

Note-taking Systems

A. The Cornell Method

How to do it:

1. Draw a line down your paper, leaving a 2 ½ inch margin on the left and a six inch area to the right.
2. During class write down information in the area on the right side. When the instructor changes topics, leave a few spaces.
3. After class, complete sentences. For each bit of important information on the right, write a cue in the left margin.
4. When reviewing, cover the notes on the right with an index card, leaving your cues showing. Try to say everything that is written on the right.

Advantages:

Organized, systematic, can use for reviewing, easy, efficient, saves time, no recopying necessary.

Disadvantages:

None

When to use it:

Any lectures.

B. The Outline Method

How to do it:

1. Write in point form.
2. Most general information begins at the left and more specific indented to the right. Level of importance is indicated by distance away from main point.
3. Do not have to use numbers.

Advantages:

Organized if done correctly, shows relationships, reduces editing, easy to review by turning main points into questions.

Disadvantages:

Takes more thought in class or rewriting later, cannot be used if the lecture is fast, must have time to organize.

When to use it:

Lectures that are presented in an organized outline. There must be enough time in the lecture to think and organize as you go. For more seasoned note-takers.

C. The Mapping Method

How to do it:

1. Each fact is related to the other in a picture or graphic form.
2. Write down a main idea and then draw lines to related facts. Other shapes, color coding, numbers etc. can be added later.
3. Review by covering lines or writing main ideas on flash cards and building structure.

Advantages:

Gives a visual picture of lecture- especially good for visual learners, easy to edit.

Disadvantages:

Sometimes it is difficult to hear changes from major points to facts in a lecture.

When to use it:

Lecture must be organized, best for heavy content.

D. The Charting Method

How to do it:

1. Determine categories to be covered in lecture.
2. Set up paper in advance in columns headed by categories.
3. Record lecture material under appropriate category.

Advantages:

Reduces the amount of writing needed, organized, easy memorization of facts, easy study of comparisons and relationships, reduces time on editing and reviewing before tests, good overview.

Disadvantages:

Must be able to sort out the categories for it to work.

When to use it:

Works well for material presented fast and heavy content, when you want to have an overview of the whole class on one paper, facts and relationships.

E. The Sentence Method

How to do it:

1. Write every new thought on a separate line.
2. Number each line.

Advantages:

Little more organized than a paragraph, gets most information down.

Disadvantages:

No way to tell major from minor points, difficult to edit without rewriting, difficult to review without a lot of editing.

When to use it:

Lecture is somewhat organized, heavy in content and presented quickly, works well when you do not know the relationship of ideas.