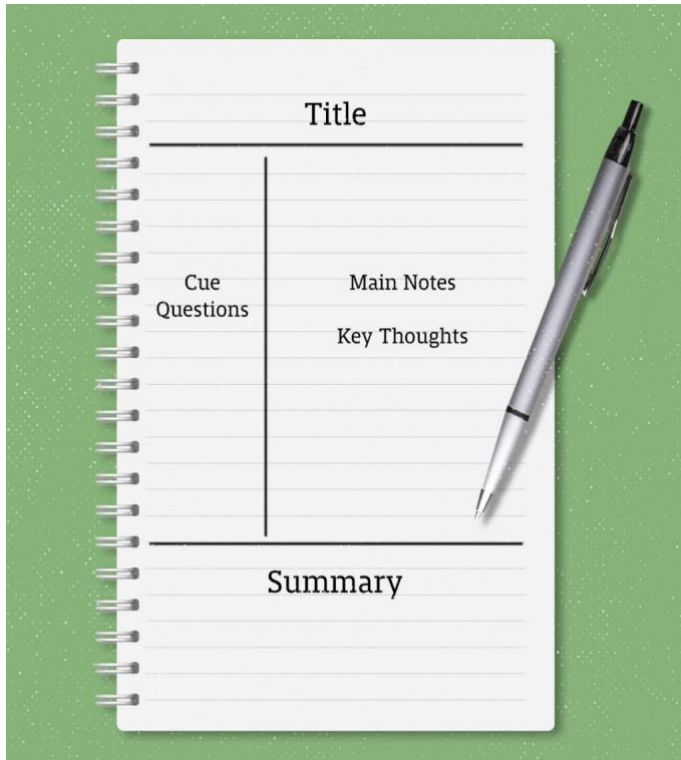


Using the Cornell Method to take notes

Writing notes by hand can reinforce our recall of information better than if we simply listen to a lecture or read text. Research shows that hand-written notes trumps typing notes on a device! Whether you are taking notes during lectures, at a conference or while working through a textbook, the Cornell note taking system is a useful method.



- Divide your page into three parts as shown in the image to the left: a column on the left for cue questions, a column on the right for general notes and a section at the bottom of the page for summary points.
- The logic of this method is that you have a space to write down facts as you observe them, record questions as they arise in your mind, and formulate a summary of what you have learnt.
- Taking notes in this way engages your brain in different ways, increasing your chances of understanding and retaining new information.
- Use abbreviations, symbols or drawings to speed up your note taking process.
- The cue column is useful after your note taking session to help you organise information & identify what you still need to find out.
- You don't have to record everything! Effective notes record the main ideas and key points of what was presented.
- Modify the method according to what works for you.

The Cornell method encourages analytical thinking, enhancing your learning during lectures and other learning activities. The method is flexible, allowing you to map out the sections as you prefer, using more than one page to delineate your columns if you need more space to write. Some students may find the summary section challenging, but your summary notes are a key component of your learning. Contemplating all the notes you have recorded and thinking about how details relate to a bigger picture, trains your brain to assimilate new information into what you already know. By summarising what **you** have learnt, you transform what a lecturer has presented into your own knowledge. Try to summarise your notes as soon as possible, while the information is still fresh in your memory. Happy note taking!

Adapted from: <https://lsc.cornell.edu/how-to-study/taking-notes/cornell-note-taking-system/> (Accessed 4th December 2023)

Pauk, Walter; Owens, Ross J. Q. (2010). *How to Study in College (10 ed.)*. Boston, MA: Wadsworth. ISBN 978-1-4390-8446-5. Chapter 10: "The Cornell System: Take Effective Notes", pp. 235-277

Compiled by Adibah Hendricks, 2024.



FHS

University of Cape Town



WRITING LAB

