Note-taking skills enabled by NoodleBib

Notes are tools for thinking, not forms to complete. They document what you already know, help you explain what you are reading so that you will understand it thoroughly, and keep a record of important ideas you unearth (or creative thoughts that occur to you).

Tagging, organizing and grouping your notes into piles can show you patterns or trends, enable you to join critical elements from different sources, and help you identify redundant or irrelevant notes that you can delete. By rereading and experimenting with various arrangements of your notes and piles, you will clarify the focus of your investigation, discover patterns and trends across sources, develop a logical order for your ideas, and tag solutions within a series of causes and effects.

Your notecard piles can support the development of any product you need to create. Eventually you can add them as a group to a subtopic in the outline of your essay, or they can become the framework of your debate speech and rebuttal arguments, the plot structure of your historical narrative or the main ideas and supporting evidence for your persuasive letter.

To guard against accidental plagiarism, we suggest that you cut-and-paste the actual words or images on a notecard before you try to summarize or paraphrase your source’s idea. This will assure that you will always be able to reread or review the author’s words and logic even after you have returned a book or closed a Web page.

Put one idea on one notecard. You can split one card into two by cutting-and-pasting part of a quote into a second card, if you discover more than one idea on a card. Record the actual page or URL of the quote, not the range of pages for the source.

Take the time to reread and think about and even mark up the author’s words with highlighting, bolding and colors; the better you understand the quote, the easier it will be to paraphrase or summarize the author’s idea. Be aware of your thoughts and feelings and record them in My Ideas, as these are the responses that help you develop a personal perspective. The more you think about your investigation, the more satisfying and interesting your investigation becomes.

If you are asked to annotate your source list or if you need to weigh one source’s contribution or qualities with another, view your notes by source (from the Bibliography screen) and read through them as a group, since it will help you assess the value of the source and compare it to others.

When you scan your source list you will notice that some sources have significantly more notecards than others. Ask yourself why -- it will help you evaluate the value of your sources and even monitor your own progress. For example, if you notice that one source only has a single notecard, it might remind you that you were interrupted when taking notes and had intended to continue later. Or, when you compare the notes for one source with another, you might recognize that one source is particularly useful for an overview of the topic, while another has been written by an expert whose research focused on one aspect of your topic. This knowledge can be useful when you want to reinforce a conclusion you make (“Kermit, whose knowledge of frogs comes from deeply personal experience, confirms my hypothesis that...”). As you critically annotate your sources, your source list view of your notecards can remind you of particular strengths or gaps in information (“While this author is not concerned with environmental threats...”).