Outline Note Taking Method

This method of note taking organizes information into main topics, sub-topics, and supporting details with indentations made to separate each category. More general information is located closest to the left margin of the paper with specific information moving outwards to the right. Sometimes bullets or numbers are used to make a distinction, but this is not necessary as long as indentations have been made. This method is very easy to use when instructors have provided outlines of their own, such as PowerPoints, to go by. This method of note taking is also very useful as a study guide or to prepare for an essay/short answer exam.

Outlining – how to:

• Follow the instructor’s lead and record information as it is presented, making indentations when appropriate. If an outline is provided, use this as your starting point and fill in the blanks. If not, utilize your critical thinking skills to determine where information should be included (i.e. main topic, sub-topic, or supporting detail).
• Continue to record throughout the lecture.
• Afterwards, re-write your notes so that your outline is easily legible and understandable. Students may find that information discussed later in a lecture should be included in a main topic presented earlier during that same lecture.

Example:

Main Topic
  Sub-topic 1
    Supporting Detail 1
    Supporting Detail 2
  Sub-topic 2
    Supporting Detail 1
Main Topic
  Sub-topic 1
    Supporting Detail 1
    Supporting Detail a
    Supporting Detail b
    Supporting Detail 2
  Sub-topic 2
  Sub-topic 3

Adapted from…