

Cornell Notes -- Tips

Tips for Taking Notes

- Listen for important points.
- Write only important ideas such as names, dates, terms, places, and events.
- Use abbreviations for familiar words.
- Develop study questions and identify main ideas.
- Look up definitions.
- Add symbols or highlight important words and concepts.
- Review overall information.
- Summarize significant ideas in a complete paragraph.
- Write high-level questions on the left side (Costa's levels 2 and 3).

Taking Notes from a Textbook

- Consider how the parts make up the whole—how ideas relate to each other.
- Note what you can learn from pictures and graphs in a given section.
- Be aware of textbook organization - chapters, headings, bold words, and graphics.
- Know where to find the index and glossary.
- Use chapter guiding questions to guide you through the textbook if possible.

Taking Notes from a Discussion

- Use topics and questions introduced by lecturer to guide note-taking.
- Use symbols to identify significant ideas.
- Include your own responses in your notes.
- Develop questions.
- Refer to textbook when connections arise.

Taking Notes from Literature and Poetry

- Include significance of title, publication date, and author information.
- Identify point of view of speaker.
- Identify setting, important characters, plot, conflicts, theme, and any figurative language.
- Highlight significant quotes/passages.
- Identify tone, theme, and poetic devices such as repetition, imagery and allusions.
- Make connections from one chapter/verse to another.
- Predict what might happen next or by the end of the piece.

Taking Notes in Mathematics

- Take notes just as in any other class, with all of the information on the right hand side of the page. Write the problem on the left side and solve it on the right. Then go back and fill in with key terms or example equations.

- As you listen to a lecture, write out any key terms or questions on the left (example: What is the Distance Formula?). Then on the right, give the formula.

Taking Notes from a Guest Speaker

- Identify the speaker's name and title (example: Mrs. Joan Smith, Admissions Counselor for the University of _____).
- Create questions for the speaker the night before the presentation, or while the speaker is speaking. Then ask questions and write your answers on the right hand side of the page, across from the question it answers.
- Write down details of the person's life and/or job.
- Keep track of any obstacles the person faced in his or her life.

Taking Notes from a Field Trip

- Identify the date and location of the field trip.
- Write out a few questions to ask the person giving the tour or leading the experience. Answer them on the right hand side of the paper, across from the question.
- Write out facts about the location (example: If you are going to a college or university, write down how many students attend the school and/or how much it costs to attend).
- Write out your favorite part of the trip and include as part of the summary at the end of note page (example: I really enjoyed touring the library at The University of California, San Diego because it is the largest library I have ever seen.).
- Write down any further questions throughout the field trip. Ask the leader or teacher for answers.

Tips for Summarizing Cornell Notes

- Tell what is being summarized (chapter, novel, discussion, lecture).
- Create one sentence that gives the main idea.
- Include new information learned.
- Give several important details that explain the main idea.
- Check the summary to make sure the supporting ideas relate to the main idea.
- The summary should be several sentences that demonstrate understanding of the learning experience.
- Any points that still need clarification might also be mentioned in the summary.

Example Summary for Cornell Notes

Today in English we learned about the parts of a story. There are several parts of a story: setting, theme, characterization, and point of view. The setting tells when and where the story takes place. The theme is the lesson or main idea of the story. Characterization describes how characters think and feel. Point of view is the perspective from which the story is told. Together all of these pieces make up the whole of the story.