

Note Taking

Learning Assistance Centre

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The Cornell Note-Taking System

This note-taking strategy offers a way to take notes and review them without recopying them onto notecards. This time saver allows you to spend more time actively reviewing your notes rather than mindlessly recopying them.

Format

The format for the Cornell system is the key to success. The left margin is marked with a line 2.5 inches from the edge; this is called the cue column. The note-taking column is the remaining 6 inches of the page. Draw a horizontal line 2 inches from the bottom of the page to mark off the summary.

Record

Use the larger note-taking column to record notes during the lecture, leaving a space when you miss information in class. You can then to fill in any missed information after class. These spaces are also useful so you can and add reflections made later.

Question

Soon after class, use the cue column to formulate questions about the notes. Formulating these questions not only helps you prepare for studying later, but also helps you make important connections and understand the information better. At the end of your notes for that class write, in you own words, a brief summary of your notes and any comments you have about the ideas. This, more than anything will help you memorize and learn class material. This step will also act as a warning signal for students who do not understand the material. If you cannot summarize, then you do not understand the material.

Recite

When you study your notes cover the note-taking column, revealing only the questions. Answer the questions out loud and in your own words, only looking at the notes if necessary.

Reflect

Think about the ideas in your notes by asking yourself questions such as "What is the relevance of these ideas?" and "How do they relate to other information and what I already know?" This process will solidify the material in your memory and enable you to move beyond merely memorizing the material. Your ideas can then be written into your note-taking column to draw the connections made and to review them.

Review

Doing a weekly review of your notes will help you retain much of the information in your long term memory and make exam studying much easier.

Centre for Learning and Teaching. (n.d). The Cornell Note-Taking System. Retrieved January 10, 2005, from Cornell University, Centre for Learning and Teaching Web site:

<http://www.clt.cornell.edu/campus/learn/LSC%20Resources/cornellsystem.pdf>