The Cornell Note-Taking System Introduction

Your brain is a computer, but the data port is really outdated. We require visual, audio, and tactile stimuli to reinforce our foggy memories. Downloading new data is a painstaking process, but you can take charge and expedite the process by following a memory-encoding system. The Cornell note-taking system is one such way to encode your own brain.

One way to think about revision, and going back to your work even before the exam is shown very nicely in this graph below:

https://psychology.stackexchange.com/questions/8377/how-are-these-review-forgetting-curve-calculated
THE CORNELL NOTES

**Note-taking Column**

1. **Record:** During the lecture, record the lecture using concise sentences & keywords in this column.

2. **Questions:**
   - After lecture, formulate questions based on notes in this column.
   - Clarify meaning, reveal relationships, establish contrast, strengthen memory.

3. **Recite:** Cover this column with a piece of paper. Then look at the questions from 2 & try to answer them from memory, in your own words.

4. **Reflect:** Reflect by asking yourself:
   - What’s the significance of this fact?
   - What principle are they based on?
   - How can I apply them?
   - How do they fit in with what I know already?
   - What’s beyond them?

5. **Review:** Spend time reviewing all your previous notes at the end of each week.

[SUMMARY]

After class, summarize the notes on this page.

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**Cornell Note-taking System**

**Note Taking Area:** Record lecture as fully and as meaningfully as possible.

**Cue Column:** As you’re taking notes, keep cue column empty. Soon after the lecture, reduce your notes to concise jottings as cues for Reciting, Reviewing, and Reflecting.

**Summaries:** Sum up each page of your notes in a sentence or two.
### Cornell Method Notetaking

**1. This is the Notes Column**

During lectures, note main ideas and concepts. Don’t mindlessly copy - rephrase what you can to retain information.

Skip one line between ideas, several between topics.

Avoid writing in complete sentences, use symbols and abbreviations, e.g.:

* Pelayo, a descendant of the Visigoth aristocracy, founded the Kingdom of Asturias in 718.

**Pelayo (dscd/Visigoth arist.) fd. Asturias 718**

**3. This is the Summary Section**

Summarise main points here at the end.

Info taken from [http://www.heritagehawks.org/faculty/dbrown/HistoryClass/TheCornellMethod.htm](http://www.heritagehawks.org/faculty/dbrown/HistoryClass/TheCornellMethod.htm)

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**Cornell Notetaking Method**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cue Column</th>
<th>Notes Column</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2.5 inches</td>
<td>6 inches</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Main Ideas</td>
<td>- Main lecture notes here</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Questions that connect points</td>
<td>- Use concise sentences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Diagrams</td>
<td>- Use shorthand symbols</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Study prompts</td>
<td>- Use abbreviations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- When? After class During review</td>
<td>- Use lists</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- When? During class</td>
<td>- Put space between points</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Summary Column**

- For top level, main ideas
- Use as a quick reference area
- After class During review
- 2"
The Five R’s:

1. **RECORD** your notes in the right-hand column.
2. **REDUCE** your notes into the recall column on the left.
3. **RECITE** out loud from the recall column.
4. **REFLECT** on the information that you are studying.
5. **REVIEW** your notes immediately and regularly.

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**Step 1: Record**

Write main ideas and supporting material in the right column.

Use signals from the lecture:
- Titles & keywords = topics
- main ideas

Use abbreviations to get the full idea.

Leave spaces between ideas so you can fill in more later. See how ideas relate to one another.

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**Step 2: Reduce**

Write the topics and vocabulary words, in the left column of your notes. Write questions to quiz yourself on the material:
- Write a question for each new topic, main idea, or significant detail.
- Write questions on the material which you think your teacher will test you.

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**Step 3: Recite**

This will help transfer ideas to your long-term memory!

Study the information by answering your questions in the left column.

- Cover the Record Column.
– Read your vocabulary words and questions in the left column.
– Using your own words, define the words and answer your questions out loud.
– You can also define the words and answer your questions on the paper you are using to cover the Record Column.
– Uncover your notes and check what you have said against the facts.

**Step 4: Reflect**
After the lecture, write a summary at the bottom of your notes.
– Use complete sentences in the summary.
– Choose the key points.
– Organize ideas.
– Link ideas together.

**Step 5: Review**
Improve your memory.
– If you spend 10 minutes after every class in a quick review of your notes, you will retain most of what you have studied you won’t have to cram during an “all-nighter” you will relate the facts and ideas to present lectures or readings.

**Note-Taking Tips**

Use indentations to distinguish between major and minor points.
- Put most notes in your own words, except
- formulas, definitions, and specific facts
- Use abbreviations and symbols wherever possible in the notes portion.
- If you completely don’t understand an idea, leave a blank space and ask your professor for help on it.
Develop a code system of note-marking to indicate questions, comments, important points ...for example,

- Mark unfamiliar vocabulary & unclear ideas in unique ways, such as with a star or asterisk.
- Highlight vocabulary terms and important people.
- Circle ideas that are still unclear.
- Make sure you can understand what you have written and if needed, make corrections.
- Use drawings, arrows or other organizers to help you see concepts and relationships between them.
The Cornell Note-taking System

2 1/2” 6”

Cue Column Note-taking Column

1. **Record**: During the lecture, use the note-taking column to record the lecture using telegraphic sentences.

2. **Questions**: As soon after class as possible, formulate questions based on the notes in the right-hand column. Writing questions helps to clarify meanings, reveal relationships, establish continuity, and strengthen memory. Also, the writing of questions sets up a perfect stage for exam-studying later.

3. **Recite**: Cover the note-taking column with a sheet of paper. Then, looking at the questions or cue-words in the question and cue column only, say aloud, in your own words, the answers to the questions, facts, or ideas indicated by the cue-words.

4. **Reflect**: Reflect on the material by asking yourself questions, for example: “What’s the significance of these facts? What principle are they based on? How can I apply them? How do they fit in with what I already know? What’s beyond them?”

5. **Review**: Spend at least ten minutes every week reviewing all your previous notes. If you do, you’ll retain a great deal for current use, as well as, for the exam.

Summary

After class, use this space at the bottom of each page to summarize the notes on that page.

Adapted from *How to Study in College 7/e* by Walter Pauk, 2001 Houghton Mifflin Company