Taking Lecture Notes
the Cornell Way

The Cornell Method of note-taking is a systematic process for taking and organizing notes. The method uses a specifically formatted page and a process to take notes and utilize them later as study material.

BEFORE LECTURE
- Read the assignment
- Survey the reading
  • Titles, subtitles, summary
- Prepare notebook for lecture notes in Cornell format
- Review the summary from the previous lecture

DURING LECTURE
- Arrive early & sit where you can hear the instructor, see the screen, and minimize distractions
- Record the main ideas/details/examples
  • Use abbreviations & symbols
  • Avoid long sentences
  • Paraphrase long ideas
- Use proper organizational form
  • Listing (1, 2, 3)
  • Sequencing (before/after)
  • Compare/contrast
  • Cause/effect
  • Summary
- Too fast?
  • Focus on main ideas and concepts
  • Leave space to fill in missed information after lecture

AFTER LECTURE
- Review within 24 hours to aid retention
- Reorganize
  • Emphasize or underline important points
  • Rewrite for legibility
  • Add relevant material
  • Add structure & show connections
- Write summary section
- Write cue section
  • Turn important points from notes into questions or cue words
- Cover notes section & use cue section to recite the notes in your own words

PREPARE YOUR NOTES

For:
- Main Ideas
- Questions that connect points
- Diagrams
- Prompts to help you study

When:
- Before class
- During class
- After class

For:
- Recording lecture
When:
- During class

For:
- Top-level main ideas
- Quick reference
When:
- After class
- Before next class (review)

Purdue University Academic Success Center