

5 Methods of Note Taking

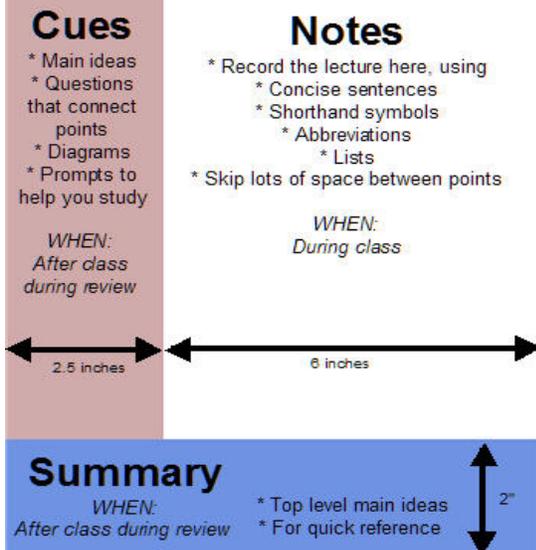
This handout illustrates five common methods for taking notes. Find whichever one suits you best!

The Charting Method

THEORIST	COUNTRY OF ORIGIN	YEARS ACTIVE	STAGES OF CHILD DEVELOPMENT
Jean Piaget	Switzerland	1920s through 1970s	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. sensorimotor (0–2) 2. preoperational (2–7) 3. concrete operational (7–12) 4. formal operational (12–adulthood)
Erik Erikson	Denmark (studied in Austria, emigrated to US in 1930s)	1930s through 1980s	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. trust vs. mistrust (infants) 2. autonomy vs. shame and doubt (toddler) 3. initiative vs. guilt (preschool-K) 4. industry vs. inferiority (elementary school) 5. identity vs. role confusion (teen years) <p>***See also stages of adult development.</p>

Separate your paper into columns headed by categories. These could include important dates, people, events, phrases, etc. For example, the columns in a history class could be “Date,” “Person,” and “Significance.” During class or as you read, write down the information that you learn under the appropriate column. This is a great method to use when the content is difficult to understand or presented quickly, as it allows you to get an overview of the lecture in your own words. This is also a good way to organize your thoughts and helpful for visual learners to memorize content.

Cornell Note-taking Method



The Cornell Method

Separate your paper into three sections (pictured to the left). The largest section is where you will record information from the lecture using sentences. After the lecture is completed, you will fill out the column to the left of the largest section. This is where you will record main ideas and anticipate test questions. Finally, at the bottom of the paper, is a summary of the lecture. This should be completed immediately after the lecture because this is when the information will be freshest in your memory. The Cornell Method of note-taking is excellent because it utilizes the “three pass” approach to learning—meaning you encounter the material three different ways. This is optimal for retaining the information in your memory for good.

Outline Method/Traditional Method

- I. **How to Build a Tree House (Main Topic or Idea)**
 - A. **Supplies (Subtopic)**
 1. **Lumber (Support)**
 - a) 10-2x4 (Clarification or list)
 - b) 6-2x8 (Clarification or list)
 2. **Nails (Support)**
 - B. **Plans (Subtopic)**
- II. **Fundraising (Main Topic or Idea)**

Keep it brief and to the point.

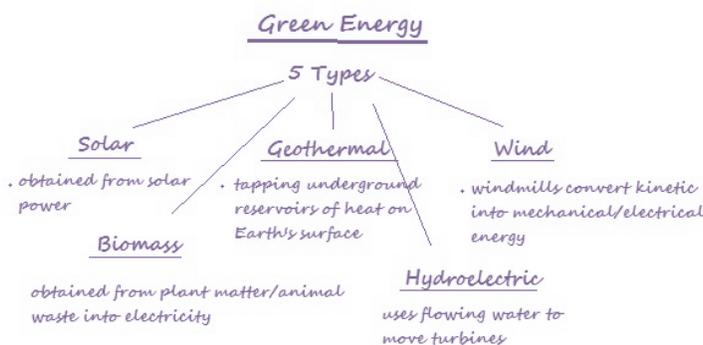
The Outline Method

Place the main and most important points farthest to the left of your paper. As information that is more specific is given, indent to the right. The more to the right a point is, the less important it is. It's important to note that once a new topic is started, you should begin at the left margin once more. Your outline should be a well-organized system where each sub-heading relates back to the original heading in the left margin. Outlining reduces editing, records content and relationships, and allows for easy reviewing.

24. *Railroad Atlas and Pictorial Album of American Industry* (Asher & Adams, 1879; copy in Hagley Library), p. 26. The historian Vaclav Smil (*Energy in World History* (Westview, 1994), p. 71) estimates that 250,000 were in use by the time of the Civil War.
25. Pursell, "Cyrus Hall McCormick and the mechanization of agriculture," p. 76.
26. Improved transportation and technical advances were abetted by the dissemination of knowledge. State agricultural fairs and farm publications gave farmers access to new seed types and better techniques. While there was no federal agricultural department until 1862, starting in 1848 a division of the Patent Office issued annual reports which Congressmen gave to their constituents. More than 250,000 of these were distributed in 1855 alone, including scholarly articles, accounts of individual farming experiences, and useful illustrations. Paul W. Gates, *The Farmer's Age* (Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1960), pp. 332-335.
27. Hunter and Bryant, *The Transmission of Power*, p. 97.
28. William Prescott Webb, *The Great Plains* (Boston, 1931), p. 340.

The Sentence Method

Simply write every new thought, topic, or fact on a new line. While similar to the outline method, this method is easier to use when the material is difficult or delivered quickly. It is best to immediately review these notes after class and rank what information is most important and least important. It's also helpful to rewrite your notes into an organized outline or map so that you can visually see the ordered relationships and connections.



The Mapping Method

Identify the main topic and underline it at the top or middle of your paper. Identify the sub-topics or supporting main ideas and place them around or under the main topic. Continue down or outward until you cover all the relevant information. Color coding or changing the shape of the bubble depending on where the information came from could be helpful. For example, a rectangle for book information and an oval for lecture information. The mapping method allows you to clearly see a topic from a global perspective.

