

# The Cornell Note Taking System

**What are the advantages?**

**Three Advantages:**

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

**What materials are needed?**

**Materials:**

1. Your notebook with lined paper
2. 2½ Inch column drawn at the left hand edge of each page to be used for recall cues

**How should notes be recorded?**

**During class, record notes:**

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 are meaningful only with concepts
4. Use abbreviations for extra writing and listening time
5. Use graphic organizers or pictures when they are helpful

**How should notes be refined?**

**After class, refine notes:**

1. Write questions (including possible test ?'s) in the left about the information on the right
2. Check or correct incomplete items
  - a. Loose dates, terms, names
  - b. 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

**What are the ways to recite notes?**

**Recite notes three ways:**

1. Cover up the right side page. Read the questions. Recite information as fully as possible. Uncover the sheet and verify information frequently (This is the most powerful learning tool in this notes system)
2. Reflect on the organization of the lectures. Think and record any connections you see regarding what is important
3. Review by reciting, reflecting and reading your impressions of your notes

**What are the five steps of this system?**

**This system in brief:**

1. Record lectures in the main column
2. Refine lectures with questions, corrections, underlining, recall cues and pictures
3. Recite by covering the 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

# Tips for Taking Notes

The following tips will greatly enhance the use of your notes.

## **S**et Up Your Paper

- Put name, class and date in the upper right hand corner
- Give all notes a title
- Draw a line (or fold your paper) down the length of the paper about one third of the way from the left hand margin
- Use lots of paper, skipping many lines. This will let you later organize your notes more easily and comment on them

## **T**ake Notes

- Paraphrase the text or lecturer in the right column
- Listen carefully to identify important information. Concentrate on understanding what the ideas are
- Use memory cues such as CAPITAL LETTERS, Underlining, ☆Stars☆, or pictures
- Don't worry about spelling
- Use abbreviations or a shorthand that works for you. Do not try to write down everything word for word.
- If you are absent, be sure to get someone else's notes. Write your **own** comments in the left hand column

## **A**fter Class

- Edit your notes as soon as possible. Reread them and make additions and clarifications, as needed
- Work with a partner when you find it useful
- Use a highlighter or different colors to emphasize important points
- Make a note to ask questions about confusing items at the next class session
- Fill in the left column with questions, symbols and memory keys

## **R**eview Notes

- Review notes regularly (not just before a test): first after class, then every two or three days, and finally before a test
- Cover the right column with blank paper
- Use the questions, symbols and memory keys in the left column as cues either to rewrite the information in the right column or to say it aloud
- Reflect on the notes. Summarize them and try to relate them to personal experience