Notetaking
For College Success

Why Notetaking Matters

- Helps you focus during class
- Improves understanding and memory
- Creates a study tool for exams, papers, and projects
- Supports active learning, not just copying

When you practice active note-taking, you are also processing information, making it easier to learn, remember, and identify thoughts and ideas.

Things to Write Down

- Main ideas and concepts
- New terms or definitions
- Steps in a process or problem
- Examples to help understand
- Things written on the board or slides
- Content the instructor emphasizes:

  "This is important"

  "This will be on the test",

  "You should know this"

Abbreviations & Symbols

Keeping up with taking notes while the professor is talking can be hard. Using abbreviations can help you write notes faster.

w/ = with   ex = example

→ = leads to   bc = because

↑ = increase   ↓ = decrease

+ = and   i.e. = in other

≠ = isn't/doesn't words

Notetaking
Tips and Tricks

1   Have your items ready for each class. Notebooks, pens, pencils, highlighters, and laptops will all help you feel ready and prepared.

2   Use highlighters, color-code, and underline to visually break down the content into easier-to-scan chunks.

3   Writing notes by hand rather than typing them causes your brain to focus on the key content.

4   Try different notetaking methods and use the one that works best for you. There is no one correct method for all.

5   Don't just forget about your notes once class is over. Review them after class. Create a quiz for yourself, teach the concept to someone else, create a summary of them.

6   Keep your notes clear, organized, and in one place so you can always access them.

7   Use symbols and abbreviations to help you save time and consolidate infomration

Method 1
Outline Method

The outline method is a traditional and straightforward method to taking notes. You will organize notes by headings, bullet points, and subheadings, in a logical and hierarchical structure.

This method consists of **primary headings**, and **subtopics** that fall under each heading are indented beneath it. This allows you to break up large or complex ideas/lectures into smaller, more manageable chunks.

To use this method, the main topic will go on the top, and any supporting topics will be added underneath that with an indent. You can create as many indented subtopics as you need, and can use **bullet points, dashes, or numbers.**

Outline Method Examples

Your first point goes at the top with no indents or bullets
- Any further information about this point will be placed underneath it with a bullet point.
  - And details that fall with that can be further indented

Mt. SAC has many great student support programs
- Some of these are culturally based
  - Arise, FPNC, CBCSS, etc.
- Some are experience-based
  - NextUp/REACH, EOPS, Veterans, etc.

Use indentation to categorise your points by main topic areas

LECTURE NOTES – The Outline Method

HEADER - MAIN TOPIC 1
- *This is the first SUBTOPIC about this topic*
  - This is the first KEY POINT under this subtopic
    - *Indent again for the smaller details:*
      - *Add supporting evidence, ideas, data points, facts, examples and opinions here*
      - *Start a new bullet point for each detail you note*
  - Add a separate subheading for the next key point
- *Keep your subtopics for each topic aligned to the left*
  - Keep adding notes by categorising them:
    - *as key points, subtopics and details*

HEADER - MAIN TOPIC 2
- *Keep going as your lecture progresses ...*

Avoid full sentences

Very little preparation required

Can be completed during your class or lecture

examstudyexpert.com/note-taking-strategies/

Method 2
Cornell Notes

Cornell notes are great for organizing your material as you learn and for later review and studying. This method encourages intentional note-taking and summarizing, which helps you better understand the material rather than just copying or writing it down.

There are three main sections: notes, keywords/questions, and summary. Divide your page into these sections by drawing lines as shown below.

Narrow column on the right: Keywords or questions to look up later
Wide column on the left: Main notes and ideas during lecture
Bottom block: Summary of your notes on that page at the end of class
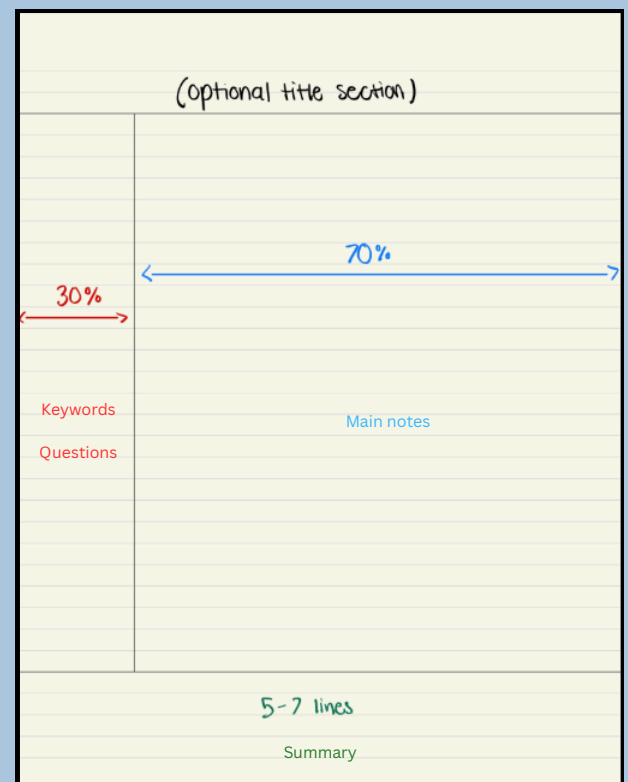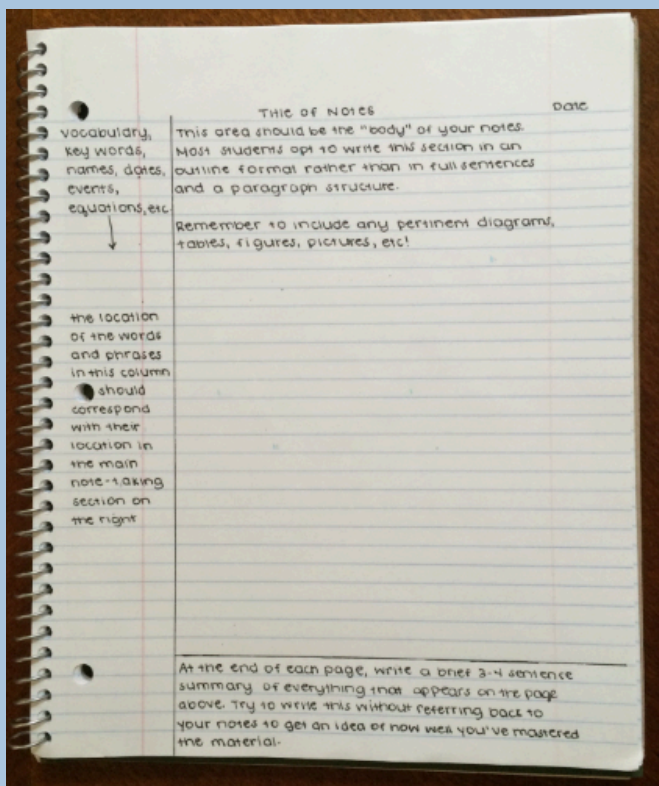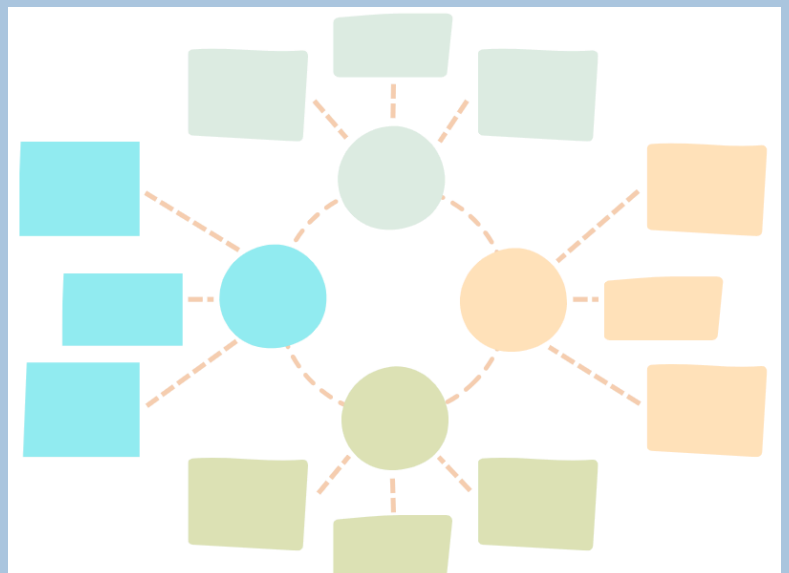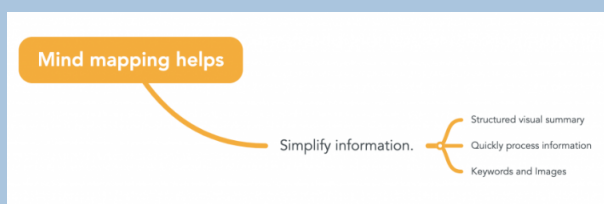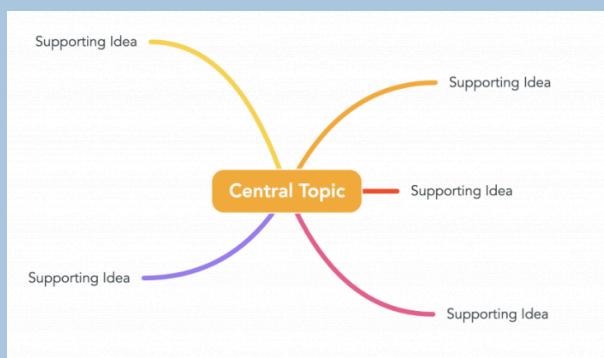
Method 3
Mind Mapping

Mind mapping is great for those who are visual learners and includes visually organizing information. You can use shapes, bubbles, branches, and arrows to connect different thoughts.

You start with a main thought, and branch out from that concept with supporting ideas and details. This can be great for consolidating notes and scanning for visual reminders.

Single central topic: This is the main idea the mind map is centered around
Branch/tree structure: Subtopics used to develop your idea
Keywords: Rather than writing out detailed notes, you use keywords

What is Mind Mapping?