



Note-taking Practice

Do you remember that course reading you were supposed to do two weeks ago? If you did read it, do you remember what its key ideas were?

There is a lot of reading to do in the post-secondary environment. As compared to the high school setting, you need to develop new note-taking skills to succeed. Old strategies like writing down everything the textbook says or highlighting every bold term may not be as effective anymore. In university, your learning will focus less on memorization and more upon understanding and application of information. You need to develop more active methods of taking notes that move from identifying information to making meaningful connections among ideas.

Practice and personalize a new note-taking style

Create one to two pages of notes based on the sample reading on the Tundra included below. It is recommended that you try to use elements from at least one of the following note-taking systems. Each of the systems appeal to different learning preferences. You need to pick the system that best suits your needs and style. Try a note-taking system like:

- Mapping method
- Matrix method
- Outline Method
- Cornell Method
- Doodling

If you need a refresher on these systems, check out our [note-taking video resources](#).

Sample Reading – The Tundra and its Ecology: How Life Survives¹

Tundra

The tundra is a vast, treeless zone bordering the Arctic Ocean in North America, Europe, and Asia. It generally extends from the treeline to the areas perpetually covered with ice and snow. Obviously, this area has a cold climate which makes it difficult for some species to survive: the ground remains permanently froze to within a few inches of the surface, and the growing season is only about sixty days. There is also an alpine

tundra on the peaks and high slopes of mountains, as in the western Rocky Mountains, the Alps, and the Himalayan Mountains. In general, tundra vegetation consists of lichens, mosses, grasses, and dwarfed woody plants. The composition of the vegetation in any particular portion of the tundra varies with the thickness and fertility of the soil. Ecologist Sham Shaeffer studied the growth of lichens across North American tundra over a 15-year period and discovered that regardless of climate fluctuations and the thickness of the soil, lichens always grew best in the most moist, fertile areas. Ecologist Michael Carols Hammer's study of tundra lichen, however, showed that lichens only thrived in areas where animal migration patterns were moderate, even if the soil was fertile. Grasses and sedges compose the alpine tundra.

Adaptations to the Tundra

In all tundra regions, numerous adaptations for survival in this extreme environment are found: dwarfism, small hairy leaves for water consumption, the ability to survive in the frozen state even when flowering, and the means for vegetative reproduction. We might suppose that animal life would be sparse under these conditions, but this is not true throughout the year. During the summer, great numbers of waterfowl nest in the tundra, and several species of insect – especially mosquitoes and black flies – are abundant. Permanent residents are few. Small rodents, including the well-known lemmings, are the most abundant animals. Other characteristic forms of animal life are caribous (reindeer in Eurasia), arctic hare, arctic fox, gray wolf, grizzly bear, polar bear, and the snowy owl. These forms show adaptation for winter survival, including white colouration, the ability to hibernate for periods of time and the means for burrowing under the snow. Often, the species that are most successful and that have the best chances for survival are those that can hibernate (Alex Yi, 2007).

¹ This passage is taken from pages 67-68 of Clay, S. (1996). *Strategies for studying: A handbook of study skills* (2nd ed.). Victoria, BC: Orca Book Publishers. It is being used for educational purposes only.