

Taking Notes Using Note Cards

Now that you have gathered your sources, it's time to read and take notes. This note-taking system using 3x5 or 4x6 cards works! Before you take information from any source, you should have a Bibliography Template for that source and have a code number in the upper right hand corner. **Any note card with information from that source should have the same code number in the upper right hand corner.**

Note-taking Information

Record only one piece of information on each note card. When it comes time to write the rough draft, you will arrange all your cards, using your outline as a "sorting" guide. If you have two pieces of information on a single card and each item belongs in a different place in your paper, you will not be able to put one card into two places.

You should not use complete sentences. Words, phrases, and fragments are fine---just as long as you can understand later what you have written.

Three kinds of information are appropriate for note cards:

- A. **Facts.** Record accurately!
- B. **General information.** If reading through material gives you an idea, write the idea in your own words on your note.
- C. **Specific information.** If you read something which is worded just the way you would like it to appear on your paper, copy it exactly onto your note card. Enclose the material in quotation marks.

In all cases be sure to record the page number where you found the information.

Finding Information in Sources

Skimming helps you search for specific information. Here's how to skim for information if your source is a book:

- A. Turn to the index at the back of the book or to the table of contents at the front. Look for headings related to your topic and research areas.
- B. When you find a heading that seems useful, turn to the page(s) listed and skim to see if that page or section of the book has the information you want.
- C. Force your eyes to move very quickly until you find the information you want or you decide that it is not there. In non-book sources, read the subheadings carefully to determine if that section will be useful. In scanning paragraphs, pay special attention to the first and last sentence.

Kinds of Notes

Your notes will contain a variety of information: facts or statistics, direct quotations, paraphrases, and summaries. The note cards that follow each subheading furnish example(s) of the type discussed. Several of the examples of the types of notes provided in the next four subsections were taken after reading a *Boston Globe* article, "Scientific Maverick on a Quest of Old Age 'Cure'" by Raja Mishra, Sunday, August 19, 2001.

Fact or Statistic:

A note card can record a brief fact or statistic that you want to remember. Do not write a complete sentence when you record such information.

3	← Source number that corresponds to a number on a bibliography template
<u>Unique role of West</u>	
Researcher/physician/scientist Michael West—the first person to harvest stem cells from an embryo.	
p. A1	← This card records a fact .
	← Page number in source (the A refers to the first section in the newspaper)

Direct Quotations:

Sometimes you will find a writer's words so vivid or effective that you decide you might want to quote it in your paper. On your note card, copy the quote exactly---word for word---just as the writer wrote it, and enclose the quoted material in large quotation marks (large so that you remember the wording isn't yours!). In general, direct quotes should be brief and should be used sparingly throughout the paper.

3	← This card contains a direct quote .
<u>Belief that drives West's work</u>	
“Aging is killing everyone. . . . Immortality has been worshipped since ancient times,” says Michael West, explaining his interest in the science of cloning.	
p. A24	

Paraphrasing:

When you paraphrase, you restate the writer's ideas in your own words. A paraphrase briefly covers every idea in the same order as in the original. Even though you are not copying the writer's exact words, you are "kidnapping" the writer's ideas, and unless you give credit to the original writer, you are plagiarizing. You will need to cite the author and the page number in your paper if you paraphrase that author's thoughts or ideas.

3

Change in West's status in scientific community

West wasn't always considered a serious researcher in this field of cloning. Ten to fifteen years ago, other researchers often ridiculed him for his view that old age could be cured.

p. A1

← Source number

← Heading

← This card **paraphrases information** from the article.

← Page number

Summarizing:

When you summarize something, you restate the main ideas in your own words. A summary does not give all the details---only the most important ones.

3

Michael West's academic path

West studied physics, theology, and medicine before moving toward research in biology, earning a Ph.D. at Baylor U. Still it is his interest in religion that permeates the course of his career in scientific research in cell biology.

p. A24

← This card **summarizes** information from several paragraphs.

Review the key steps:

1. Write the source number in upper right corner.
2. Write only one main idea on a card.
3. Write a heading for the note—it might be a heading or subheading on your outline.
4. Take notes by:
 - ❑ recording brief fact or statistic
 - ❑ quoting directly—enclose information in quotation marks
 - ❑ paraphrasing
 - ❑ summarizing
5. Write the page number at the bottom of each card.