

# THE CORNELL NOTE-TAKING SYSTEM

## Why should you take notes?

You forget almost half of what you hear or read within an hour. One way to capture information so that you won't forget it is to take notes. Then, new information can be reviewed later and remembered, not forgotten.

## How can I take better notes?

There is no best way to take notes, but some styles work better than others. One good method is called the Cornell Note-taking System.

## How do I use the Cornell Note-taking System?

### To start, prepare your note paper.

Use and 8½ by 11 inch piece of loose-leaf notebook paper. Draw a line down the sheet 2½ inches from the left-hand edge of the paper. End this line 2 inches from the bottom of the paper. If your paper already has a line down the left-hand margin, ignore it. Next draw a line that is 2 inches up from the bottom of the page. Draw this line completely across the page. **Turn over this page to see how your note paper should look.**

### Then, take and use your notes.

#### • Step 1: Write Notes

In *Part A*, write your classroom or textbook notes.

□ **Write your notes in short sentences.** For example, write "Jean home 3pm," instead of "Jean will be home at 3:00 PM." Leave out unnecessary words.

□ **Write clearly.** It can be hard to read bad handwriting, even if it is your own! Write your notes clearly. They aren't useful if you can't read them.

#### • Step 2: Replay and Reduce

The first chance you get replay the lecture or the reading in your head. This might be while you walk to your next class, in your next study hall, or at home. Later, reread your notes and think about the lecture.

Sometimes a word or short phrase can be a clue to help you remember a whole idea. These clues are called **key words** or **key phrases**. When you review your notes **reduce** each idea in them to key words or key phrases. Write these key words in *Part B* of your note paper. These clues will trigger your memory. When you study, the key words will help you remember the whole idea.

Some people find it easier to remember their notes when they write **key questions** instead of key words in *Part B*. Which is better? Try each. Which works best for you?

#### • Step 3: Recite

Say each fact or idea **out loud**. This is called *reciting*. It helps you remember better. Cover *Part A* of your note paper with a blank sheet of paper. You should only see the key words or questions in *Part B*. Read each key word or question out loud. **Recite out loud and in your own words** the fact or idea the key word relates to.

Then, check to make sure that your answer is complete and correct. If you do not know the right answer, study your notes and recite your answer out loud again. Recite until you get all the answers correct. Go through the whole lecture or chapter this way.

Do you feel funny reciting out loud? It is worth doing. Research shows that students who recite out loud remember material much better than those who just reread the same material to themselves. It is also important to use your own words for the answer. Your own words make the material mean more to you than if you memorize an idea in someone else's words.

#### • Step 4: Think and Reflect

Think about the information you have in your notes. This thinking process is called **reflecting**. **Reflect** by asking yourself questions about your notes. Ask yourself. 'What are the most important ideas?,' 'Why is this information important?,' and 'How does this relate to what I already know?'

#### • Step 5: Review

The word **review** means to view or look at something again. The best way to prepare for test is to review or look at your notes regularly. Make this a habit. **Recite and reflect on** your notes every day. Short, fast reviews daily will help you understand and remember more than 'cramming' before a test.

#### • Step 6: Summarize

If you can summarize your notes in your own words, you really understand the facts and ideas in them. Review your summaries when you study for tests.

Write your summary in *Part C*, at the bottom of your note paper. You can

- Summarize each page of notes on that page;
- Summarize the entire lecture on the last page of notes for that lecture; or
- Do both.

Would you like to see an example of how to use the Cornell Note-taking System? Turn this page over.

### **Want more tips on study habits that can help you get better grades?**

Call the toll-free ICPAC Hotline, **1-800-992-2076**. We will send you free copies of any of the following guides. Guides marked with a \* are also about taking notes.

Better Study Skills for Better Grades	(90 – 7)
Listening in the Classroom	(SS – 1)
* Taking notes during Classroom Lectures	(SS – 2)
* Getting the Most from Your Textbooks	(SS – 3)
How to Do Well on an Essay Test	(SS – 5)
How to Do Well on Objective Tests	(SS – 6)

**Part B — Reduce.**

*In Part B, write key words or questions from your notes*

Here is an example of key words or questions.

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**Part A — Write Notes.**

*In part A, write your notes during the lecture or while you read.*

Here is an example of classroom or reading notes.

Metric System

A. Beginning of Metric System

1. Started in France in late 18th century.
2. Group of scientists decided on a length and called it "meter."

3. Meter comes from the Greek word Metron— meaning "a measure."

B. Adapting the Metric System

1. Adopted in France in 1793.
2. Many people were against it.
3. Napoleon changed back to the old system of measurement in 1812.
4. The metric system was adopted again in 1840 and has been used ever since.

C. Units of Measurement

1. The metric system has 7 base units of measurement.
  - a. The 7 base units are
    - 1) meter
    - 2) kilogram
    - 3) second
    - 4) ampere
    - 5) kelvin
    - 6) mole
    - 7) candela

**Part C—Summarize. In Part C, summarize the notes that you wrote in Part A.**

Here is an example of a summary.

Scientists in France "discovered" the meter. After many years, the metric system was adopted in France in 1840. Since the meter, they have added 6 more units of measurement: kilogram, second, ampere, kelvin, mole, and candela.