TAKING NOTES ON TEXTBOOKS

I Make Preparations

A. Keep your books and notes together in one permanent place  
B. Take out a new sheet of paper and head it with the author and title of the text and the chapter number.  
C. Divide the sheet of paper in two; on the left side note key terms, people, events, movements, and concepts; on the right hand side, define and comment on new terms.

II Write Down All Key Terms

A. Do not try to write down everything contained in the chapter.  
B. Take down as much specific information as possible, i.e. names of people or places, significant dates, important theories, formulas, and concepts. These are the key terms of the textbook chapter.  
C. Keep track of all new key terms, either by maintaining a master list or using separate lists for each chapter.  
D. Underline any term or phrase that is repeated frequently in the text.

III Include in Your Notes Brief Definitions of Key Terms

A. Write brief explanations or definitions of key terms next to them  
B. Jot down words or phrases that will help you later recall definitions of key terms.  
C. Develop a shorthand that will enable you to take down more material faster with less effort.

1. Avoid complete sentences  
2. Omit unnecessary words such as articles (e.g. “the”; “an”)  
3. Don’t worry about spelling and punctuation, except in copying key terms  
4. Keep descriptions, anecdotes, and examples brief  
5. Abbreviate repeated key terms  
6. Use signs and symbols for commonly repeated words  
7. Use charts and diagrams, especially if your learning style is visual or spatial.

IV Construct a Rough Outline

A. Use a simple diagram that helps you keep track of how various points and concepts in the chapter are related.  
B. Identify the main topic or subtopic of the chapter.