



EFFECTIVE NOTE TAKING

(Adapted from: Sweet Briar College Academic Resource Center, Dartmouth College, and York College)
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► Evaluate Your Present Note-Taking System

Ask yourself:

1. Did I use complete sentences? They are generally a waste of time.
2. Did I use any form at all? Are my notes clear or confusing?
3. Did I capture main points and all subpoints?
4. Did I streamline using abbreviations and shortcuts?

If you answered no to any of these questions, you may need to develop some new note-taking skills!

► Five Important Reasons to Take Notes

1. It triggers basic lecturing processes and helps you to remember information.
2. It helps you to concentrate in class.
3. It helps you prepare for tests.
4. Your notes are often a source of valuable clues for what information the instructor thinks most important (i.e., what will show up on the next test).
5. Your notes often contain information that cannot be found elsewhere (i.e., in your textbook).

► Guidelines for Note-Taking

1. Concentrate on the lecture or on the reading material, not on spelling and grammar.
2. Take notes consistently.
3. Take notes selectively. Do NOT try to write down every word. (The average lecturer speaks approximately 125-140 words per minute, and the average note-taker writes at a rate of about 25 words per minute.)
4. Translate ideas into your own words.
5. Organize notes into some sort of logical form.
6. Be brief. Write down only the major points and important information.
7. Write legibly. Notes are useless if you cannot read them later!

► Tips for Finding Major Points in Lectures

The speaker is usually making an important point if he or she:

1. Pauses before or after an idea.
2. Uses repetition to emphasize a point.
3. Uses introductory phrases to precede an important idea.
4. Writes an idea on the board.

► Forms of Note-Taking

1. Outlining
 - I. Topic sentence or main idea
 - A. Major points providing information about topic
 1. Sub-point that describes the major point
 - a. Supporting detail or example for the sub-point
2. Patterning: flowcharts, diagrams
3. Listing, margin notes, highlighting

► Ways to Reduce and Streamline Notes

1. Eliminate small connecting words such as: is, are, was, were, a, an, the, would, this, of.
2. Eliminate pronouns such as: they, these, his, that, them.
3. However, be careful NOT to eliminate these three words: and, in, on.
4. Use symbols to abbreviate, such as:

+, &	and, plus
=	equals
-	minus
#	number
x	times
>	greater than, more, larger
<	less than, smaller, fewer than
w/	with
w/o	without
w/in	within
---->	leads to, produces, results in
<----	comes from
/	per

For example:

Typical Note: "The diameter of the Earth is four times greater than the diameter of the Moon."

Revised Note: "Earth = 4x > diameter of Moon."

5. Substitute numerals with symbols, for instance:

"one"	1
"third"	3rd

6. Abbreviate:

Drop the last several letters of a word.

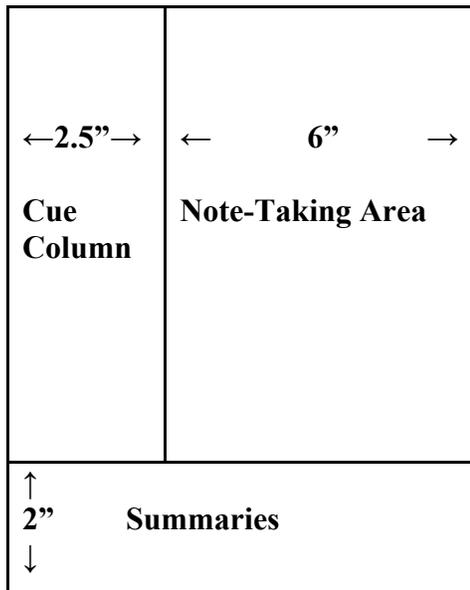
----For example, substitute "approp." for "appropriate"

Drop some of the internal vowels of a word.

---- For example, substitute "lrg." for "large"

Cornell Note Taking System

The Cornell Note Taking System divides a page into 3 sections as illustrated below.



Note-Taking Area: Record the lecture as full and meaningfully as possible in this section.

Cue Column: As you take notes, leave this section empty. As soon as possible after the lecture, Reduce your notes into concise phrases as clues for “Reciting, Reviewing, and Reflecting.”

Summaries: Sum up each page of your notes in a sentence or two.

This format provides the perfect opportunity for following through with the **5 R's** of note-taking:

Record

During the lecture, record in the main column as many meaningful facts and ideas as you can.

- (1) Write legibly.
- (2) Underline headings
- (3) Slightly indent main ideas under the headings
- (4) Further indent details/examples which elaborate on the main ideas

Reduce

As soon after as possible, summarize these facts and ideas concisely in the Cue Column. This clarifies meanings and relationships, reinforces continuity, and strengthens memory. Be sure to include in this column:

- (1) key words and phrases
- (2) questions you may have that need to be clarified before the exam
- (3) connections between ideas from the same lecture or from other notes

The contents of this “cue column” are your study notes and can be used to practice your recall of the material.

Recite

Cover up the notes column of the page and use only the “cues” in the cue column to trigger your memory. Say the facts and ideas of the lecture as fully as you can, not mechanically, but in your own words. Then, verify what you have said by uncovering the notes column.

Reflect

In the summary section, draw out opinions from your notes and use them as a starting point for your own reflections on the course and how it relates to your other courses. Reflection will help prevent ideas from being inert and soon forgotten.

Review

Spend 10 minutes after each class period in quick review of your notes, and you will retain most of what you have learned.