

Rutgers Learning Centers

At Camden Campus

NOTETAKING: CORNELL SYSTEM

The notes you take in class are really a hand-written textbook. In many cases, your lecture notes are more practical, meaningful, and up-to-date than a textbook. If you keep them neat, complete, and well organized, they'll serve you well.

Down the left side of your note paper draw a vertical line that will give you 1/3 page on the left and 2/3 page on the right. Draw a horizontal line across the bottom of the paper, 2 inches above the paper's edge. In the wide column on the right, you will write your lecture notes. In the narrow column on the left, you will write cue words or questions. And, in the space at the bottom of the sheet, you will summarize your notes.

STEP 1: RECORD

In the wide column, record as many facts and ideas as you can. Soon after class, fill in any blank spaces that you left out and clarify your handwriting if necessary.

STEP 2: REDUCE

During your study session, reread your notes and rethink the entire lecture. Then reduce each fact and idea in your notes to key words and phrases or formulate a question that your notes answer. In the narrow column on the left, write the key words or the question opposite the facts in your notes. The key words or the questions will act as memory cues and you will remember the full fact or idea.

STEP 3: RECITE

Reciting is saying each fact or idea in your notes out loud, in your own words, and from memory. Cover up the wide column of your note sheet exposing only the cue words or questions in the narrow column. Read each cue word or question aloud; then recite aloud and in your own words the full facts and ideas brought to mind by the cue word or question. Check your answer. Correct yourself and repeat until you can remember the information.

STEP 4: REFLECT

Reflection is thinking about and applying the facts and ideas that you've learned. What is significant? How does this fit with what I already know?

STEP 5: REVIEW

Every evening before you settle down to study, quickly review your notes. Short, fast, and frequent reviews will produce far better understanding than all-nighters.

STEP 6: RECAPITULATION

Writing a recapitulation, or summary, is not easy, but the rewards are great. Write your summary in the space below the horizontal line at the bottom of the note sheet. Summarize the content of each page and summarize the content of the entire lecture on the last note sheet for that lecture.

* Many thanks to Dr. Walter Pauk of Cornell University for his clever & useful creation.

For more information, visit or call your nearest Rutgers Learning Center, or visit our website:<http://rlc.rutgers.edu>

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