



WORKSHOP - Note Taking and Learning from Lectures

Cornell Note Taking System

Cue column (margin)	Note taking area (main column)
	Summary section

Taking notes during class or readings is a great way to become actively involved with the course material and helps provide an accurate record of all the information you are expected to know. There are many effective note taking strategies that are used by students.

The Cornell System (developed at Cornell University) is one method of taking notes that you may find helpful.

To use the system, divide your note page into three sections (as pictured here):

- Create the cue column by drawing a wider margin (2.5-3 inches) on the left hand side of your page.
- The right hand side of the page is the note-taking area.
- Leave a margin (2") at the bottom of the page for the summary section.

Note Taking Area: Record the lecture as carefully as possible.

Cue Column: As you're taking lecture notes, keep the cue column empty. Soon after the lecture reduce your notes to concise jottings as clues for reciting, reviewing and reflecting.

Summary Section: Summarize each page of your notes in a sentence or two.

The 5 R's of Note Taking

This format provides the perfect opportunity to follow the five R's of note-taking.

Record: During the lecture, record as many meaningful facts and ideas as you can (using the note-taking area). Write legibly!

Reduce: As soon as possible, summarize these facts and ideas concisely (in the cue column). Summarizing clarifies meanings and relationships, reinforces continuity, and strengthens memory.

Recite: Cover the note taking area, and using only your jottings in the cue column, say the facts and ideas of the talk as fully as you can - not mechanically, but in your own words. Then, check and verify what you have said.

Reflect: Draw out opinions from your notes and use them as a starting point for your own reflections on the lecture and how it relates to the overall theme of the course, accompanying textbook chapter, etc. Reflection will help ideas from being inert and soon forgotten.

Review: Before your next lecture, review the summary column.





Learning from Lectures

At Dalhousie, your classes are designed to help you obtain and integrate information from a variety of sources. Your classes will always include a lecture or seminar, mandatory readings, and sometimes tutorials and labs. Your lectures are a vital part of everything you learn and you should always attend all lectures in order to understand how your professor organizes, links and gives explains the information you read in your assigned readings.

*It is therefore very important to show up **prepared and engaged** for your lectures and your notes are an integral part of both!*

In order to get the most out of your lectures, you need to work **before, during,** and most importantly, **after** your lectures.

BEFORE THE LECTURE

- 1) Review your notes from the previous class so it is fresh in your mind. This cuts time significantly from your exam preparation.
- 2) Read the topic of the next lecture from your syllabus and try and connect it to what you have read for that lecture. This helps to keep your attention in class.
- 3) Write down any questions you have from the reading and see if they are answered in lecture. If not, ask the professor or TA for help- don't move on until everything is clear.

DURING THE LECTURE

- 1) Bring note-taking materials and always assume you need to take notes, even during guest lectures, films or class discussions.
- 2) Pay attention to verbal and visual cues from the professor.
- 3) Organize your notes in a way that replicates the organization presented by the professor so you can grasp the connections between readings and topics made by the professor.

AFTER THE LECTURE

- 1) Review and complete your notes within 24 hours of the lecture. This after-lecture review is the most important!
- 2) Combine notes from the lecture, the reading for that class and any labs tutorials together to build a study pack. This will significantly help with your exam preparation.

References:

Blerkom, D.L.V. (2008) Taking charge of your learning: a guide to college success. Thompson Wedsworth. Boston, USA. 283 pp. http://www.crazycolour.com/os/notetaking_04.shtml

