

NOTE-TAKING STRATEGIES

TAKING NOTES

The purpose of this tutorial is to demonstrate three basic note-taking methods and to utilize the approach to write notes from a textbook passage.

Understanding the Task

When you take notes, you write a summary of information to use later. You will want to include the most information you can using the fewest words. To write useful notes, you have to decide which information is important and must be included, and which information can be left out.

Getting Ready

Here are some tips and techniques for note-taking. The tips give you some advice on what information to include in your notes. The techniques describe three ways of laying out your notes.

1. **Note-Taking Tips.** To create good notes, you have to decide what information is important: this will depend on your reason for taking the notes. If you're studying for a test, your notes should probably be short, and focus on key terms. More detailed notes may be helpful when you're trying to understand a difficult topic. If you're gathering information for a presentation or an essay, you might take many pages of notes. Adjust your note-taking style to suit your purpose.
 - Look for key terms. When you read a textbook, you are learning the key terms related to a single subject. These terms must appear in your notes. The following pointers will help you recognize key terms.
 - Words in special type (bold, italics, colour) are important – that's why they are highlighted.
 - Key terms often appear in titles, headings, subheadings, and captions.
 - Look for words that appear again and again throughout a paragraph, section, or chapter.
 - Key terms are often accompanied by definitions and examples.
 - Your own knowledge will help you to identify key terms. Trust your intuition.

Later in this Tutorial, you will learn different ways of structuring your notes around key terms.

- Use your own words whenever possible. When you express something in your words, you have taken your first step towards understanding it. The notes that follow are based on the introductory paragraphs of "Canada's Water Resources" from the appendix that accompanies this Tutorial.

- most water (H₂O) on earth is salt w.
- less than 3% fresh
- some frozen, some far underground
- use water (H₂O) from lakes, wetlands, and just beneath ground

- Be concise. Don't use full sentences. Numbers, symbols, abbreviations, and other short forms save space and increase your note-taking speed.

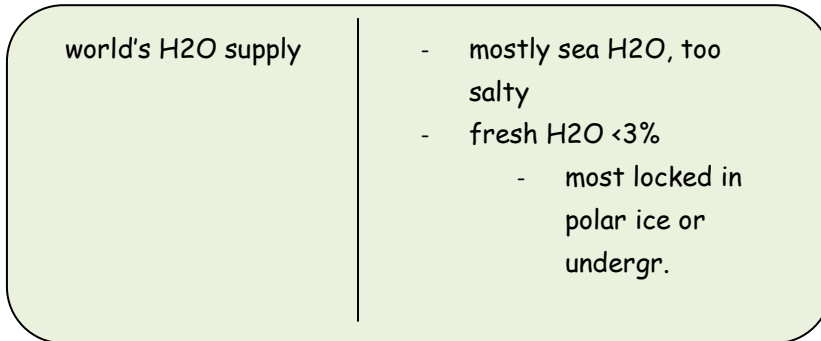
<u>Original Source</u>	<u>Note</u>
Though Canada has only one percent of the world's population, it has nine percent of the fresh surface H ₂ O.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can. 9% world's fresh surface H₂O

- Be neat and organized. When you read your notes later, you must be able to find the information you're looking for and understand what you've written.
2. **Note-Taking Techniques.** Here are three different ways to lay out the notes you take as you read a textbook. The sample notes that follow are taken from "Water: Uses and Abuses" from the appendix that accompanies this Tutorial.
- **Point-Form Notes.** This is a very common note-taking technique. Each key term or important idea is placed close to the left-hand margin. Support information follows in a series of brief phrases called points. Each point is indented on a new line and begins with a hyphen (-) or a bullet (•). Use further indentation when you want to add information related to a specific point.

<p>world's H₂O supply</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - mostly sea H₂O, too salty - fresh H₂O <3% <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - most locked in polar ice or undergr. <p>Canada's fresh H₂O</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 9% of world's fresh H₂O - stored in lakes & wetlands
--

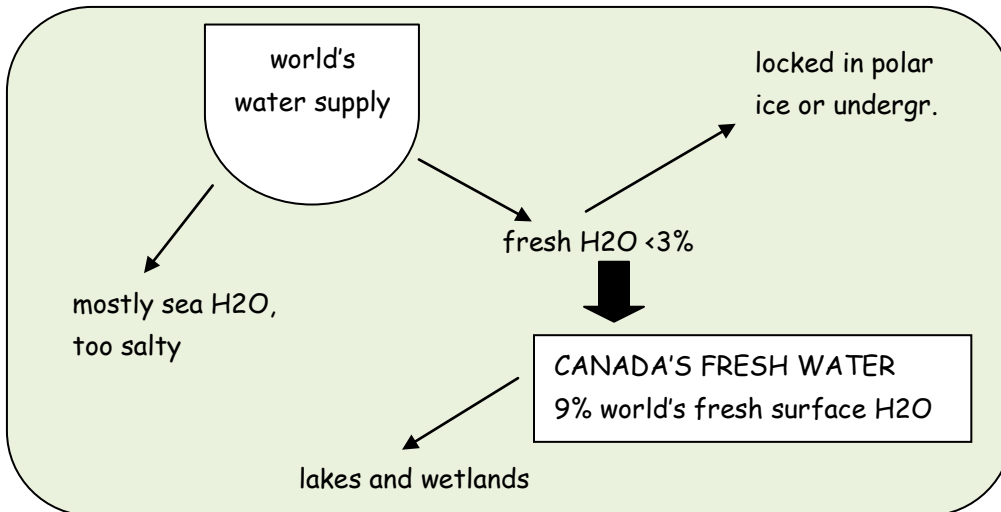
This technique works well any time you need to take notes quickly.

- Split-Page Notes.** To create split-page notes, the page is divided into two columns – a narrow left-hand column and a wider right-hand column. Key terms and important ideas go on the left; supporting information goes on the right.



Because they have their own column, the key terms really stand out from the supporting information. Try this technique when you need to learn important terms or dates, or the names of people and places. You can list the key terms in the left column as a pre-reading activity, and fill in the right column as you read.

- Mapping.** Mapping is a more visual method of note-taking. Shapes such as boxes or circles emphasize key terms, while lines and arrows show how supporting information fits in. You might even use diagrams instead of words to represent some of the ideas.



This technique works well if you like to see how things fit together, rather than read an explanation or description. Mapping takes more planning than the other techniques, so it's not good for quick note-taking. But it works well for note summaries, note comprehension, if you're studying for a test or preparing for a written assignment.

Writing Your Notes

Choose one or more of the three note-taking techniques and write notes from the information located in the appendix about the water cycle. Your notes should contain all the key terms, with supporting information for each term. When you have completed your notes, use the checklist below to assess your work.

Then choose a partner who has also completed this activity. Compare your notes with your partner's. Did you choose the same key terms and supporting information? Which note-taking techniques did you use, and why did you choose it?

With your partner, discuss how to improve your notes. You might ask your partner to use the checklist to assess your notes.

CHECKLIST: TAKING NOTES

- ✓ Did I identify the key terms and use them to structure my notes?
- ✓ Did I include information for each key term?
- ✓ Did I understand the information I included and use my own words wherever possible?
- ✓ Are my notes concise?
- ✓ Did I include words or information I didn't need?
- ✓ Did I leave out anything important?
- ✓ Are my notes neat and easy to follow?

Appendix

WATER: USES AND ABUSES

from Krueger, Corder, Koegler, This Land of Ours. (Toronto: Harcourt Brace Canada, 1991.)

Surplus or Scarcity?

“Canada has more fresh water per capita than any other country”
 “Canada will face a water supply crisis before the end of the century”

These two headlines appeared in a Canadian newspaper in the same year. How can they both be right?

A Valuable Resource

In this chapter we look at Canada’s freshwater resources: what they are and how important they are, and how we have used and abused them.

Water is one of our most valuable resources. All plants, animals, fish, and insects depend on water for their survival. As you answer the following questions, you will see how important water is to human beings.

1. Make a list of at least six ways you and your family use water in your home.
2. Tell why water is important to the following undertaking.
 - a. livestock farming
 - b. growing crops in dry regions
 - c. the manufacture of steel, paper, and any two other products
 - d. the production of electricity
 - e. the transportation of bulky cargoes
 - f. commercial and sport fishing
 - g. recreational activities
 - h. cleanliness

The Water Cycle

Water that available for human use is always on the move (figure 6.1). It falls from the clouds as rain or snow on land and sea. Some of the **precipitation** that falls on land runs off. Passing through lakes, streams, and rivers, it finally reaches the ocean. The rest soaks into the ground. Some of the water that goes into the ground remains in the soil and subsoil, where it is used by plants. If there is enough precipitation, some water moves underground through layers of sand and gravel or porous rock to feed streams and lakes. Some of the underground water percolates deep, where it may remain until someone digs or drills a well to tap this source. If the land is near a seacoast, some of this ground water slowly works its way into the ocean.

As soon as precipitation reaches the surface, it starts making its way back up into the atmosphere. Some of it **evaporates** directly from the land and water surface. Plants begin at once to use any water that reaches them. Later they give off vast amounts of moisture into the atmosphere through a process called **transpiration**. The moisture released by evaporation and transpiration forms clouds. The clouds later return the moisture to earth, completing the water cycle.

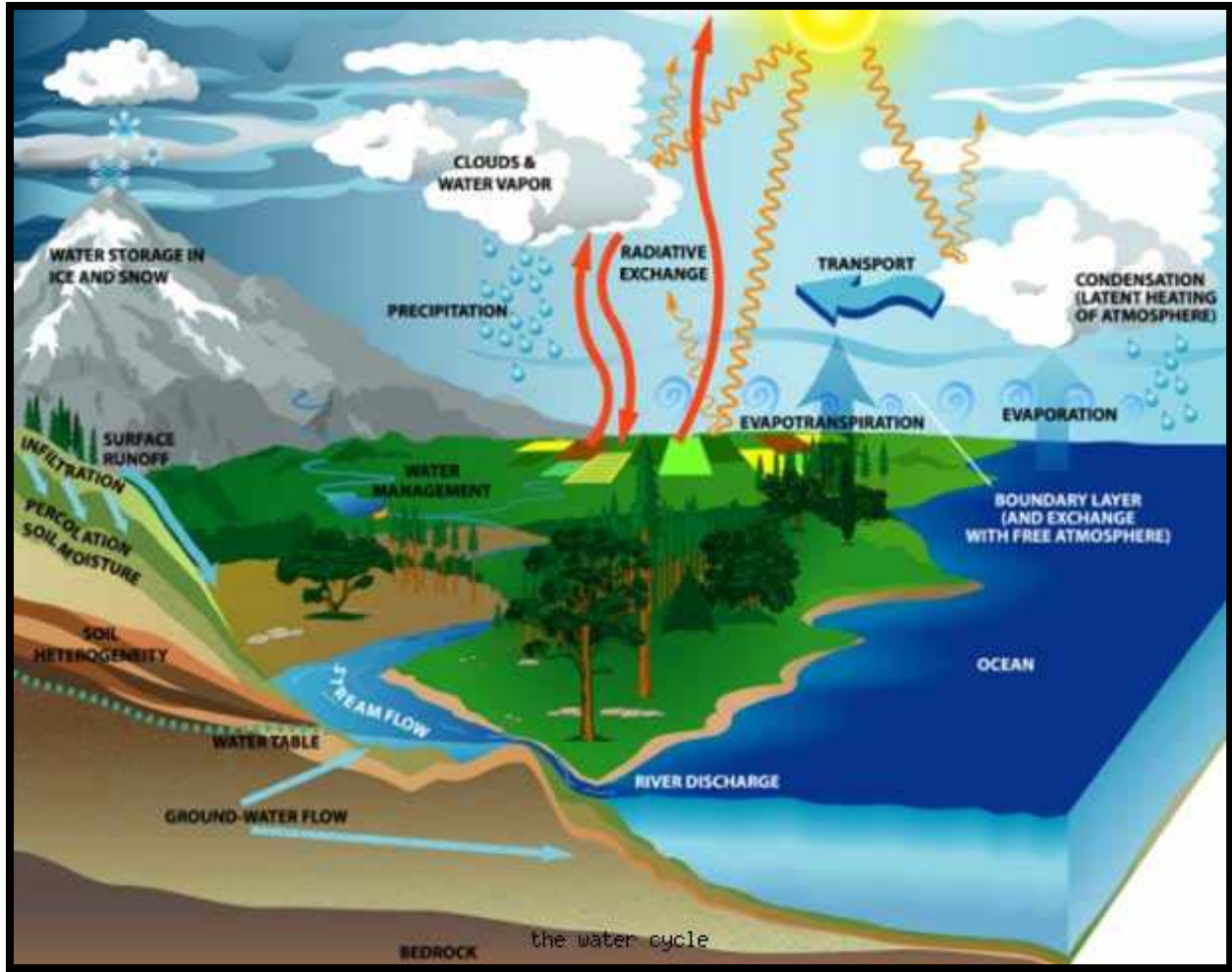


Figure 6.1 The Water Cycle

Human actions often affect the movement of water in the water cycle. When forests are cut, water runs off the land more rapidly, and less water soaks into the ground. Water **run-off** increases even more when we build cities, where rain water quickly runs off roofs and paved surfaces. This increased run-off often has drastic results. Rapid run-off decreases the supply of ground water for plants, animals, and people. It also causes rivers to flood during wet periods and streams to run dry during droughts. The following activities may make you even more aware of how much our actions alter the water cycle.

1. What happens to precipitation that falls on rooftops, streets, and parking lots? Where does it go from there? Compare its course with what happens to rain that falls on grass or tree areas.
2. Estimate the proportion of your schoolyard that is covered with asphalt or other material that water cannot penetrate. Do the same for the lot on which your home is located, and for a downtown block in your city or town (or the nearest city or town). How do these surfaces limit the amount of water available for human use in each of these areas?



Figure 6.2 An urban area of high run-off

Canada's Water Resources

The total amount of water on the earth has remained almost unchanged since the early days of the planet's history. Most of this water is sea water, too salty for our needs. Fresh water makes up less than three percent of all of the world's water, and most of that small proportion is not available for human use. Most of the world's fresh water is locked up in polar ice caps or lies deep underground beyond our reach. The available fresh water is stored in lakes and wetlands, and in the ground not far below the surface.

Lakes and Wetlands

Canada possesses a very generous share of the world's available fresh water. Though Canada has only one percent of the world's population, it has nine percent of the fresh water supply. Much of this water is stored in lakes and wetlands such as **bogs, swamps, marshes, and sloughs**. These lakes and wetlands cover about twenty percent of Canada's surface. The list of Canadian lakes in Table 6.1 includes only the largest; you will find many thousands more on a large-scale map of Canada.

1. Locate in an atlas the lakes named in Table 6.1. Mark them on an outline map of Canada.
2. On your outline map, mark the southern edge of the Canadian Shield. Which of these lakes lie within (or partly within) the Canadian Shield?
3. Which provinces have none of the lakes listed in Table 6.1?

Table 6.1 Large Canadian Lakes

(Lakes covering more than 5000 km²)

Lake	Area (km ²)
Superior*	84 500
Huron*	63 500
Great Bear	31 400
Great Slave	28 400
Erie*	25 800
Winnipeg	24 400
Ontario*	19 300
Athabasca	7 940
Reindeer	6 640
Nettilling	5 530
Winnipegosis	5 360

Source: The Inquiry on Federal Water Policy, Currents of Change, Final Report, 1985.

*Note: These Great Lakes are shared with the United States.

River Flow

Lakes and wetlands are important reservoirs. They store water, but by themselves they are not **renewable resources**. If a lake is drained, it stays dry until it is filled again by rivers that empty into it. For this reason, the number and size of lakes do not provide a good measurement of our renewable water supplies. A much better measurement is river flow.

River flow depends on the amount of water run-off resulting from precipitation. As you would expect, the highest amount of water run-off in Canada occurs in British Columbia, where the precipitation is highest. Run-off rates are lowest in the southern prairie region, where there is much less precipitation. In this region there is no run-off at all in many years; the precipitation either evaporates or soaks into the ground. The volume of the river flow in any area is very difficult to measure because it varies from day to day and from month to month.

Bibliography

Archer, Lynn, Cathy Costello and Debbie Harvey. Reading and Writing for Success. Toronto: Harcourt Brace Canada, 1997. Pages 60 – 66.

US Global Change Program. "Conceptualization of the Water Cycle (Schematic view)." Images from Our Changing Planet FY 2003. Web. 21 Feb. 2011

<http://www.usgcrp.gov/usgcrp/images/ocp2003/ocpfy2003-fig5-1.htm>

Cooper, David. "Aerial photo of the Toronto skyline." Toronto Star 19 May 2008.

<http://www.thestar.com/article/425824>