

Cornell Note Taking

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Student
Academic
Success
Center

Our short-term memory can store about 5-7 bits of information at one time. This means that while we may understand what is being said in a lecture or what we read in a textbook in the moment, we remember very little of it later unless we take really good notes. The Cornell system has five steps, plus a special format for laying out your pages. The five steps are:

Record
Reduce
Recite
Reflect
Review

First you need to set up your notebook pages in three parts. Loose leaf paper works best. Create one 2 ½ inch column for “cues” on the left hand side of the paper, leaving one 6 ½ inch column for class notes, and add one 2 inch zone at the bottom of the page for summary statements.

Record as many facts and ideas as you can in the 6 ½ inch column. Do not be concerned with getting down every word that the lecturer says or with writing your notes grammatically correctly. Learn to write telegraphic sentences or a streamlined version of the main points of the lecture by leaving out unnecessary words and using only key words. To ensure that your notes make sense after the lecture is over, fill in blanks or make incomplete sentences complete.

After you read through your notes, your next step is to **Reduce** important facts and ideas to key words or phrases or to formulate questions based on the facts and ideas. Key words, phrases, and questions are written in the 2 ½ inch cue column on the left. The words and phrases act as memory cues so that when you review them, you will recall the ideas or facts. The questions help clarify the meanings of the facts and ideas.

Recitation is a very powerful process in the retention of information. Reciting is different from rereading in that you state out loud and in your own words the facts and ideas you are trying to learn. It is an effective way to learn because hearing your thoughts helps you sharpen your thinking process, and stating ideas and facts in your own words challenges you to think about the meaning of the information. When reciting, cover up your notes in the 6 inch column while leaving the cue words and questions uncovered and readily accessible. Next, read each key word or question, then recite and state aloud, in your own words, the information. If your answer is correct, continue on through the lecture by reciting aloud.

Reflection is pondering or thinking about the information you have learned. Reflecting is a step beyond learning note content. It reinforces deeper learning by relating facts and ideas to other learning and knowledge. Pause after you recite the information on each page, or topic and ask yourself: How do these facts and ideas fit into what I already know? How can I apply them? How is knowing this important? What is the significance of these facts and ideas?

The way to prevent forgetting is to **Review** your notes frequently. A good guideline to follow is to review your notes nightly or several times during the week by reciting, not rereading. Brief review sessions planned throughout the semester, perhaps weekly, will aid more complete comprehension and retention of information than will cramming the day before a test. It will cut down on stress too!

Cornell Notes

<p>2. Reduce and Write Questions (After Lecture)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• write key words, phrases or questions that serve as cues for notes taken in class• cue phrases and questions should be in your own words <p>3. Recite</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• with classroom notes covered, read each key word or question• recite the fact or idea brought to mind by key words or questions	<p>1. Record (during and after lecture)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• write down facts and ideas in phrases• use abbreviations when possible• read through your notes• fill in blanks and make scribbles more legible
<p>Summary (After Lecture) –2 inches from bottom:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• summarize each main idea• use complete sentences	