

Cornell Notes

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The **Cornell note-taking system** is a widely-used [notetaking](#) system devised in the 1950s by [Walter Pauk](#), an education professor at [Cornell University](#). Pauk advocated its use in his best-selling *How to Study in College*, but its use has spread most rapidly in the past decade.

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Overview of method

The student divides the paper into two columns: the note-taking column (usually on the right) is twice the size of the key word column (on the left). The student should leave five to six lines, or about two inches, at the bottom of the page. Notes from a lecture or teaching are written in the note-taking column; notes usually consist of the main ideas of the text or lecture, and long ideas are paraphrased. Long sentences are avoided; symbols or abbreviations are used instead. Relevant questions (which should be recorded as soon as possible so that the lecture and questions will be fresh in the student's mind) or key words are written in the key word column. The student also writes a short summary on the last four lines.

The student then covers up the note-taking (right) column to answer the questions/keywords in the key word or cue (left) column. The student is encouraged to reflect on the material and review the notes regularly. The Cornell method provides a systematic format for condensing and organizing notes.

After the notes have been taken, the student writes a brief summary at the bottom of the page. This helps to increase understanding of the topic. When studying for either a test or quiz, the student has a concise but detailed and relevant record of previous classes.

Five Rs of Note Taking

- 1. Record.** During the lecture, as many meaningful facts as possible are recorded.
- 2. Reduce.** As soon after class as possible, ideas and facts are concisely summarized in the Recall Column. Summarizing clarifies meanings and relationships, reinforces continuity, and strengthens memory.
- 3. Recite.** Most of the page is covered and the student tries to recall as much of the lecture as possible, using only what has been written in the Recall Column. This procedure helps to transfer the facts and ideas to the long term memory.
- 4. Reflect.** The student's own opinion is distilled from the notes. This also has the effect of training the mind to find and categorize vital information, leading to more efficient memorization.
- 5. Review.** The student reviews the notes briefly but regularly. Because of the highly condensed nature of the notes, the student remembers a significant amount of material.