How I Keep My Notes Organised

Staying organised is key to making the most of your time at university. As someone studying Business and Languages (currently Mandarin, previously French), I've developed a note-taking system that works for different types of modules. Whether you're planning to pursue business, languages, or another field, these tips might help you stay on top of your studies!

Organising Notes for Business Modules

For my Business lectures and assignments, I use a combination of digital tools like OneNote and Word. Here's how I approach it:

1. Centralise Reading Notes in OneNote

When doing pre-lecture readings, I take notes directly in OneNote. I create a dedicated notebook (e.g., "Year 2") with separate folders for each module. What's great about OneNote is the search tool—when it's time to work on an assignment, I can quickly find specific phrases or concepts without flipping through pages.

2. Capture Assignment To-Dos

Sometimes lecturers drop hints about assignments during class. I immediately jot these down in OneNote to ensure I don't forget. Having everything in one place makes it easy to stay organised.

3. Consolidate Lecture Notes in Word

I prefer keeping all my lecture notes for each module in a single Word document. Last year, I created separate documents for every lecture, but it became tedious to locate specific files. With one master document per module, I can easily find what I need using Ctrl+F.

Pro Tip: Always back up your Word document to OneDrive! A large file with 100+ pages can crash if saved only on your laptop. By storing it in the cloud, you can access it from any device and avoid potential disasters.

Organising Notes for Language Modules

Learning languages like Mandarin and French requires a different strategy because of the emphasis on practice and repetition. Here's what works for me:

1. Paper Practice

For Mandarin, I do most of my writing practice by hand. I keep my written work in a plastic slip folder inside my notebook, so it's all in one place. To avoid losing anything, I take photos of my work and upload them to OneDrive as a backup.

2. Use Digital Subsections

I create subsections in OneDrive for each language topic. For example, I have folders for grammar, vocabulary, and writing assignments. This method was especially useful for French, where frequent revision of verb tenses and grammar rules was essential.

3. Repetition Technique

I often make tables for verb tenses or grammar rules, then practice from memory. I cover the answers, rewrite the rules, and check my work. Doing this daily helped me master tricky concepts quickly.

Why This System Works

Keeping notes organised helps me spend more time studying and less time searching for information. Whether it's a lecture or a language class, having a clear system ensures I'm always prepared.

What about you?

You might not be studying the same subjects as me, but are there any principles that you could use in your own work?

Have you used digital note tools before? If not, why not set up some drafts over summer before beginning at Uni!

By Sophia for the University of Reading's Unibuddy site