

How to Take Notes

In order to write your state report, you need to know how to organize the information you find. Keeping well organized notes will make it much easier for you when you are ready to put your final report together. Note-taking is an important skill because it gives you an opportunity to record and remember names, dates, numbers, and facts that you read. Here are some tips to help you take good notes as you gather information for your state report.

1. Use a variety of reference materials; don't rely on just one or two sources. Gather as much information as you can from newspapers, magazines, encyclopedias, the Internet, and reference books.
2. As you read, look for the most important ideas and concepts. In textbooks, sentences and words in bold type often provide key information. Read the topic sentence - usually the first sentence in a paragraph - to find the main idea of the paragraph.
3. Write the main ideas on index cards. Consider using cards that are 5" x 8" (or larger if you need more space).
4. Limit yourself to one major topic (historical sites, wildlife, etc.) per card. Write about four or five facts per topic. Each fact will become a sentence or two in your report.
5. Take notes in your own words. Do not copy verbatim (word for word) from reference materials unless the exact words are important and you plan to quote the writer or speaker and credit the source.
6. Beside each fact - or on each index card - write the name of the book, publication, or source in which you found that particular information. Doing so will help you later if you need to go back and double-check your facts. It will also help you write your bibliography. Number each of your index cards so you know how many you have and can keep them in order. Use paper clips or rubber bands to keep them together.

