes of transport and their role in commerce. Read it carefully and take down notes as you read.

Example 4

The Role of Transport in Commerce

The economic system of any country is largely dependent upon the efficiency of its transport system. Without the help of a good transport system, the expansion in national and international trade would never take place.

Broadly, the means of transport both for purposes of trade and social activity can be classified into three main divisions, land, water and air. We are, here, concerned with transport for trade. Of all the forms of transport, road transport has shown the greatest growth in recent years. Road transport is also used as a complementary means of transport for other types of transport. Roads are indispensable links for carrying goods and people to and from railway stations, ports and airports.

Transport by road may be both vehicular and non-vehicular. Non-vehicular transportation includes both animal and man. Animals such as horses, mules and yaks are frequently used for carrying goods and passengers in hilly areas. Camel is the only means of transport in desert areas. Man is also sometimes used to carry goods. In hilly areas, porters and coolies carry goods on their backs and heads. This type of transport is generally used when animals, carts or vehicles cannot be used. Vehicular transport in developing countries includes the ancient bullock carts, as well as the modern automobiles. The invention of the automobiles has been of great significance to modern industry and commerce because of their high speed and low cost per kilometre.

The introduction of the railways has been vital in the growth of industrialization. Railways are useful in carrying heavy and bulky goods over long distances. They are especially favoured because, unlike other modes of transport, they are unaffected by weather conditions.

Water transport is one of the oldest forms of cargo transport. Though it is slow, it is the cheapest form of transport. Water transport includes inland transport and ocean transport. Inland waterways are rivers and canals. While rivers are 'naturally' created, canals are artificial waterways. Inland waterways are not always reliable. Sometimes rivers change their course abruptly, which may cause dislocation of traffic. In times of drought they may run dry.

Ocean or sea transport is very important for the growth of foreign trade of any country, especially as it is cheaper than air transport. It is particularly useful for carrying bulky goods over long distances, especially when time is not the essential factor.

The greatest advantage of air transport is that it has reduced the time and distance barrier to a great extent. However, air transport is the costliest means of transport because of the high cost of planes, their operation and maintenance. It is generally used rather sparingly for carrying light freight

Check your progress 9

1 In what way is road transport a 'complementary' means of transport for other types of transport'?

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

2 When is man used as a means of transporting goods?

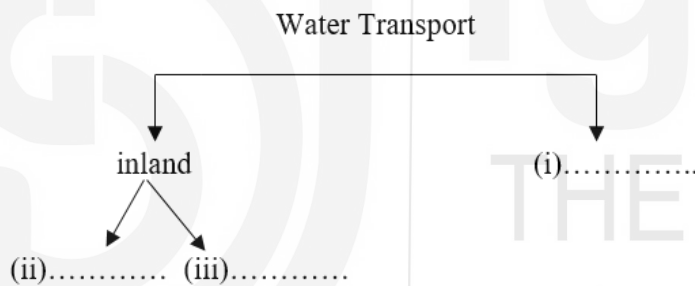
.....
.....
.....
.....

3 What types of vehicles do you think are included in the word 'automobiles'?
.....
.....
.....

4 Fill in the gaps below
(i)..... is one of the oldest forms of transport. It is also (ii).....
than any other means of transport. Water transport includes both (iii).....
and (iv)..... transport

5 What are some of the disadvantages of inland waterways as a means of transport?
.....
.....

6 Read the passage on water transport again. Then organize your notes in the form of a tree diagram. Some help is provided for you.



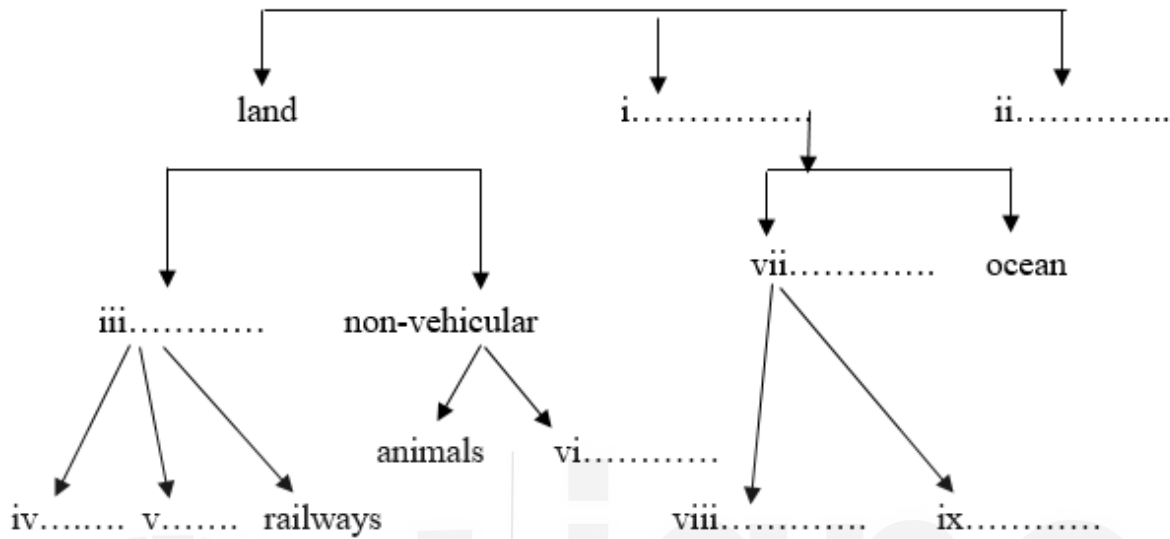
7 What is the advantage and disadvantage of air transport?
.....
.....

Check your progress 10

Notes 4 below (based on Example 4) are organized into a tree diagram. Fill the gaps to complete the tree diagram.

Notes – 4

Means of Transport



3.3.3 Other Diagrams

Besides flow charts and tree diagrams, there are other kinds of diagrams as well which are used to summarize the written material. Descriptive passages on scientific topics or passages which show processes can sometimes lend themselves to such diagrams. You must realize that this is not a common note-taking technique. Only when you feel that a diagram will help you understand and memorize a piece of information better, is it wise to use it.

Read the passage below on 'The Atmosphere' carefully and take notes as you read along.

Example 5

The Atmosphere

Although we cannot see it, taste it, or smell it, the air that surrounds the earth is vital for life. It provides the gases needed for human, animal and plant life. Of these gases, oxygen makes up about 21 per cent and nitrogen about 78 per cent of the volume of dry air. Other gases, such as argon, carbon dioxide, hydrogen, neon, krypton and xenon, comprise the remaining one per cent. The amount of water vapour and its variation in amount and distribution is of great importance in weather changes. The atmosphere has no definite upper limits, but gradually thins until it becomes imperceptible. However, the atmosphere has three well-defined layers. The layer of air next to the earth, which extends upwards for about ten miles, is known as the troposphere. Most of the air and water vapour are in the troposphere. It is the warmest part of the atmosphere because most of the solar radiation is absorbed by the earth's surface, which warms the air immediately surrounding it. The temperature decreases by about 11.2 °C for every mile as one travels upwards through the troposphere. Most of the features that govern our weather, including most clouds and wind systems, occur in the troposphere. Strong winds moving at more than 160 kms an hour are located at the upper levels of the

troposphere. These are known as JETSTREAMS and are important to pilots of jet aircrafts who fly in this zone.

Above the troposphere to a height of about 50 miles is a zone called stratosphere. The stratosphere is separated from the troposphere by a zone of uniform temperatures called the tropopause. Within the lower portions of the stratosphere is a layer of ozone gases which filters out most of the ultraviolet rays from the sun. If this zone was not there, the full blast of the sun's ultraviolet light would harm our skins, blind our eyes, and eventually result in our destruction. Within the stratosphere, the temperature and atmospheric composition are relatively uniform.

The ionosphere extends to a height of 300 miles above the earth. The air here, is extremely rarefied. It is called the ionosphere, because it consists of electrically charged particles called ions thrown from the sun. The northern lights (aurora borealis) originate within this highly charged portion of the atmosphere. Its effect upon weather conditions, if any, is as yet unknown.

(Adapted from *Caxton Atlas of the Earth*)

Check your progress 11

- 1 Read the passage again and state whether the following statements are true (T) or false (F).
 - i) The major gases in the atmosphere are nitrogen and oxygen. ()
 - ii) The distribution of gases in the atmosphere is of vital importance for changes in the weather. ()
 - iii) The warmest part of the atmosphere is the stratosphere. ()
 - iv) Features that affect weather conditions are found in the troposphere. ()
 - v) In the troposphere, the temperature is relatively stable. ()
 - vi) If the ozone layer is destroyed or damaged, gradually all life on earth will be destroyed ()
 - vii) The air in the ionosphere is extremely thick ()

- 2 Fill in the gaps with suitable words/phrases.

The atmosphere is a region of gases (i)..... the earth. It is divided into (ii).....layers. The (iii)..... is called the troposphere. It extends upwards (iv)..... The (v)..... is called the stratosphere and it extends to a height (vi)..... The presence of (vii)..... in the (viii)..... of the stratosphere prevents the (ix)..... of life .(x)..... the stratosphere is the(xi).....

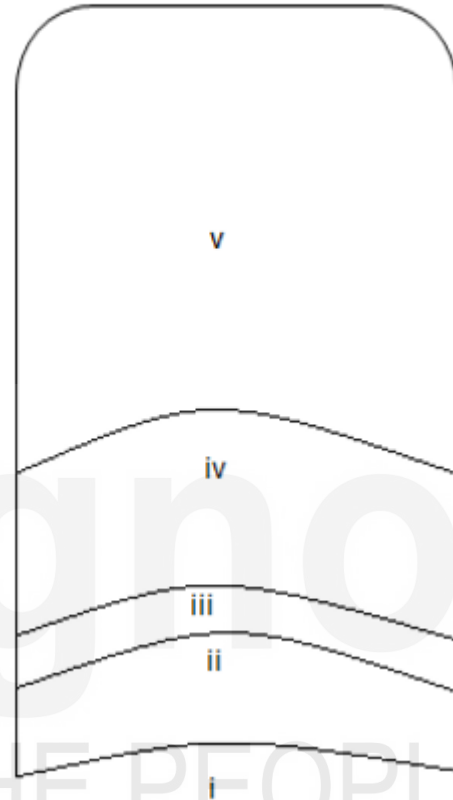
Check your progress 12

Given below is a diagrammatic representation of the atmosphere. Put the correct labels on the diagram. Then summarize the information given in the passage as shown in the diagram.

Notes – 5

Layers of the Atmosphere

- (i)
- (ii) Troposphere extends for about 10 miles from the earth; warmest part of atmos; governs weather condition on earth; temp. decreases by about 1 1°C for every mile upwards.
- (iii)
- (iv)
-
-
- (v)
-
-
-



3.4 LET US SUM UP

In the first unit on note-taking, we described the technique of note-taking in terms of the organization of notes into headings and subordinate points. In this unit we have discussed the organization of notes in the form of tables, charts and diagrams. We have also suggested that different kinds of material lend themselves to different techniques of note-taking.

3.5 ANSWERS

Check your progress 1

- 1 because they are a source of energy, add flavour to food, and provide a lubricating action to body tissues.
- 2 mainly because they are often adulterated and have in recent years also been associated with some diseases.
- 3 the group that has a higher socio-economic status. This group uses more fried preparations.
- 4 i) less than 20%.

Check your progress 2

Notes – 1

	Name of oil	Quantity (tonnes)	Regions where used
1	Groundnut oil	14,00,000	West coast and Central India
2	Mustard oil	6,00,000	Bengal, Bihar, Orissa, Kashmir
3	Sesame oil	1,50,000	West coast, Central India and southern India
4	Coconut oil		
5	Sunflower oil	1,00,000	No particular region
6	Safflower oil	25,000	
7	Soybean oil	10,000	

Check your progress 3

1 Temperate and Tropical Grasslands

2 Notes 2

Name of Grasslands	Places where found
Prairies	North America
Steppes	Russia
Veld	S. Africa
Downs	Australia and New Zealand
Pampas	S. America

3 because they are being turned into farmlands.

4a) restricted

4b) carnivores, becomes extinct

Check your progress 4

i) Africa, parts of S.E Asia, N. Australia, India and S. America

ii) less. (winters cold and snowy)

iii) acacia and baobab trees - esp. in Savannahs; elephant grass

iv) trees rare; not much grassland now - mostly turned into farmland

iv) several animals now extinct. Coyotes, badgers, snakes, pronghorns, rodents, and rabbits are the main animals found.

Check your progress 6

Notes – The Maoris

Details	
1 Country	New Zealand
2 Physical features	Tall, well-built, brown skin, long, wavy black hair
3 Houses	Made of timber with fine carving
4 Food	Roots, berries, birds and fish
5 Clothing	Flax from swamps, woven and used with feathers, grasses and bark
6 Entertainment	Women and girls: dancing, Men: canoe races

Check your progress 7

- 1 the zone in which life can exist
- 2 (iii) chlorophyll absorbs the energy of the sun and uses it to produce carbohydrates.
- 3 i) energy, ii) sunlight, iii) hydrogen, iv) carbohydrate, v) glucose
- 4 They would die, because there would be too little oxygen in the atmosphere.

Check your progress 8

- i) water, ii) Hydrogen, iii) CO₂ (Carbon dioxide), iv) glucose, v) amino acids, vi) proteins

Check your progress 9

- 1 Roads are important links for carrying goods and people to and from railway stations, ports and airports.
- 2 When other forms of transport, such as animals, carts or vehicles, cannot be used. This generally happens in hilly areas, where porters and coolies carry goods on their backs or heads.
- 3 cars, vans, buses, trucks
- 4
 - i) water transport
 - ii) cheaper
 - iii) inland
 - v) ocean
- 5 Inland waterways are not always reliable. For example, rivers may change their course abruptly which may cause dislocation of traffic. In times of drought, they may become dry.
- 6
 - i) ocean
 - ii) canals
 - iii) rivers

- 7 The advantage is that we can save time and goods can be sent to places much faster. The disadvantage is that it is the costliest means of transport because of the high cost of planes, their operation and maintenance.

Check your progress 10

- i) water, ii) air, iii) vehicular, iv) bullock carts, v) automobiles, vi) man, vii) inland, viii) rivers, ix) canals

Check your progress 11

- 1 i) T, ii) F, iii) F, iv) T, v) F, vi) T, vii) F
- 2 i) surrounding
ii) three
iii) layer of air next to the earth
iv) for about 10 miles
v) next layer
vi) of about 50 miles
vii) ozone gases
viii) lower portions
ix) destruction
x) Above
xi) ionosphere

Check your progress 12

- i) The Earth
ii) Troposphere
iii) Tropo pause
iv) Stratosphere: extends to a height of about 50 miles above the earth. Ozone gases present in lower portions; temperature and atmospheric composition stable.
v) Ionosphere: extends to about 300 miles above the earth; air thin; effect on weather conditions unknown.

UNIT 4 MAKING EFFECTIVE SUMMARIES

Structure

- 4.0 Objectives
- 4.1 Introduction
- 4.2 Paragraph, Precise and Summary
- 4.3 Writing Summaries
 - 4.3.1 The Art of Condensation
 - 4.3.2 Identifying the Topic Sentence
 - 4.3.3 Identifying the Key Ideas
 - 4.3.4 Identifying the Main Claim and Supporting Arguments
- 4.5 Techniques of Summarizing
- 4.6 Let Us Sum Up
- 4.7 Suggested Reading
- 4.8 Answers

4.0 OBJECTIVES

In this unit we shall take up passages and show you how they can be summarized. This unit will help you write summaries of passages by giving you practice in:

- separating essential from non-essential ideas,
- separating details from ideas,
- removing repetition or restatement making use of grammatical features to determine the importance of the ideas being presented,
- giving importance to the words which link sentences and ideas, and
- becoming aware of how ideas in a passage are systematically linked to each other.

After you have worked through the unit, you should be able to perform all the tasks indicated above and write effective summaries.

4.1 INTRODUCTION

Of all the writing we have discussed so far, note making and summary writing may well be the ones you are most expected to do in your academic life as a student and as a researcher.

In fact, we are summarizing information all the time. We watch a movie and tell our friends the story in two minutes, we listen to long conversations and say, "So what you are actually saying is..." Think of a long newspaper report running into three columns, but with a neat five-word headline which summarizes the entire report. Summaries may involve one or two key words, a line, or it may be quite an elaborate write-up. It all depends on the purpose of the writing.

Why do we summarize what we read? Most often we summarize what others have said. We use this material for future reference. It forms an essential part of our preparation for an exam,

a class discussion, a presentation, writing of projects, research papers and term papers. In this unit we will look at ways in which we can condense information in a long text.

As students, you are expected to read and remember large amounts of prose. In many of your college courses, you are probably able to memorize facts and key statements with relative ease, but at times you are expected to go a step further, i.e., read critically and closely so as to present the argument or information of an article in as cogent a form as possible and in your own words. In order to demonstrate that you have understood the main idea of a text you must be able to paraphrase, summarize, and even compose a precis of the text.

4.2 PARAGRAPH, PRECISE AND SUMMARY

Let us first explain these three terms - paraphrase, precis and summary.

To paraphrase is to rewrite something using different words without changing the original meaning: this is what is usually meant by the phrase, 'in your own words.' The paraphrase is usually clearer and more easily understood than the original, and is usually similar in length to the original. The purpose of a paraphrase is to convey the meaning of the original message and, in doing so, to prove that we have understood the passage well enough to restate it in our own words.

The **precis** is derived from the word 'precise'. A precis usually reduces the length of the original passage by at least two-thirds. Every important idea must be retained, preferably in the order in which it appears in the original.

A **summary** is much shorter than the original text, and communicates the main idea of the text and the supporting points written again 'in one's own words'. The summary should give someone who has not read the original a clear and accurate overview of the text. Writing a summary therefore requires a combination of précis writing ability and the ability to paraphrase.

4.3 WRITING SUMMARIES

4.3.1 The art of condensation

One of the skills required to write precis and summaries is using concise language. Before practicing writing summaries, let us look at how we can say and write sentences in brief.

Writers often load their prose with extra words or phrases that do not seem to add to the meaning of the sentence. Although such words and phrases are meaningful in the appropriate context, they can easily be left out. We can **eliminate these unnecessary word and phrases**. For instance:

- Completing the project proposal by June 10 is an impossibility without some kind of extra help.
- For all purposes, American industrial productivity generally depends on certain factors that are really more psychological in kind than of any given technological aspect.

A more concise version is:

- Completing the project proposal by June 10 is impossible without help.
- American industrial productivity depends more on psychological than on technological factors.

A single word can sometimes replace a phrase. Therefore, we can **convert phrases into single words** whenever possible. Often, adjectival or adverbial phrases can be replaced with a single adjective or adverb. For example:

- He is never late and is always on time.

He is *punctual*.

- The employee with ambition ... (= the *ambitious* employee)
- The department showing the best performance ... (= The *best-performing* department...)
- The company buys compressors from other countries (= The company *imports* compressors).
- Do you think you are incapable of making mistakes? (= Do you think you are *infallible*?)

Check Your Progress 1

A. Find single words for the phrases in italics and rewrite the sentences making appropriate changes wherever necessary.

- The company *buys compressors from other countries*.
- The theory can be *checked to see whether it is true and accurate*.
- Jack is a person *who can do many different things*. He is quite talented.
- The man is *expected to become the next CEO* of the company.
- Pollution can *make his asthma become unpleasant and worse*.
- The case resulted in *a court decision that he was not guilty*.
- The company decided *to officially settle the disagreement* between the two state government offices.
- He thought his theory *did not have any mistakes*.

Using a clause to convey meaning that could be presented in a phrase or even a word contributes to wordiness. We can therefore **convert modifying clauses into phrases or single words** where possible.

- The report, which was released recently ... (= the recently released report)
- All applicants who are interested in the job must ... (all job applicants)
- The system that is most efficient and accurate ... (=the most efficient and accurate system)

Writing that focuses directly on a point and maximizes meaning with minimum wordiness tends to be both clear and concise. Revising for clarity of meaning often makes the writing more concise. Read this sentence:

- The cause of the failure of our schools to teach basic skills is not understanding the influence of cultural background on learning.

Now read the revised sentence:

- Our schools fail to teach basic skills because they do not understand how cultural backgrounds influence learning

Check Your Progress 2

Rewrite the sentences to make them more concise.

- 1 My suggestion is that we make alteration in the length of the cloak.
- 2 Everything today has the requirement of the conformity of people to some standard.
3. A revision of the programme will result in increase in our efficiency in the servicing of our customers.
4. Many engineering personnel have made comments regarding a lack of knowledge about what new information is available in the library, as literature is filed into the library without any sort of notification.

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When we combine ideas and sentences in a clause, we reduce the length of the sentence and text significantly. Read these two versions:

- A. There is a beautiful park near my house. The name of the park is Tian-Tan Park. This was built several hundred years ago. It is the biggest park in Beijing. The Tian-Tan Park is famous not only for its beauty but its quietness as well. (46 words).
- B. Near my house stands Tian-Tan, the biggest park in Beijing, built several hundred years ago and is now famous not only for its beauty but its peaceful atmosphere too. (28 words)

However, it is better to write short sentences that are correct and well formulated than long sentences that are harder to understand.

4.3.2 Identifying the topic sentence

A paragraph is a group of sentences related to a particular topic, or central theme. Every paragraph has a key concept or main idea. The main idea is the most important piece of information the author wants you to know about that paragraph. A writer will state his/her main idea explicitly somewhere in the paragraph. That main idea may be stated at the beginning of the paragraph, in the middle, or at the end. The sentence in which the main idea is stated is the **topic sentence** of that paragraph.

Read the passage below:

For many years people have wished they could fly through the air like birds. Skydivers have found a way to fly without a machine. They jump from an airplane and fall at the rate of 120 miles an hour. The fall is so smooth that they don't feel like they're moving at all. When they pull the ripcord on their parachute they float the rest of the way to the ground.

Which sentence in the paragraph do you think summarizes the text best?

- a) Skydivers have found a way to fly without a machine.
- b) The fall is so smooth that they don't feel like they're moving at all.
- c) For many years people have wished they could fly through the air like birds.
- d) They jump from an airplane and fall at the rate of 120 miles an hour.

It is (a). The other sentences (b, c, and d) just elaborate what these ways of flying without a machine are. The topic sentence announces the general theme of the paragraph. Although the topic sentence may appear anywhere in the paragraph, it is usually in the beginning. The last sentence of a paragraph can also contain the topic sentence, it is likely to be a concluding sentence. It is used to sum up a discussion, to emphasize a point, or to restate all or part of the topic sentence so as to bring the paragraph to a close. It can fall in the middle of a paragraph as well, especially when a paragraph begins with an introductory sentence that is meant to grab your attention.

In order to find the topic sentence the best thing to do is ask yourself the question, "What is this about?" Keep asking yourself that question as you read a paragraph, until the answer to your question becomes clear.

Check Your Progress 3

Study these paragraphs and identify the topic sentence in each of them.

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Text 1: Today, boys try to prove they are men in many different ways. Long ago, it was not hard for some boys to know they had become men. American Indians had ceremonies and tests for boys to prove they were men. In one tribe, boys were given drugs which made them see visions of the gods. Having a vision was the first step towards being a man. In another tribe, boys had to prove that they could stand pain. They had to lie still on ground covered with ants and let the ants bite them again and again. When the Indian boys had been through these ceremonies and tests, they knew they were men.

The topic sentence of this paragraph is:

- a) Today, boys try to prove they are men in many different ways.
- b) In another tribe, boys had to prove that they could stand pain.
- c) They had to lie still on ground covered with ants and let the ants bite them again and again

- d) When the Indian boys had been through the ceremonies and tests, they knew they were men.

Text 2: The rules of conduct during an examination are clear. No books, calculators or papers are allowed in the test room. Proctors will not allow anyone with such items to take the test. Anyone caught cheating will be asked to leave the room. His or her test sheet will be taken. The incident will be reported to the proper authority. At the end of the test, all materials will be returned to the proctor. Failure to abide these by rules will result in a failing grade for this test.

The topic sentence of this paragraph is:

- a) The rules of conduct during an exam are clear.
- b) No books, calculators or papers are allowed in the test room.
- c) Anyone caught cheating will be asked to leave the room.
- d) Failure to abide these by rules will result in a failing grade for this test.

4.3.3 Identifying the Key Ideas

Any piece of writing is made up of a few key (or main) ideas. However, if all a writer did was to put these forward briefly and concisely, few – if any – readers would be able to fully grasp the writer's meanings, or be able to see the significance and implications of what he or she has to say. Consequently, writers tend to explain, extend, or 'flesh-out' what they think and say by including examples and evidence that lead the reader through the piece to make it more understandable.

As a reader, our job is to grasp these key ideas or items of information; to understand the essential points in a text. One useful technique to help you do this effectively is for you to highlight the key ideas. Underlining key ideas will help you focus your attention on what you are reading.

When you are selecting ideas from a passage, ask yourself the following question: If this idea were omitted, would the fundamental meaning of the passage be changed?

Newspaper headlines are the best precis that we see around us. News headlines generally present the main idea very succinctly and clearly. Read the news item below and say which of the headlines best summarizes it.

New York, May 31 (AP): A pink cocktail dress worn by Audrey Hepburn in "Breakfast at Tiffany's" was auctioned for \$192,000 (euro143,000) – more than six times its estimated value.

The sleeveless dress, worn for the scene in which Holly Golightly discovers her brother has died, sold Wednesday to a private European buyer at Christie's sale of film and entertainment memorabilia. The auction house said it had expected the dress to sell for up to \$30,000 (euro22,000).

"The sale was filled with iconic pieces", said Helen Hall, Christie's head of entertainment memorabilia. "It captured people's imagination".

Hall said the auction house was pleased with the results of the sale, which brought in \$1.2 million (euro890,000).

1. Audrey Hepburn's dress bought by a European buyer.

2. Dress worn by Audrey Hepburn auctioned for \$192,000

3. A Private European buyer pays \$192,000 for a dress

4. The dress Audrey Hepburn wore in "Breakfast at Tiffany's"

Which of these do you think is a suitable headline? To find this out, read the news item and, ask yourself 'What is the main idea?' It is definitely about a dress Audrey Hepburn wore in one of her films. It is also about the sale of her dress. It is about the huge price at which it was bought. The rest – who bought it and why – is important but not necessarily the main idea of the news item. Therefore, the answer is (2).

Check Your Progress 4

Read this passage and do the tasks that follow.

Computer games have been extremely popular for decades now and almost every household has at least one computer. However, it can be seen that playing these games causes social, educational and personal problems of several kinds both to youngsters and society. Firstly, youngsters who spend a great deal of time in front of a monitor are not playing sport. As a result, they are more likely to be overweight and less healthy, so more prone to diseases such as diabetes. In addition, the games themselves are often quite violent which add to many problems such as the lack of interaction and social skills with their friends and relatives. If we wish children to grow up to become well-adjusted members of society, these games should be more tightly controlled.

i. Identify the topic sentence.

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ii. Write down the main ideas.

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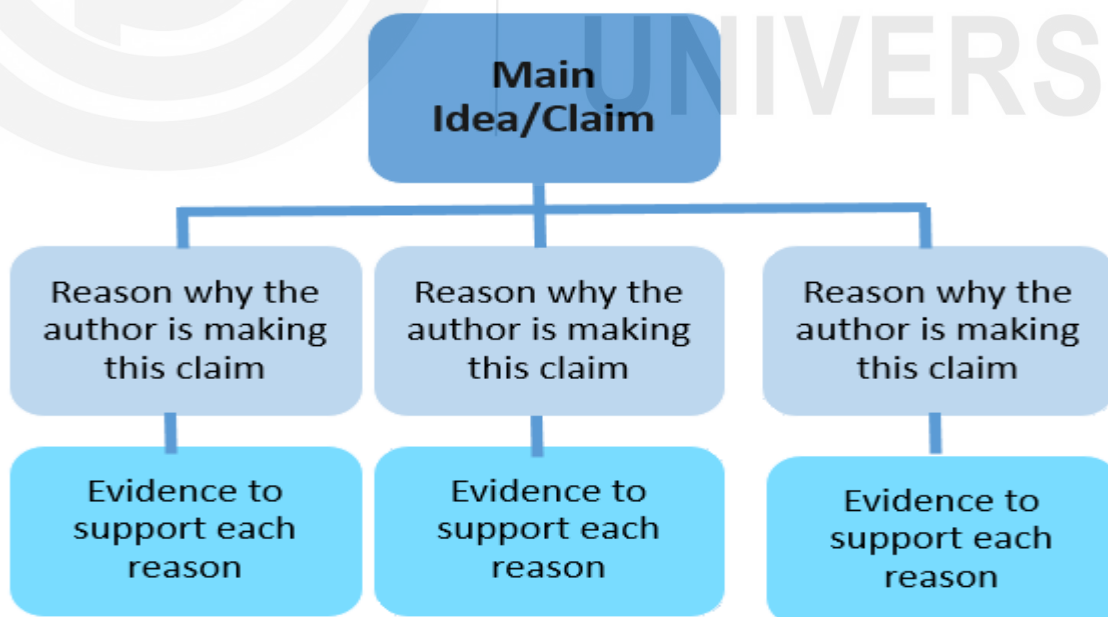
iii Write a summary which should not exceed 50 words.

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4.3.4 Identifying the Main Claim and Supporting Arguments

Every essay contains many ideas but the first thing you need to determine is what the central thesis of the text is. You need to be able to state this claim in a clear and concise manner.

You should skim through each text before reading it carefully and, after skimming, try to determine the central thesis or claim. Then you will be able to go on to the next step. The next thing you need to look for is the author's specific arguments in defence of his or her overall position (thesis). Usually an author gives more than one argument in favour of his/her thesis. A text can be seen as the following structure:



Let us look at one such text to explain this structure. Read the following text, it has **one main thesis and three supporting arguments** and **one conclusion**.

Text

The government should provide more financial assistance to parents who use childcare. Childcare centres may assist children in their early development. They give children an opportunity to mix with other children and to develop social skills at an early age. A whole range of learning occurs in childcare centres. Parents and children need to spend some time apart. Children become less dependent on their parents and parents themselves are less stressed and more effective care-givers when there are periods of separation. Recent studies indicate that the parent-child relationship can be improved by the use of high-quality childcare facilities. Parents who cannot go to work because they don't have access to childcare facilities cannot contribute to the national economy. They are not able to utilize their productive skills and do not pay tax. Government support for childcare services assists individual families and is important for the economic prosperity.

Make notes of the main idea and the three arguments in support:

The main idea

The arguments:

- 1)
- 2)
- 3)

The main idea asserts a conclusion – an idea, an opinion, a judgment, or a point of view – that the writer wants you to accept. The support includes reasons (shared beliefs, assumptions, and values) and evidence (facts, examples, statistics, and authorities) that give readers the basis for accepting the conclusion. It is also necessary to identify the type of author's arguments. We also need to identify how the author tries to persuade us: by appealing to our reason or intellect or to our emotions. Please note that even when we summarise, we need to acknowledge the source.

4.5 TECHNIQUES OF SUMMARISING

Read the passage given below. It talks about natural ways of fertilizing the soil. The method suggested here is the use of earthworms to freshen the soil. We will now help you summarise this rather large passage.

Earthworms Back in the Garden

- (1) Earthworms are the answer for every garden problem, according to Harold John Weigel. They can increase crop production, turn and freshen soil, and produce faster growth. Simply take care of the earthworms, and the earthworms will take care of the garden. Weigel is extremely enthusiastic about earthworms. They are tremendous creatures," the intestines of the Earth." Weigel says, quoting Charles Darwin.
- (2) Weigel is so excited about the benefits of worms that he is writing a book about them. He gardens using thousands of earthworms. He has persuaded his wife to put worms in her houseplant pots. He even suggests eating worms which he claims are 70 per cent protein. He has dreams of armies of earthworms helping to replace topsoil in the country. It is a

fact, he says that topsoil is disappearing every year through erosion. Wind and water carry away the soil, and nature needs centuries to replace it.

- (3) Within one year, one thousand earthworms and their descendants can change approximately one ton of organic matter into one of the highest-yield growing materials known, according to Weigel. Worms eat organic material and produce what is known as worm castings. If 1,000 pounds of earthworms are working one acre of land, every twenty-four hours they will produce 1,000 pounds of castings that function as a high-grade topsoil, Weigel said. They produce the same amount of topsoil in one day that nature could produce in 700 years through decomposition and erosive forces such as wind and rain.
- (4) Planting gardens in worm castings offers plants more than just all the necessary nutrients. For example, castings are very porous, and water flows easily through them. They are very absorbent being able to hold water easily. In addition, worms tend to be happiest around the roots of plants. Water can then flow directly to roots through the worm channels. The worms' channels also give air to the plants. Because the worms dig in the soil, they create a planting area of even consistency. Thus, the earthworms act as natural ploughs.
- (5) Worms offer all these benefits, yet they make few demands. They need only moisture, darkness, and food from the soil. Weigel gets his information on the benefits of earthworms from books and from the Worm Growers Association. That little-known group, which is active in many states, suggests that commercial farmers reintroduce earthworms in places where they have been killed through the use of synthetic fertilisers and other gardening chemicals.

(from Zukowsk-Faust, J., Johnston, S.S. and Atkinson, C.S. *Between the Lines*. Copyright 1983 by Holt, Rinehart and Winston Inc., reprinted by permission of the publisher)

Check your progress 6

- 1 Reread paragraph 1 and draw out the main idea from it. You can begin in this way:
'Earthworms are the answer for every garden problem'.

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(Check your answer with that given by us at the end of the unit)
You were expected to complete the above sentence by giving examples of the problems earthworms can solve, as listed in paragraph 1.

- 2 Now re-read paragraph 2 and draw out the main ideas from it. You will find that it contains two main ideas. Write them down here.

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Check your answers with those given at the end of the unit.

The paragraph is about the benefits of worms and the two benefits mentioned here should be selected for the summary. If you have chosen anything else, it can only be about Weigel's excitement and the usefulness of worms in general. In a summary we are not much concerned with the views of an individual such as Weigel, but with the facts themselves. The usefulness of worms in general has already been stated in the summary of paragraph 1, so that doesn't need to be repeated.

- 3 Now re-read paragraph 3 and note down the main points. Choose the most general statements. Specific examples should not be included unless they also express a general idea which has not already been stated. Write down your points here.

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Check your answers with those given at the end.

You will find that a large part of the first and the last sentence expresses the main points. All references to Weigel are left out. The point regarding worm castings, though important, is not really necessary for the main argument that runs through the whole piece.

- 4 Now read paragraph 4. Just select those points that have not already been stated. Choose adjectives and adjective-like phrases that are used to describe the effect of worms on the soil. You can begin your sentence this way:
'Worms make the soil

It is not necessary to give all the details even though they are interesting. In a summary you need basically to provide the main points that are important for the whole passage.

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Check your answer with that given by us.

- 5 Now read paragraph 5 and note down the main points. You will notice that this paragraph deals with the needs of worms. So, first state the three things that they need, starting with the words:
Worms need only

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Another point is also being made here regarding a Worm Growers' Association which is of interest in the context. This could also be mentioned. Put in a line about this.

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Check your answer with that given by us.

Now, if the whole summary we have produced is written up, it will read like this:

'Earthworms are the answer for every garden problem: they can increase crop production, turn and freshen soil and produce faster growth. Earthworms, it is claimed, are 70 per cent protein, so they can be eaten. They can replace the topsoil which is disappearing every year through erosion. Within one year, 1,000 earthworms and their descendants can change approximately 1 ton of organic matter into one of the highest-yield growing materials known. They produce the same amount of topsoil in one day that nature could produce in 700 years through decomposition and erosive forces. Worms make the soil porous, absorbent and of even consistency. Worms need only moisture, darkness and food from the soil. A Worm Growers' Association is active in many states.

Let us look at the summary carefully now to see if any changes are required in order to make it read like a connected passage. The first part all the way upto ... *and of even consistency*, is concerned with the function of earthworms. Each point that is being made up to this stage consists of a statement of yet another function of the earthworms, so no further connecting words are required.

However, the sentence 'Worms need only moisture, darkness and food from the soil' is concerned not with the function of worms but with the needs of these worms. It is therefore necessary to indicate that a different kind of idea is being brought in. A line from the original passage can be used in order to connect this sentence with the rest of the summary. Let us see how the summary will read with this addition:

'... Worms make the soil porous, absorbent and of even consistency. Worms offer all these benefits, yet they make few demands: they need only moisture, darkness and food from the soil.'

What about the last sentence of the summary? Does it fit in at that point in the summary? There is actually no connection between that and the sentence before it. It may perhaps be preferable to drop the mention of the Worm Growers' Association.

Notice that the summary does not necessarily follow the sequence of ideas of the original passage. It may follow the same sequence or it may not. What is important is that a clear line of argument develops.

Now rewrite the final version of the summary here.

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Check your answer with that given at the end of the Unit.

4.6 LET US SUM UP

The goal of writing a summary of an article, a chapter, or a book is to offer as accurately as possible the full sense of the original, but in a more condensed form. A summary restates the author's main point, purpose, intent, and supporting details in your own words. The process of summarizing enables you to better grasp the original and the result shows the reader that you understand it as well. In addition, the knowledge gained allows you to better analyse and critique the original.

In this unit we have shown you how we can write summaries of the passages we read by looking for the important ideas in each passage and the relationship between them; and adopting a proper arrangement for the main points in the summary and linking the various sentences in it with the use of connectives.

4.7 SUGGESTED READING

J. Zukowski/Faust, S.S. Johnston and C.S. Atkinson: *Between the Lines*.

4.8 ANSWERS

Check Your Progress 1

1. i. imports ii. verified iii. versatile iv. prospective
v. aggravate vi. acquittal vii. arbitrate viii. infallible

Check Your Progress 2

1. I suggest we alter the length of the cloak.
2. Everything today requires peoples' conformity to some standard.
3. If we revise the programme, our efficiency in customer service will increase.
5. Many engineers have commented about not being notified when new information is filed in the library.

Check Your Progress 3

Topic sentences:

Text 1: (a) Today, boys try to prove they are men in many different ways.

Text 2: (d) Failure to abide by these rules will result in a failing grade for this test.

Check Your Progress 4

- i. The topic sentence: Playing computer games causes social, educational and personal problems to youngsters and society and therefore should be controlled.

- ii. The main ideas: youngsters stop playing sport – become overweight and less healthy – more prone to diseases – games may be violent – leads to lack of interaction and social skills.
- iii The summary

Nowadays almost every household has a computer. However, playing them causes social, educational and personal problems. Children can become overweight and more prone to diseases. Also, games are often violent and can lead to less interaction with friends and relatives. Therefore they need to be tightly controlled. (47 words)

Check your progress 5

Main Ideas in 'Earthworms Back in the Garden'

Paragraph 1: Earthworms are the answer for every garden problem: they can increase crop production, turn and freshen soil and produce faster growth.

Paragraph 2: Earthworms, it is claimed, are 70 per cent protein, so they can be eaten. They can replace topsoil which is disappearing every year through erosion.

Paragraph 3: Within one year, 1000 earthworms and their descendants can change approximately 1 ton of organic matter into one of the highest-yield growing materials known. They produce the same amount of topsoil in one day that nature could produce in 700 years through decomposition and erosive forces.

Paragraph 4: Worms make the soil porous, absorbent and of even consistency.

Paragraph 5: Worms need only moisture, darkness and food from the soil. A Worm Growers' Association is active in many states.

Final Summary of 'Earthworms Back in the Garden'

Earthworms are the answer for every garden problem: they can increase crop production, turn and freshen soil and produce faster growth. Earthworms, it is claimed, are 70 per cent protein, so they can be eaten. They can replace topsoil which is disappearing every year through erosion. Within one year, 1000 earthworms and their descendants can change approximately 1 ton of organic matter into one of the highest-yield growing materials known. They produce the same amount of topsoil in one day that nature could produce in 700 years through decomposition and erosive forces. Worms make the soil porous, absorbent and of even consistency. Worms offer all these benefits, yet they make few demands: they need only moisture, darkness and food from the soil.