

Writing a memo (BA level)

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Memos are mnemonic devices that help you keep track of ideas, to sort and organize them as you study. There are different kinds of memos with different form and content. As course requirement you will write memos for the texts we read and learn to develop memos that fit your style of working and that will support you in your study programme. Please note: **You write the memos for yourself, not for the lecturers.** It is up to you to use short notes or running text and decide on the content you want to preserve. A memo is not an excerpt and should not be too long. Try not to write more than half a page per text.

For this purpose, a text of reading memo typically contains:

- **Three to five #keywords.** These do not have to be the same keywords the authors use. Better note the keywords that you think fit the text best at the time that you write the memo. The keywords you use might change over the course of your study as your interests change. Do not try to find a final and best keyword, but those you think outline the text in a concise manner.
- **No more than three selected quotes.** Only copy quotes from the text that you think are helpful and pointed. Looking for good quotes helps to understand the reasoning within the text and in longer texts, they are helpful to come back to the relevant parts of the text quickly. Thus, you should always note the page for the quote as this will be useful for writing reports.
- **The main terms and examples or cases.** Try to outline the main argument in your own words. Remember that less is sometimes more. Keep it short! Try to select the core from the rest. If the text contains an empirical example or data, sketch out the case very briefly by describing the method and the results. Finding the main argument is not always easy and also depends on your own interests and perspectives.
- **Your subjective evaluation.** This is especially important. Note down your thoughts when reading the text. Try to rephrase the line of argumentation in your own words. What is the text's message and what do you think of it? Are there issues where you do not share the perspective of the text or authors? Which questions remain after reading and which ones have been answered?
- **Links to other texts or theories.** Do you see relations to other texts, questions or authors? Some texts belong to a school of thought or share the same methodological approach. They might also have similar empirical cases or theoretical perspectives. To try and think about the connections helps you to gain orientation in the immense plethora of texts you read.

Write down the memos right after reading the text.

Write **no more than half a page** and take **no more than half an hour**.

Finally: use a reference management software like [Zotero](#) (recommended) or [Citavi](#) (campus license).