Notetaking

Materials:

Three-ring notebooks with soft covers and in a different color for each course work best for this note taking method. You can punch holes in your syllabus, handouts, papers and exams and insert them into the notebook in order to create your own textbook for the course. Use regular 3-ring paper and draw a wider margin (2-2.5") on the left - hand side or use the notebook paper that law students use which already has a wide left margin.

Taking your notes:

1. Put the date in the upper right-hand corner.

2. Take notes in an outline format. You do not need a formal outline, but write the main idea or topic next to the line and indent the supporting details under it with dashes in front of them.

3. Use only one side of the paper. Your notes will be more readable and the back of the page can be used for other purposes.

Reviewing your notes:

1. Reread your notes within the first few hours after the lecture since, on the average, retention of material is good for that length of time but drops off sharply after that.

2. As you read, underline main ideas, number supporting details and use graphic devices such as boxes or circles to indicate important names, dates, or terms. If you have to recopy or clarify a section, rewrite it on the opposite page and draw an arrow to where it belongs.

3. Now use the left margin to make up questions about the contents of your notes. Don't write the answers but record a number or a mnemonic device to aid your memory. (Example: What are the branches of government?: 3 or j-e-l)

4. Test your recall by covering up your notes and quizzing yourself using the questions you have made up. Either verbalize the answers or write a very brief response. Thinking that you know an answer is not enough. (If you don't have time for this step now, at least you will have set up an excellent system for exam preparation. Doing it now - and reviewing often - is, however, the best approach.)

5. On the back of the first page of the lecture, list the major topics that were covered in the lecture and list the relevant textbook chapters that you should review when you review this lecture.