NOTETAKING SYSTEMS & STYLES

Overview

Below you will find an overview of five different notetaking systems. You should select a system that is easy to execute and that is easy to understand when reviewing. It is best to be flexible when taking notes; alter your style depending on the topic. For example, Math notes can (and will) look very different from your English notes. **With any style of notes, always spend at least 5 minutes reviewing them before packing up your bags.**

Cornell Notetaking System

This is the best notetaking system to be better prepared for exams as it allows you to quiz yourself AND to pull out the most important ideas from each lecture or reading material.

1. Divide your page into three different sections: right side = key words/main ideas, left side = raw notes, bottom section = summary of text or lecture:

Key words/main ideas	Raw notes
Brief summary of text or lecture	

2. During class: Take notes on the right side (raw notes). Use abbreviations; write telegraphically, and replace whole words with symbols so you can take notes quickly but effectively
3. After class: Create key words or main ideas that relate to each set of raw notes on the left side. After your key words are created, review all of your notes and write a brief summary capturing the most important details from the text or lecture.

Informal Outline System

The Informal Outline System allows you to structure your notes as opposed to simply writing down random sentences. With this method, it is helpful to abbreviate and to replace whole words with symbols to save time.

1. Uses roman numerals or numbers for main ideas
2. Include examples/subheadings under main ideas

   Example: 1. Main idea # 1
      o   Example or subheading
      o   Example or subheading
   2. Main idea #2
      o   Example of subheading
      o   Example or subheading

Textbook Marking System

The Textbook Marking System can replace the need for notebooks with markings in your textbook.

1. Use the margins to take notes or to make note of key concepts or confusing terms or concepts
2. Create questions for each paragraph in the margins
3. Highlight or underline main ideas
   o Never highlight or underline entire sentences (this could lead to confusion when studying)
   o Only highlight or underline key words or phrases that capture the main idea
      Example: one underline = important information, double underline = very important information or key terms to remember
4. Read the material first, then go back to highlight or underline
   o This allows you to understand the key concepts
   o When you go back to reread, you know what to underline and what to skim

Concept Map

A Concept Map is a web of connected ideas, and can be used for lectures or texts that are difficult to follow. This is typically helpful for visual learners and provides structure to unorganized lectures or texts.

1. Put the main idea or topic in the center
2. Branch off of the main topic with subtopics that relate
      Example:

Question System

The Question System helps you pinpoint the most important parts of the text. Creating questions helps you focus on the text and allows you to structure your notes to ensure you're paying attention to the main points within the reading. This method is helpful in preparing for exams since you can quiz yourself later on with the questions you created. You may also have created questions that will be on the exam!

1. Before reading or taking notes, use major headings and/or topic sentences to create questions about what you will read
      Example heading: Three Types of Goals
      Example question: What are the three types of goals?
2. Write or type your list of questions for the entire reading before starting to read the material
3. Then, go back to the beginning and read the material
4. Read each section carefully to find the answer to your question
5. Recite the answer out loud before writing it down
6. Write the answer below or beside your question

For more information and support, contact:

Academic Advising & Exploration Center: 262-472-5220, 2054 Roseman, advising@uww.edu