

Note Taking: Outlining

The outlining method is perhaps the most common form of note taking used by college students; an outline naturally organizes the information in a highly structured, logical manner, forming a skeleton of the textbook chapter or lecture subject that serves as an excellent study guide when preparing for tests. This method of note taking is extremely useful in most instances; however, in classes, such as math or chemistry, where a lot of formulas, graphs, or structures must be drawn, the outline method should be replaced with a better note-taking system.

How to Use

- Write points in an organized manner based on space indentation
- Place major points farthest to the left
- Indent each more specific point farther to the right (level of importance is indicated by distance away from left margin)

Advantages

The outlining method emphasizes content as well as relationships between the material. Also, it reduces the time needed for editing and allows for easy reviewing.

Disadvantages

This method requires more thought for accurate, understandable organization and, therefore, cannot be used during lectures that move too quickly.

Example

How to study from an outline

Read through one line at a time

Explain the information and connect the idea to others presented

Check the accuracy of the information

Add clue words

Jot down keywords or details that you didn't originally include in the outline

Use these keywords to jog your memory when studying from the outline

Recite information from the outline aloud

Write a summary of the information presented

Use your own words to connect the various ideas presented in the outline in a logical manner

Adapted from: Wong, L. (2006). *Essential study skills* (5th ed.). Boston: Houghton Mifflin.

