

## Tips for Taking Cornell Notes

*The following tips will greatly enhance your notes.*

### Set 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.
- Set up a number of **pages**, leaving room for summary notes. This will allow you later to better organize your notes and make significant comments.

### Take 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, pictures, or abbreviations.
- 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.

### After 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 clues.

### Review Your 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 clues 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 experiences.

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## Note Taking: Tips for Lectures

### Be an Active Listener

- Think about what is being said.
- Think about how what is being said relates to other points in the lecture and ideas from discussion/reading/other subjects.
- Ask questions.

### Be Aware of Lecturer/Speaker Organization

- 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.

### Use the Speaker's Style to Identify Important Points

- Become familiar with the speaker's style.
- Listen for important points that might be emphasized when the speaker:
  - pauses or slows down;
  - repeats a point;
  - modulates the volume of his/her voice;
  - uses introductory phrases;
  - writes on the board; and
  - generalizes or uses visual aids.

### Keep up With the Speaker

- Write only the important ideas such as names, places, dates, events, examples, terms, definitions, causes, effects, evaluations, cross references: Make it brief, but clear.

### Be Alert to Speaker's Stance

- Some lecturers attempt to persuade as well as inform listeners; when applicable, note ideas/references/opinions that provide insight into speaker's point of view.

### Review Notes Shortly After a Lecture

- Develop study questions and identify main ideas.
- Fill in details for clarity.
- 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 , the teacher, or other texts.
- Look up and add definitions of new terminology.

## Activity 1.4 (7 of 9)

## Student Handout (3 of 5)

- Add symbols to highlight important ideas.
- Delete irrelevant information.
- Review overall organization of the material; add symbols to make organization clear or rewrite for clarity as needed.
- Incorporate cross references to other texts and notes.
- Write a summary of notes, using significant statements.

# Note Taking: Tips for Textbooks and Other Readings

## Be an Active Reader

- Think about the reading.
- Consider the ways that portions of the text relate to the text as a whole; think about how the text relates to ideas from lectures, discussions, and other subjects.
- Generate questions (e.g., about the meaning of new words/terms, about why portions of the text are italicized or underlined, about why emphasized points are important).
- Examine and understand the significance of visuals (e.g., diagrams, graphs, charts, photos, artwork).

## Be Aware of Text Organization

- Look for the pattern of elements like chapter/subsection headings, summary points, graphics.
- Know where to find the index and glossary.

## Use the Style of the Text to Identify Important Points

- Become familiar with the typefaces, symbols, borders, graphics, colors, and page layouts that highlight main ideas and key terms.

## Be Alert to the Writer's Goal

- Some texts attempt to persuade as well as inform listeners; when applicable, highlight ideas, references, and opinions that seem significant to writer's point of view.

## Take Notes While Reading

- Incorporate chapter headings, key terms, meaningful examples, important graphics into notes.
- Write only the important ideas; make it brief, but clear.
- Paraphrase text to capture meaning and reduce volume.
- Use symbols to highlight significant material and/or areas for further study.
- Use headings, subheadings, and review questions within the text to generate study questions and main ideas for left-hand column of notes.
- Incorporate original questions raised by text into notes.

## Activity 1.4 (8 of 9)

## Student Handout (4 of 5)

### Review Textbook Notes

- Develop study questions and identify main ideas.
- Fill in details for clarity.
- 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, the teacher, or other texts.
- Look up and add definitions of new terminology.
- Add symbols to highlight important ideas.
- Delete irrelevant information.
- Review overall organization of the material; add symbols to make organization clear or rewrite for clarity as needed.
- Incorporate cross references to other texts and notes.
- Write a summary of notes, using significant statements.

## Note Taking: Tips for Videos and Guest Speakers

### Consider the Subject and Purpose

- Notes from video and film viewing for information (e.g., depiction and description of tide patterns, narration about an historic period) are much like lecture notes, guided by similar verbal cues.
- Notes from video and film viewing for enrichment (e.g., dramatic portrayal of history, the stage version of a play) can be enhanced by style clues that may contribute to meaning. Look/listen for the significance of:
  - names;
  - settings;
  - music;
  - repeated images/phrases/actions/symbols/ideas;
  - changes in lighting;
  - changes in audio volume;
  - background sights and sounds; and
  - camera angles.
- Incorporate these observations into notes and generate questions about their significance.
- Include references to the lecture/text and other material as they come to mind.
- Write a summary of the content of the video or speech.
- Write a reflection about the content of the material. What was the point of view? How did the material make you think?



## **Tips on Taking Discussion Notes**

### **Incorporate Discussion Topics/Questions**

- Use the topics and questions posed by discussion leaders to guide the content of the notes.
- Use symbols to indicate questions and ideas that seem to carry weight or significance, and consider the discussion leader's purpose in emphasizing them.
- Incorporate a variety of responses into notes; consider and react to the various responses during review of notes.
- Generate questions to inject into the discussion or review later with other students, tutors, or teachers.
- Incorporate references to the lecture, text, and other material as they come to mind.

## **Tips for Studying with Notes**

### **Make Use of the Format of Your Notes**

- Spread out or hold your Cornell-style notes so that the right-hand side of the page is covered; review ideas and answer study questions from the left-hand column; use the right-hand specifics as answer key.
- Engage in oral quiz with others using study questions from the left-hand column.

### **Write**

- Write summaries of the most important material in the summary/reflection section.
- Write anticipated test questions beyond those already in the left-hand column and write answers to the questions.

### **Review**

- Look over notes frequently to keep information and questions still unanswered fresh in mind.
- Recite information from notes.
- Rewrite notes if necessary.
- Answer all the questions you developed in your Cornell notes and then check that you are correct.

### **Study With a Group**

- Exchange notes with others to flesh out information and understanding.
- Use notes in study groups to provide common ground of material for reference and review.
- Write questions that the instructor might ask and answer those questions.