



Ms. Strong's Tips for Taking Academic Notes
a.k.a. A Guide to Academic Note-taking Nirvana



Requirements for AP Gov Textbook Notes

1. **Format** – You are welcome to use whichever format works best for you (ex: traditional format, Cornell notes). Be consistent throughout the outline.
 - a) Notes must be handwritten unless there are special circumstances; see Ms. Strong if you need to type your outline.
 - b) Your outline does not need to be elaborate; simply organize your thoughts into a logical plan or structure.
 - c) Use major section and sub-section headings as your Roman numerals, or column topics.
 - d) Include brief explanations, definitions, and examples to support these headings.
2. **Length** – Though there isn't a "magic number" for the length of your outline, they should be concise, but include all parts of the chapter. A typical outline might be around six handwritten pages.
3. **Vocabulary** – Knowledge of government vocabulary is critical to success on class quizzes, tests and the AP exam. NOTE: Vocab may not be limited to words in bold. Vocab should be included in the outline using ONE of the following methods:
 - a) Attach vocab with definitions or descriptions at the end of the outline.OR
 - b) Include vocab in the text of your outline and highlight and/or underline it.

Tips for Effective and Efficient Note Taking

1. Read the chapter first BEFORE you start taking notes – it saves time and you need to read for understanding first.
2. While reading the chapter, look for, and include in your notes key concepts, vocabulary, and actions.
3. Focus in particular on the first and last sentences of paragraphs for clues as to what the author thinks is important.
4. You don't need to write in complete sentences; include key phrases.
5. Use abbreviations where possible.
6. It should not take you much longer than 1 hour total to take notes on a given chapter (this does not include the reading of the chapter). If you find that outlining takes a lot more time, see Ms. Strong for assistance.
7. You can tackle the chapter in smaller chunks i.e. read ten pages and take notes or so at a time over two or more days i.e. DON'T WAIT UNTIL THE NIGHT BEFORE TO TACKLE THE WHOLE CHAPTER.