

RESEARCH NOTE-TAKING TEMPLATE

A structured template for organizing research sources, findings, and analysis for your literature review and research paper.

☐ SOURCE INFORMATION

Source Number: _____ (e.g., Source #1, #2, #3...)

Full Citation (APA/MLA/Chicago): _____

Source Type:

☐ Journal Article ☐ Book ☐ Book Chapter ☐ Conference Paper
☐ Dissertation ☐ Report ☐ Website ☐ Other: _____

Date of Publication: _____

Date Accessed/Retrieved: _____

Database/Location Found: _____

DOI/URL: _____

☐ RELEVANCE TO YOUR RESEARCH

Your Research Question/Thesis: _____

How This Source Relates (check all that apply): ☐ Provides background/context

- ☐ Supports my argument
☐ Contradicts my argument
☐ Offers alternative perspective
☐ Fills a research gap
☐ Provides methodology guidance
☐ Seminal/foundational work
☐ Recent advancement in field

Relevance Rating: ☐ High ☐ Medium ☐ Low

Keywords/Tags: _____

☐ SUMMARY & KEY POINTS

Main Argument/Thesis of Source:

Key Findings (3-5 main points):

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

☐ IMPORTANT QUOTES & PAGE NUMBERS

Quote 1:

“ _____ ”

Page #: _____

Why Important: _____

Quote 2:

“ _____ ”

Page #: _____

Why Important: _____

Quote 3:

“ _____ ”

Page #: _____

Why Important: _____

☐ **Remember:** Always use quotation marks for direct quotes!

☐ METHODOLOGY (For Empirical Studies)

Research Design:

☐ Experimental ☐ Survey ☐ Case Study ☐ Qualitative

☐ Quantitative ☐ Mixed Methods ☐ Meta-Analysis

☐ Other: _____

Sample Size: _____

Population/Participants: _____

Data Collection Method: _____

Key Variables: - Independent Variable(s): _____ -

Dependent Variable(s): _____

Statistical Methods Used: _____

☐ RESULTS & DATA

Main Results/Findings: _____

Statistical Significance: _____

Key Data/Numbers to Remember: _____

Tables/Figures to Reference: (note page numbers)

☐ ☐ **CRITICAL ANALYSIS**

Strengths of This Source:

- ☐ Strong methodology
- ☐ Large sample size
- ☐ Clear findings
- ☐ Well-written
- ☐ Recent/current
- ☐ Peer-reviewed
- ☐ Fills research gap

Notes: _____

Weaknesses/Limitations:

- ☐ Small sample size
- ☐ Limited generalizability
- ☐ Outdated
- ☐ Methodological flaws
- ☐ Biased perspective
- ☐ Incomplete data
- ☐ Unclear findings

Notes: _____

Theoretical Framework Used:

☐ **CONNECTIONS & SYNTHESIS**

Sources That Support This Finding:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Sources That Contradict This Finding:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

How This Connects to Other Sources I've Read:

Themes/Patterns Emerging:

☐ **PERSONAL ANALYSIS & NOTES**

My Thoughts/Reflections:

Questions This Raises:

1.

2.

3.

Research Gaps Identified:

Follow-Up Sources to Find:

1.

 2.

 3.

-

☐ **HOW I'LL USE THIS SOURCE**

Which Section of My Paper:

- ☐ Introduction
- ☐ Literature Review
- ☐ Theoretical Framework
- ☐ Methodology
- ☐ Results/Discussion
- ☐ Conclusion

Specific Purpose:

- ☐ Provide background context
- ☐ Support my hypothesis
- ☐ Present counterargument
- ☐ Compare with my findings
- ☐ Justify my methodology
- ☐ Identify research gap

☐ Frame theoretical lens

Planned Use (draft notes): _____

Priority Level: ☐ Must Use ☐ Should Use ☐ Optional

☐ COLOR-CODING SYSTEM (Optional)

Suggested Color Key: - ☐ **RED:** Contradicts my argument / Counterevidence - ☐

GREEN: Strongly supports my argument - ☐ **YELLOW:** Background/contextual

information - ☐ **BLUE:** Methodological guidance - ☐ **PURPLE:** Theoretical framework

- ☐ **ORANGE:** Research gaps / Future research

This Source's Color: _____

☐ FOLLOW-UP ACTIONS

☐ Full citation added to reference manager (Zotero/Mendeley/EndNote)

☐ PDF saved and organized in research folder

☐ Key quotes highlighted in PDF

☐ Source added to annotated bibliography

☐ Cited in paper draft

☐ Cross-referenced with related sources

☐ Shared with advisor/study group (if applicable)

☐ QUICK REFERENCE TAGS

Author(s): _____

Year: _____

Study Type: _____

Field/Discipline: _____

Country/Region: _____

One-Sentence Summary: _____

SUPPLEMENTARY TEMPLATES

☐ COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS TEMPLATE

Use this section when comparing multiple sources on the same topic:

Topic/Theme: _____

Aspect	Source A	Source B	Source C
Author & Year			
Main Argument			
Methodology			
Key Findings			
Sample Size			
Strengths			
Limitations			
Conclusion			

Synthesis Across Sources: _____

Agreement Points: _____

Disagreement Points: _____

Research Gap Identified: _____

☐ THEMATIC SYNTHESIS TEMPLATE

Use this to organize sources by theme rather than individually:

THEME 1: _____

Sources Supporting This Theme: 1. Author (Year) - Key point:

_____ 2. Author (Year) - Key point:

_____ 3. Author (Year) - Key point:

Synthesis/Analysis: _____

Contradictory Evidence: _____

THEME 2: _____

Sources Supporting This Theme: 1. Author (Year) - Key point:

_____ 2. Author (Year) - Key point:

_____ 3. Author (Year) - Key point:

Synthesis/Analysis: _____

Contradictory Evidence: _____

THEME 3: _____

Sources Supporting This Theme: 1. Author (Year) - Key point:

_____ 2. Author (Year) - Key point:

_____ 3. Author (Year) - Key point:

Synthesis/Analysis: _____

Contradictory Evidence: _____

☐ SOURCE TRACKING MASTER LIST

Keep a running list of all sources reviewed:

#	Author	Year	Title	Type	Priority	Status
1					☐ High ☐ Med ☐ Low	☐ Read ☐ Cited ☐ Drafted
2					☐ High ☐ Med ☐ Low	☐ Read ☐ Cited ☐ Drafted
3					☐ High ☐ Med ☐ Low	☐ Read ☐ Cited ☐ Drafted
4					☐ High ☐ Med ☐ Low	☐ Read ☐ Cited ☐ Drafted
5					☐ High ☐ Med ☐ Low	☐ Read ☐ Cited ☐ Drafted

Total Sources Read: _____

Total Sources Cited: _____

Target Source Count: _____

☐ DIGITAL ORGANIZATION TIPS

Folder Structure:

```
Research Project/
├── PDFs/
│   ├── Background/
│   ├── Core_Sources/
│   └── Supporting/
├── Notes/
│   ├── Source_Notes/
│   └── Synthesis_Notes/
├── Drafts/
└── Final/
```

File Naming Convention:

AuthorLastName_Year_ShortTitle.pdf

Example: Smith_2023_SocialMedia.pdf

Backup Reminders: - ☐ Cloud backup enabled (Google Drive/Dropbox/OneDrive) - ☐
Weekly backup to external drive - ☐ Reference manager synced

☐ HOW TO USE THIS TEMPLATE

Step 1: Create one template document for EACH source you read

Step 2: Fill out sections as you read (don't wait until after!)

Step 3: Use the comparative/thematic templates for synthesis

Step 4: Review all notes before writing each paper section

Step 5: Keep all notes organized in a dedicated research folder

Pro Tip: Use this template in your note-taking app (Notion, Evernote, OneNote) or print multiple copies for physical note-taking.

Template Version: 2.0

Last Updated: 2025

© Research Note-Taking Template - For Academic Use

☐ REMEMBER

- ✓ **Take notes IN YOUR OWN WORDS** (avoid plagiarism)
- ✓ **Always include page numbers** for quotes and specific claims
- ✓ **Note the difference** between your ideas and source ideas
- ✓ **Review notes within 24 hours** for better retention
- ✓ **Organize as you go** - don't wait until the end!

Good luck with your research! ☐ ☐