

UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA

Academic reading and writing

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Denkleiers • Leading Minds • Dikgopolo tša Dihalefi

ACADEMIC ENGLISH

A kind of language/discourse with its own rules and conventions, and requires:

- Comprehensive vocabulary
- Comprehension skills
- Skills in identifying key points
- Note-taking/making skills
- Summarising skills

Academic English is:

- formal
- objective
- discursive or expository
- ordered

Academic reading is:

- reading widely
- reading interactively
- reading with understanding
- reading critically
- extracting the necessary information and using it correctly

Academic thinking is:

- critically weighing what you read or hear
- understanding the intention of the writer
- assessing an argument
- gaining insight through the associations created by imagery
- responding responsibly

Academic writing

The writing process requires:

- research
- free writing
- organising
- editing
- referencing

Critical perspective

1. Set clear targets for each reading session
2. Break up each reading task into clear stages, SPQ3R method
 - Survey
 - Preview
 - Question
 - Read
 - Repeat
 - Review

3. Plan ahead
4. Recognize and accept your limitations
5. Optimum conditions for reading
6. Use a variety of reading resources
7. Keep an effective record
8. Develop speed reading skills
9. Read actively by engaging with the text
10. Read critically

Strategies for effective reading

- Skim read through quickly without making notes
- Use a ruler/pencil to keep eyes moving at good pace
- Read chunk of text/paragraph/page before taking notes
- Take regular breaks
- Take notes

How do I take notes?

- Determine topic
- Keep record of main ideas/key points
- Identify problems
- Improve notes
- Take short-cuts, use abbreviations
- Beware of deviations
- Listen to concluding remarks

Now - how do you do it?

- Find style, e.g. linear, tables, flowcharts or mind-maps
- Look for top tips on googe for ideas
- Consider using an e-version, e.g. Notes Plus for iPad or OneNote for Microsoft
- Use a template
- Some examples

Forces in Creation

- 1) Introduction
 - a. What is force?
 - b. What is gravity?

- 2) The Four Fundamental Forces of Creation
 - a. Gravitational force - attracts objects to each other. Weakest of the four forces.
 - b. Electromagnetic force - force that exists between particles with an electrical charge.
 - c. Weak force - governs some radioactive processes in atoms
 - d. Strong nuclear force - force that holds the center of the atom (nucleus) together.

- 3) The Gravitational Force
 - a. Newton's Universal Law of Gravity
 1. All objects with mass are attracted to one another by the gravitational force.
 - a. all matter is attracted to all other matter
 - b. applied to anything in the universe that has mass
 2. The gravitational force between two masses is directly proportional to the mass of each object.
 - a. strength of the gravitational force between two objects increases as the mass of either object increases.
 3. The gravitational force between two masses is inversely proportional to the square of the distance between those two objects.
 - a. when the distance is big, the force is small. When the distance is small the force is big.

- 4) Force and Circular Motion
 - a. Centripetal Force - Force that is always directed perpendicular to the velocity of an object. This makes an object move in a circle.
 1. Circular motion requires centripetal force.
 2. The larger the centripetal force, the faster an object can travel in a circle.
 3. The larger the centripetal force, the smaller the circle of motion

- 5) The Gravitational Force at Work in Our Solar System
 - a. Planets are attracted to the sun. This is a perpendicular force, therefore the planets revolve around the sun.

- 6) Comets
 - a. A comet's orbit is elliptical.
 - b. They are not visible until they are near the sun, then they get so hot that the ice turns into gas. That is when we can see them.



Sample Note-taking Table for Biography Book Report

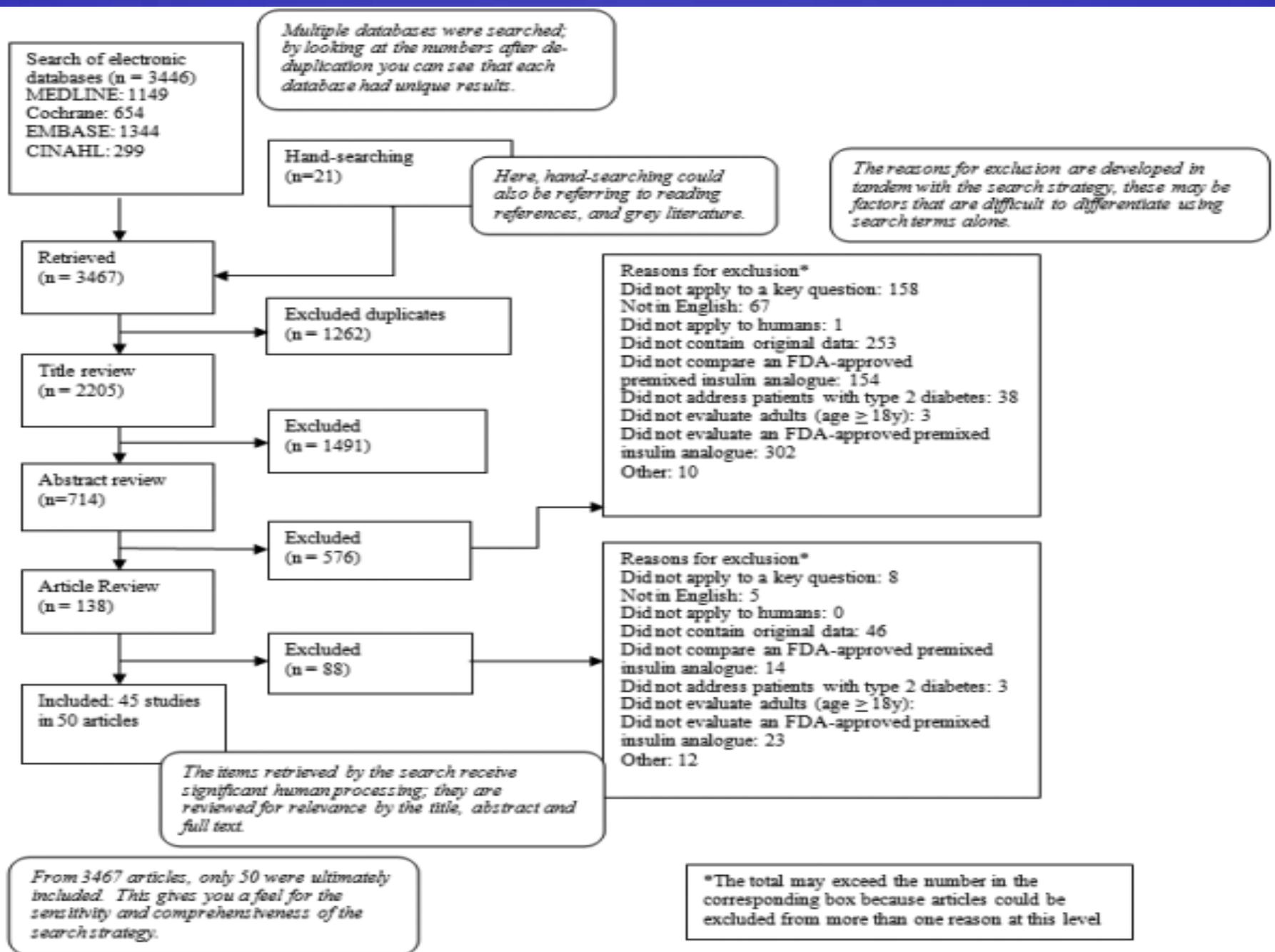
The minimum required information to be presented is as follows:

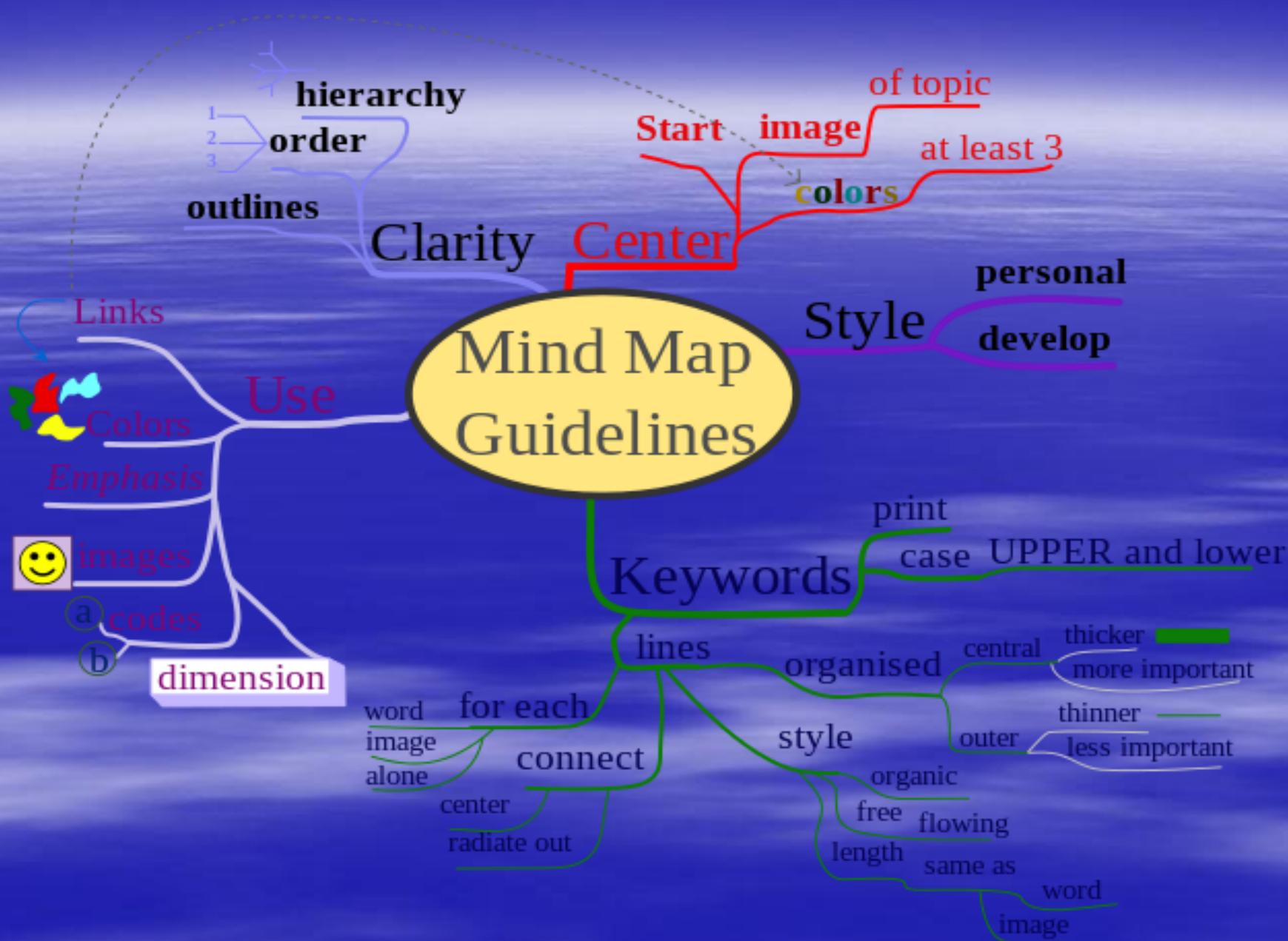
At sometime in your presentation state,

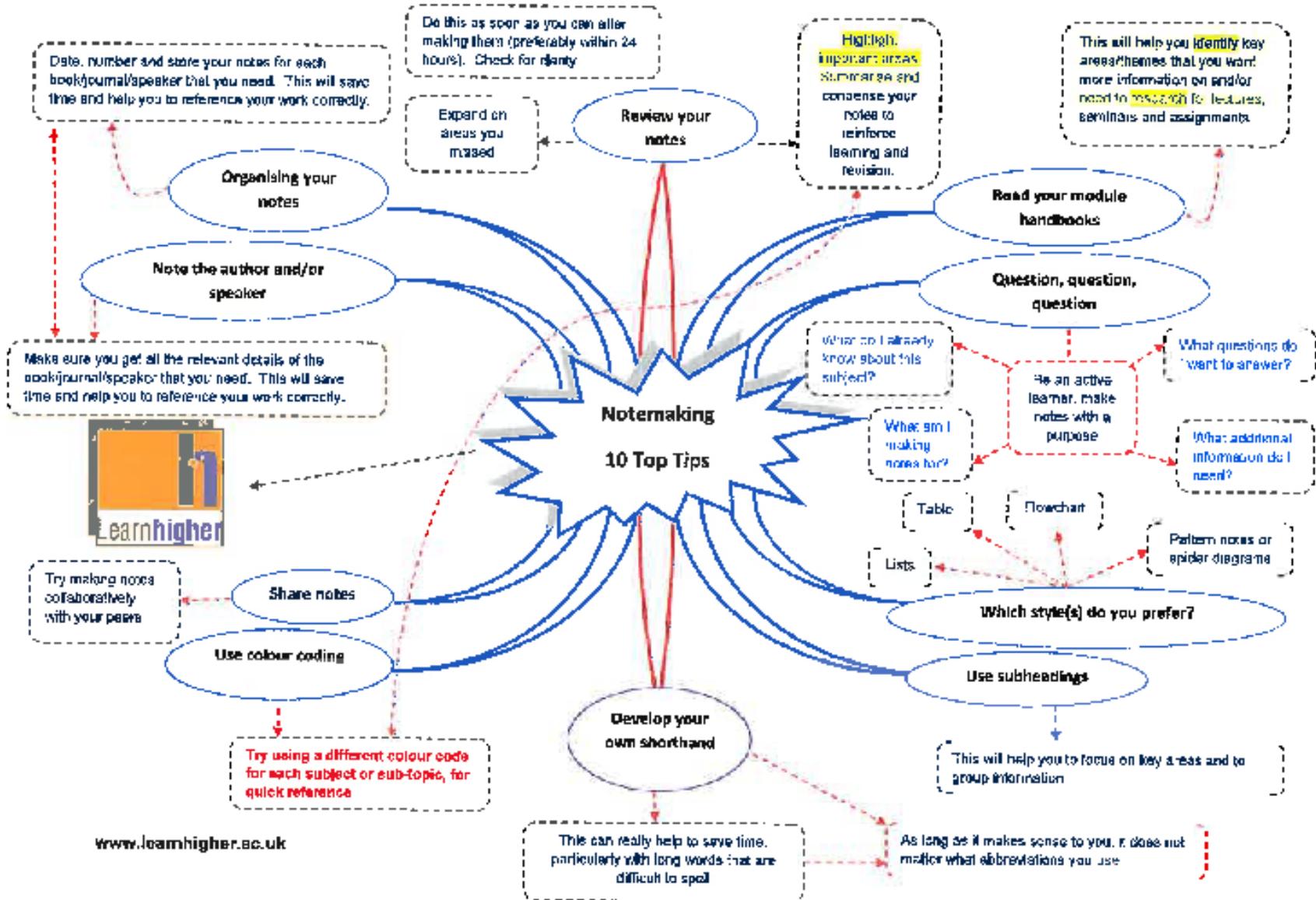
1. *the person's name*
2. *dates and places of birth and death*
3. *where they lived*
4. *why they were famous*
5. *and share at least 5 other interesting and important facts about the person.*



Date	Page number	Important Information and Dates	Questions I have
11-18-09		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Harriet Tubman was born in Maryland in 1820. • Harriet was a slave owned by Edward Brodas. • The master was selling slaves so that he could have money. • Harriet was sold to Miss Susan to take care of her baby. • She was known as Moses from the Bible. • Miss Susan told Harriet to clean the house and take care of the baby. 	<p>Was Harriet alone with Miss Susan? What happen to her brothers? Will Harriet see her family again? Will Harriet's parents miss her? Will Harriet get out of slavery? How will she lead other slaves to freedom? Why was she known as Moses?</p>
11-19-09		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Harriet ran away and came back four days later. • Harriet was whipped and Miss Susan sold her back to Edward Brodas. • She was working in the fields, a slave ran away, she refused to help the overseer, and he threw a iron weight at her head. • She got very sick, she almost died and she had strange dreams. 	<p>Why would Miss Susan whip Harriet just because the baby was crying? Why does she get sold back? Why did the overseer throw an iron weight at her?</p>
11-19-09		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Edward Brodas dies and she gets sold to John Stewart. • She was short and strong. • Wanted to be free. • Stewart was nice to Harriet because he let her work for her own money. • She started learning about the Underground Railroad and the 	<p>Will see escape without a problem?</p>







Choosing linear notes or spidergrams

- **Linear notes** are traditional – written down on a page with headings and subheadings. They have plenty of room for detail
- **Spider diagrams** are on one page and are good for structuring essays and for exam revision

To make linear notes

- **HEADINGS** - for main ideas and concepts
- **Subheadings** – for points within those ideas
- One point per line
- Underlining for key words
- Numbering (letters, Roman numerals, bullets)
- Abbreviations & symbols
- Phrases
- **CAPITALS**

Leave plenty of SPACE – for adding detail - & for easy reading

To increase memorability

- Colour - be systematic & consistent
- Highlight - for emphasis
- Indent to create patterns

To make spidergram notes

- Use whole side of paper
- Put subject in centre
- Use one branch per main point
- Make it large enough
- Add smaller branches for examples
- Summarise
- Label with source

Useful resources

- Cottrell (2008, pp116-18)
- Doyle, D (2010) *Self Pacing Methods* at
- <http://english.glendale.cc.ca.us/methods.htm>
- <http://www.speedreadingcd.com/reading-test.htm>
- [http://www.ucs.edu/hsc/ebent/res/Guide to Reading Research.pdf](http://www.ucs.edu/hsc/ebent/res/Guide%20to%20Reading%20Research.pdf)
- YouTube video:
<http://youtu.be/SxOv3NfkiEU>

ACADEMIC WRITING

FAITHFUL REPRESENTATION

- relevance
- accuracy
- textual justification
- clarity
- perspicuity
- organization

CONCEPTUAL PRECISION

- words
- concepts
- things

REASONEDNESS

- completeness
- coherence
- well-formedness
- discrimination

CLARITY

All sentences are:

- comprehensible
- completely unambiguous
- idiomatic
- written in sober, objective style, not familiar, commonplace style.
- linked logically, using suitable words/phrases e.g. *therefore, as a result, however, in addition, etc.*

PRONOUNS

- *it, they, which* and *whose* are used sparingly and
- with extreme caution

THE FOLLOWING ARE AVOIDED

- an accumulation of negative words (*not, never, nowhere*)
- complex prepositions (*in terms of, in respect of, in relation to*)
- vague prepositions (*concerning*)
- an accumulation of modal expressions (*can, will, may, must, possibly, necessary, apparently*)
- metaphors and images

TERMS

- are used with great care and precision
- are used correctly
- unambiguously
- consistently

TECHNICAL IMPECCABILITY

- neat physical appearance
- formatting conventions
 - page numbers
 - indentations
 - inverted commas
 - quotations
 - references
 - footnotes
 - bibliography

TECHNICAL IMPECCABILITY

- orthographic and punctuation rules of English studiously observed
- formal components as prescribed, generally:
 - title page
 - table of contents
 - introduction
 - body
 - conclusion
 - footnotes
 - bibliography
 - appendix/ices

GENERAL INTELLECTUAL STANDARDS

The mark for your article/assignment will be reduced if you neglect to:

- define any basic concept
- illustrate any theoretical statement
- document any statement with a reference to the relevant literature
- substantiate any new statement

GENERAL INTELLECTUAL STANDARDS

- convey any point of content by means of short, idiomatic sentences
- convey any point of content by means of direct, perspicuous statements

- The sentences you use must be as short and simple as is reasonably possible.
- They must be idiomatic in the sense that they sound “natural and grammatically correct to native speakers” (COBUILD: 719).

THE WRITING PROCESS

“...good writing does not emerge magically from a writer’s plumed pen, but instead we put our words, our thoughts, on to the page in order to work with them. Once our ideas are fastened on to the paper, we can hold them in our hands, we can put them in our pockets, we can take them out later and think about our thinking...”

THE WRITING PROCESS

...We focus in to write, then pull back to ask questions of our text. We ask the same questions whether the writing is a poem about willows or a book on oil spills. “What have I said so far? What am I trying to say? What’s good here that I can build on? What’s not so good that I can fix up? How does it sound? How will they read it?”
(Calkins 1985:42)

THE WRITING PROCESS

I strongly endorse Calkins's remarks and hints, and I have one more item to add to the list of self-critical questions.

Self-critical writers are even prepared to add, "Wouldn't it be better to start all over again?"

Reference book

- A good source of information and help in the writing process:

Henning, E., Gravett, S., Van Rensburg, W.
2002. *Finding your way in academic writing.*