STUDY TIPS

USING MATRICES TO ORGANISE THE LITERATURE

There are many methods for taking notes from a text, but we also need a strategy for capturing information from a variety of texts so we have an overview of it. Matrices are very useful for this.

They can be used for:

- identifying which texts deal with which concepts
- identifying key points and how you will incorporate these points in your writing
- Identifying which texts deal with which themes, identifying main points
- summarising key points that support or refute an argument.

Here is an example of each.

Identifying which texts deal with particular themes

Texts	Topic: Prenatal influences on the child			
Concepts ➔ Texts	Harmful substances & diseases	Maternal age and physical characteristics	Domestic violence	Prenatal health care
McDonald (2011)	✓	✓		
Smith, 2009)	✓		✓	
Langley(2011)				✓
Seddon (2012)			✓	
Anderson (2010)	✓			✓
Etc., etc…				

Identifying key points and how you will use them in your writing

Topic: Issues in measurement of teaching quality		
Texts	Main points	Comments/Use in my writing
Keogh (2011)	Learning performance = index measuring result of learning and quality of teaching	But what does 'quality' of teaching mean?
Brown (2009)	Identifies several criteria of quality of teaching	Contrast 2nd criterion with Keogh's ideas; differences are contentious
Morgan (2011)	Etc, etc…	Etc, etc…

Identifying which texts deal with which themes, identifying main points

	Topic: Prenatal influences on the child			
Concepts ➜ Texts	Harmful substances & diseases	Environmental dangers	Prenatal health care	Etc…
McDonald (2011)	Tobacco = retarded foetal growth & increased infant mortality			
Smith, 2009)		Impact involves interaction of many factors		
Langley(2011)	Tobacco: Generally agrees with Jones but disputes causal influence – too many variables	Challenges in identifying exposure to toxins		
Seddon (2012)	Alcohol: Effects of foetal alcohol syndrome			
Anderson (2010)		Useful table of toxicants & associated foetal impact	Frequency of pre-natal examinations – benefits & problems	
Etc., etc…				

Summarising points supporting or refuting an argument

Topic: Does meditation improve the immune system?		
Texts	Support	Refute
O'Dwyer & Jones (2010)	Single case report Healing was more rapid when subjects meditated	
McKenzie (2011)		Two-group design No difference observed
Peters et al. (2009)	Two-group design Meditation group significantly reduced infection rates	
Etc, etc…		