NOTES:TM
Making Notes Meaningful—and Memorable

What makes information meaningful is not just writing down what someone else is saying—it’s connecting what we’re hearing or experiencing to what we think about it, what we already know about it, and how we can use it. When we connect new information to what we already know, we make it more meaningful—and memorable!

Notes:TM is a brain-friendly note-taking system that is not just about taking notes, but also about making notes (the TM stands for taking and making). This helps students to keep their brains involved in the learning process. Relating new information to what they know, feel, and think, leads to better understanding of the new information and better ability to remember it. In short, Notes:TM makes the information more meaningful and memorable.

Here’s what a Notes:TM page looks like. The note-taking section is on the left—this is where important information provided by the teacher is recorded. The note-making section is on the right and this is where thoughts, feelings, and questions are recorded. It’s important to remember here that our brains remember images better than words, and symbols are quicker than writing words. Exclamation marks, asterisks, and question marks, and symbols you make up are all quick and useful. This side of the page is all about making connections between what the teacher is saying and what we already know or feel about the topic—and our brains love connections!

A brain-friendly way to take notes, mind mapping uses colors, symbols, and pictures to help students make mental associations that facilitate learning.

Follow these simple steps:

1. Begin with colored pens or pencils and a piece of paper (placed horizontal or landscape).
2. Put your main topic in the center of the page.
3. Draw thick branches from the center for your subtopics or key points.
4. Attach new branches to your subtopics as you come up with thoughts.
5. Use pictures and symbols to make it more memorable.

(Mind Mapping was created by Tony Buzan and is used with permission and enthusiasm)