

How do I take notes? (please note that for convenience's sake, this document is single-spaced).

Taking notes on what you read for a research project is an essential skill that can be easily mastered with a few short strokes. The main idea is to try and recognize content in your secondary materials that you can use later, either in quoted, paraphrased, or summarized form.

Let's look at the note taking process first.

You'll find that most professional writers you're studying tend to practice the same type of habits that I'm trying to pass along to you. They structure paragraphs with topic sentences. Paragraphs are usually focused on an example so that these blocks of writing hold together and make sense. The beginning of an article or essay usually states the point that the person is making. The concluding paragraph generally offers a conclusion (if [my idea], then what?) and implications (if [my idea], so what? Why does it matter?). Therefore, I'd suggest that you concentrate on these parts of a secondary source, because you'll find your most useful materials there.

We'll use this essay as an example, [in this link](#).

Create a notes file with full bibliographical information, including page numbers and links

Since research papers tend to be a mess while they're in process, it's a good idea to create a container for all your materials. I usually make a file called "notes" and stow all my mess there. For my purposes, the best thing to do is keep the file handy and open when you're going over materials. Create an entry with the correct title, author, link, whatever. Then, if it has page numbers, create sub-entries next to the page numbers. Here's the example from the link.

Heidt, Amanda. "Conferences Confront Abortion Bans and Anti-LGBTQ+ Laws." *Science*, vol.

380, issue 6651, 23 June 2023, pp. 1207-08.

1207 Heidt's first paragraph introduces us to the dangers some professional women feel in attending conferences in states with restrictive abortion laws if they are themselves expecting: those "who might need emergency medical care for complications such as miscarriage, ectopic pregnancy, and septic uterus."

Why was this worth marking out and quoting, paraphrasing, or summarizing?

It's from the first paragraph, and sets the tone for the rest of the short article. Since fear seems to be its point, I used a quotation that best embodies it. I might not use it at all, but it's a good thing to have on hand. Here is what I would have considered on the first page in the illustration below. The conflict seems to be about whether to have meetings in such states or not, so everything I chose was about that.

Conferences confront abortion bans and anti-LGBTQ+ laws

Survey shows few societies are pulling out of affected U.S. states, but many are implementing safety measures

By Amanda Heidt

When Claire Kouba heard that the American Geophysical Union's (AGU's) annual meeting would be held in New Orleans in 2025, she was worried. After the U.S. Supreme Court's June 2022 decision overturning *Roe v. Wade*, which guaranteed a constitutional right to abortion, Louisiana had banned the procedure with few exceptions. Kouba—a hydrogeologist at the University of California, Davis, and an AGU member since 2011—had attended the 2022 meeting in Chicago while early in her first pregnancy and may be trying to grow her family again in 2025. As she contemplated traveling to Louisiana, she found herself fearing for her own safety and that of other attendees who might need emergency medical care for complications such as miscarriage, ectopic pregnancy, and septic uterus.

Other professional organizations are also planning conferences in states that have enacted restrictive abortion laws, anti-LGBTQ+ legislation, or measures seen as racially discriminatory, raising similar concerns. Some have relocated their meetings: The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists moved its May meeting this year, from Louisiana to Maryland, af-

ter members worried they could be arrested for describing their work, and the American Association of Immunologists relocated its 2024 meeting from Arizona to Illinois, issuing a statement decrying the “dramatic and deleterious impact” the Supreme Court’s *Dobbs v. Jackson Women’s Health Organization* decision was having on patients.

But they are exceptions, according to a *Science* survey of U.S. conferences across STEM disciplines. Of the 15 organizations that responded, 10 currently have meetings planned in states with restrictive abortion policies or anti-LGBTQ+ legislation; none is relocating. Four cited the steep financial costs associated with pulling out of existing contracts typically negotiated years in advance. But at least two-thirds of the organizations are taking other measures to address members’ concerns. Among them: new guidelines for choosing future meeting venues and safety measures to protect vulnerable groups. Organizers and attendees alike have also expressed hope that the hybrid and virtual offerings popularized during COVID-19, which can increase participation and diversity, will remain an option.

AGU is among those not relocating, though Kouba asked leaders to do so in an open letter that garnered more than 800 signatories. The letter pointed out that AGU had shifted to a virtual platform dur-

Downloaded from <https://www.science.org> on June 28, 2023

Ultimately, what you mark out as important material will depend on your topic. But it never hurts to gather as much material as you can. It’s better to have too much and have to omit things rather than not having enough and scrambling for materials so you’ll have something to say.