ORGANIZATIONAL STRATEGIES

These strategies help you connect material to your prior knowledge and aid you in seeing the connections between different ideas and materials.

- **Concept Maps** help you see the relationships between ideas and facts and should reflect how you think about the subject.
  
  - Start by listing the key ideas, concepts, terms, and facts from chapter. Then arrange these in a hierarchy with the most inclusive on top, working your way down to the least inclusive.
  - To draw the concept map, start at the top with the most inclusive items and work your way down the page to the most specific items.
  - Draw lines showing the connections between the different items. Label each line to show the connection.
  - If you start a concept map and discover a better way to organize the material, do not be afraid to start over. This shows that you are thinking about the material and making sense of the overall structure of it.
Test Prep Strategies

- **Charts** are useful for depicting many kinds of information. Matrices are helpful to display information where two or more topics are to be compared. First, list the topics you want to compare along the top of the chart. Then list the characteristics you want to use to compare them along the side. You can then list the defining characteristics for each topic. This gives you a quick way to compare the characteristics of the topics.

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<th>Mercantilist</th>
<th>Smith</th>
<th>Marx</th>
<th>Keynes</th>
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<td><strong>Price Theory</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Population Size and Growth</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Food Pricing</strong></td>
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- **Outlines** help organize the information in the reading and can help connect the reading material to other class material. You do not have to use formal outlining techniques. Just develop your own style of organizing the material in a hierarchical structure. If the textbook provides an outline, you can use it as a starting point, but expand on it to make it your own. Do not copy text from the book, but paraphrase material in your own words.

One benefit of an outline is that you can integrate material from the readings, lecture, and discussions into one outline. This allows you to see how all the pieces of the class fit together.

- **Summaries** Writing a summary in your own words after reading a passage is a powerful way to remember the material. Write the summary without referring back to the reading. If you cannot do so, then go back and read the passage again.
Learning to write effective summaries will take practice. You want to include enough information to capture the argument or significant points, but do not want to simply copy the text.

Tips for writing summaries:

- Eliminate trivial and redundant information.
- Use lists. Sometimes your summary might be a list. Again, be discerning about what you include in the list. Too much detail will not be helpful.
- Restate the topic sentences in your own words. If a text does not provide topic sentences, then write your own.

Flashcards  Much of studying involves the remembering of different kinds of information. In courses where there are large amounts of FACTUAL information, the use of flashcards may be helpful. Kinds of material that might be considered appropriate for flashcards are vocabulary words, formulas, equations, definitions, dates, names, etc.

The primary advantage of flashcards over other review techniques is that since the cards are more conveniently carried, they will probably be reviewed more often than material in a notebook or a textbook. Frequent review of cards is what makes them effective. Short, frequent reviews will generally be more effective than long sessions of cramming.

Objections about flashcards usually state that “they take too long to make.” One should keep in mind, however, that the writing down of the material on the cards is an aid to memory in itself. One learns while preparing the cards!

Here are some hints for making flash cards:

- Choose the most important facts or concepts from each chapter you read or lecture you attend.
- Use your own words unless a specific definition is required.
- Label the cards with a subject heading and date, so you’ll be able to put them into categories for various types of quizzes and tests.
Test Prep Strategies

Examples:

Put terms on one side with definitions and examples on the other side.

Place types of math problems on one side with examples on the other side.

Draw an illustration on one side with an arrow pointing to the part you need to know and
Test Prep Strategies

place the answer on the other side.

- **Venn Diagrams** Graphic organizers are powerful ways to help understand complex ideas. By using even a basic Venn diagram, you can recognize complex relationships.