Textbook Notes

Some kind of notes on readings is a must---unless you have an astonishing memory. Exams in college do not come frequently; hence, the material accumulates and becomes a horrendous burden for review—unless you have reduced it through judicious selection of notes to manageable, essential and important points. You may take notes in a number of ways:

**Marginal Notes**

1. Write key ideas or facts and their brief explanations opposite the paragraphs in which they appear.

2. Summarize in the bottom margin the significant ideas on that page. For review, all you have to do is read the bottom margins. If there is any question about any notation, all you need do is check it on that page.

3. Use your own personal system of symbols to mark significant ideas: check marks, asterisks, arrows, vertical and parallel lines, etc.

**Binder Notes**

1. Identify and restate briefly in your own words the major theme or controlling idea from the introductory paragraphs. The major theme can appear in the form of a problem, issue or argument.

2. Read a paragraph or two or some manageable portion. Reflect a moment on what you’ve read and on what it means. Relate this to the thesis and major ideas gained so far. Restate briefly and clearly IN YOUR OWN WORDS the essential and important ideas. You may add brief supporting details, but be sparing. Absolutely avoid copying from the text as this hinders learning instead of helping.

3. Use a simple outline form to show logical and important relationships between ideas. Use space to create an uncluttered and ordered arrangement so that the eye can immediately distinguish the more important from the less important.

4. Review notes immediately after completing the reading. This may well be the most important review for you as it will reinforce what you have just learned. This secures the initial learning permitting it to enter the long-term memory storage system, and subsequent periodic reviews will be merely review instead of relearning. Only a few minutes are required. This review also synthesizes the material into a whole.

5. Notes should be in ink, legible, and readily understood.
**Underlining/Highlighting**

1. Underlining or highlighting is the least helpful. It requires little mental involvement and discourages reworking the information in your mind to check understanding. Moreover, there is a tendency to underline or highlight too much.

2. If you must, underline or highlight sparingly—only key terms, concepts and significant ideas within a sentence. It is assumed that review of the underlined or highlighted concepts and words will immediately bring for the necessary understanding without rereading the paragraph.