

Cornell Notes

Teacher Tips

- ◆ Give students a lecture on “How to take Notes”, using the Cornell format on an overhead, modeling effective notes, and having all students record the information.
- ◆ Students can practice abbreviating their words while you give a brief lecture share notes after the lecture to compare abbreviations.
- ◆ Consider running off Cornell format paper, front and back, in various colors.
- ◆ Allow students to select a color for each academic content class, keep all notes for that class in the same color to foster organization.
- ◆ Give an open-notes quiz on How to Take Notes and/or other topics.
- ◆ Encourage students to think about which class it might be easiest for them to take notes, and start there. Remind students that when they are focusing intently on taking good notes, for a short time their focus on the class content will be less. This is natural and happens whenever we learn something new. With practice, taking notes will become second nature as they focus on the class content.
- ◆ Explain to students that the in-class portion of note-taking accounts for only a part of the learning time. It is important to review their notes within 24 hours, compare lecture notes to book notes, look for inaccuracies and/or incomplete notes, write questions to help them study (Questions will be discussed in detail in the next section), keep their notes organized, and review their notes periodically.
- ◆ Have students practice taking Cornell notes only at first, then teach how to write questions separately, then teach how to write summaries separately.
- ◆ Each of these concepts takes some time to master, so be patient and look for improvement.
- ◆ Display examples of quality notes on the overhead. Display examples of incomplete or inaccurate notes for students to brainstorm how to review/revise notes.
- ◆ Display examples of quality reflections/ summaries on the overhead, preferably from your class. Display examples of poor quality, limited, or incorrect reflections/ summaries and have students give suggestions on how to improve. At a staff meeting, teach all teachers Cornell note style, encourage note-taking schoolwide.

The Cornell Notetaking System

<p>What are the advantages?</p>	<p>Three Advantages</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. It is a method for mastering information, not just recording facts. 2. It is efficient. 3. Each step prepares the way for the next part of the learning process.
<p>What materials are needed?</p>	<p>Materials:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Loose-leaf paper to be kept in binder. 2. 2-1/2 inch column drawn at left-hand edge of each page to be used for questions or summary statements.
<p>How should notes be recorded?</p>	<p>During class, record notes on the right-hand side of the paper:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Record notes in paragraphs, skipping lines to separate information logically. 2. Don't force an outlining system, but do use any obvious numbering. 3. Strive to get main ideas down. Facts, details, and examples are important, but they're meaningful only with concepts. 4. Use abbreviations for extra writing and listening time. 5. Use graphic organizers or pictures when they are helpful.
<p>How should notes be refined?</p>	<p>After class, refine notes:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Write questions in the left column about the information on the right. 2. Check or correct incomplete items: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • loose dates, terms, names • notes that are too brief for recall months later 3. Read the notes and underline key words and phrases. 4. Read underlined words and write in recall cues in the left-hand column (key words and very brief phrases that will trigger ideas/facts on the right). These are in addition to the questions. 5. Write a reflective paragraph about the notes at the bottom of the page. 6. If possible, compare notes with a study buddy.
<p>What are the ways to recite notes?</p>	<p>Recite notes three ways:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Cover up right side of page. Read the questions. Recite information as fully as possible. Uncover the sheet and verify information frequently (single, most powerful learning tool!) 2. Reflect on the organization of all the lectures. Overlap notes and read recall cues from the left side. Study the progression of the information. This will stimulate categories, relationships, inferences, personal opinions/experiences. Record all of these insights! <i>REFLECTION = KEY TO MEMORY!!</i> 3. Review by reciting, reflecting, and reading insights.
<p>What are the five steps of this system?</p>	<p>This system in brief:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Record lectures in the main column. 2. Refine lectures with questions, corrections, underlining, recall cues, graphics and pictures. 3. Recite by covering main column and expanding on recall cues - then verify. 4. Reflect on organization by studying all cues. 5. Review by repeating recite and reflect steps.

Advice for Using the Cornell System

FORMAT for notes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">◆ Write the date, class, topic of notes, source of notes (e.g., lecture, book, film) and page number for each page of notes at the top of a page of lined paper.◆ Mark a wide left margin (approx. 1/3 of page).◆ Consider the left-hand column the place for study questions and main ideas.◆ Consider the right-hand column the place for specific information.◆ While taking notes, write in the right-hand column.◆ Use abbreviations.◆ Paraphrase to capture content but simplify writing◆ Use symbols (arrows, circles, underlining) or highlight important◆ Information; ideas/words that are unclear, relationships between ideas/information.◆ Include graphics (e.g., diagrams, charts) when relevant.◆ Skip lines between ideas.◆ Within 24 hours of taking notes, develop study questions and identify main ideas about specifics in right-hand column; write study questions/main ideas in the left hand column.
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TAKING NOTES: SOME TIPS

Be an active listener Be aware of lecturer/speaker organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none">◆ Think about what is being said.◆ Think about how what is being said relates to other points in the lecture, ideas from discussion/reading/other subjects.◆ Ask questions.◆ Listen for the speaker to forecast organization of the lecture (e.g., phrases like "Today I want to talk about," or "By the end of this lecture, you should be convinced that . . .")◆ Look for lecture outlines on the board or handouts.◆ Use arrows/lines/circles/numbers to connect related ideas.
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TAKING NOTES: SOME TIPS

<p>Use the speaker's style to identify important points</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Become familiar with the speaker's style. ◆ Listen for important points that might be emphasized when the speaker: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • pauses or slows down • repeats a point • modulates the volume of her/his voice • uses introductory phrases (e.g., "The four main points are" or "Note the relationship") • writes on the board • gestures or uses visual aids
<p>Keep up with the speaker Example: Example:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Write only the important ideas such as names, places, dates, events, examples, terms, definitions, causes, effects, evaluations, cross references: make it brief but clear. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Speaker says:</i> "Hippocrates, a Greek who is considered to be the Father of Medicine, was born on the island of Cos in 460 B.C." • <i>Notes say:</i> "Hippocrates (Gr.) Father of Med. B. Cos 460 B.C." ◆ Use abbreviations for familiar words <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Speaker says:</i> "George Washington was not, in a sense, America's first president." • <i>Notes say:</i> "G. Wash. Not Am's 1st Pres.?"
<p>Be alert to the speaker's stance</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Some lecturers attempt to persuade as well as inform listeners; when applicable, note ideas/references/opinions that provide insight into the speaker's point of view.
<p>Review notes shortly after a lecture</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Develop study questions and identify main ideas. ◆ Fill in details for clarity. ◆ Look up and add the definitions of new words/terminology. ◆ Identify information that is unclear and/or questions that need to be answered; write and mark questions in the text of notes or at the end where they will be easily found; get answers to the questions from other students and/or the speaker. ◆ Add symbols to highlight important ideas and key words. ◆ Delete irrelevant information. ◆ Review the overall organization of the material; add symbols to make the organization clear or rewrite for clarity as needed. ◆ Write a summary of the significant ideas.

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Mary Catherine Swanson, 2002, reproducible for classroom use

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