

Outline (or Theme) Note Taking

Outline notes (sometimes called theme notes) are a common form of note-taking that focuses on the structure of writing. It reveals whether the author has made a clear and defensible argument.

As you take notes, approach your reading on a paragraph-by-paragraph basis. Identify all the major paragraphs (smaller ones may be grouped with larger ones) and treat each one as a separate mini-essay. As such, you will need to identify the major overall theme of the paragraph (i.e. the "title"), the major point(s), and specific supporting premises (i.e. evidence). For each paragraph, your notes should look like the following:

a) TITLE (the overall theme or topic of the paragraph)

└─▶ **b) MAJOR POINT(S) (One, two or three key ideas)**

└─▶ **c) EVIDENCE AND EXAMPLES (1 or 2 per major point)**
-events, specific people or groups, phrases, policies, dates,
statistics, anecdotes, etc.

Make sure you **indent** each level like the above example. This is not merely cosmetic; indenting a half or one full inch for each level makes your notes much more readable and, hence, more useable when you study.

For example, you might have the following notes from two paragraphs out of your textbook:

1) Canada Opens Her Doors

- *Laurier's government wanted to fill the prairies with experienced eastern European farmers.
 - Sifton didn't want British industrial workers, who would prefer Canadian cities like Winnipeg.
 - Eastern Europeans (i.e. "Galicians") had experience in dry land farming and were looking for free land.
- *Large businesses wanted cheap, hard-working labour.
 - Chinese workers were brought in for the CPR; they worked for half the wages of a European.

2) Backlash

- *Older Canadians feared these new immigrants.
 - Prairie papers called the Galicians the "scum of the earth" - & not "English" enough.
 - In 1907, the Asiatic Exclusion League led a riot through Vancouver's Chinatown.