

Listening and Note-Taking

There are many ways to record notes. The best method depends on your learning style and what is being taught.

Record

- **Have a good loose-leaf notebook and ring-binder:** so that you can add, delete, and re-sequence pages and materials and include handouts.
- **Label, number, and date all notes.**
- **Divide your page:** Draw a vertical line about 5 cm from the left side of your paper. Write your notes on the right side. Save the left side for writing key words to help you in your review stage.
- **Highlight important information:** If the Instructor indicates something is important mark it in your notes either by:
 - placing a star;
 - using a highlighter / different coloured pens;
 - indenting the paragraph / sentence;
 - underlining; and
 - leaving spaces in your notes to indicate a change in ideas.
- **Use key words or phrases:** Write down the essence of what the Instructor is saying (i.e., technical terms, names, concepts, etc.).
- **Use point form:** Only put one idea in each set of points or use different bullets for each set of points (e.g., •, >, etc.). This helps to keep your notes clear and complete.
- **Use pictures and diagrams:** This method may help you understand and relate ideas together.
- **Use abbreviations:** This will help you write faster and avoid missing anything important. But be careful not to abbreviate too much as your notes may become confusing. Use complete sentences when the material is important, and try not to use shorthand as this is harder to review.

Cornell Method

A common method of note-taking is the Cornell Method of note-taking. The five R's of note-taking:

1. Record

Step 1: Before class

- Draw a vertical line down the left side of the page 2 1/2 inches from the margin (this will act as the recall column).
- Leave 2 inches at the bottom of the page or on a separate page to record your reflections, opinions, and questions.

Step 2: during class

Take notes on what the Instructor says by:

- identifying and capturing main points in your own words;
- using abbreviations and symbols; and
- using words, outlines, pictures or whatever it takes to get the information down quickly (avoid quoting unless it is very necessary).

2. Reduce

After class re-read your notes for sense and pick out:

- key concepts / words / phrases / questions and write them in the column on the left of your paper; and
- link information from the text or other sources.

3. Recite

Review from memory what you have learned, so cover your notes to recall as much information and uncover your notes to verify what you remembered. To help you recite, use:

- key words as cues;
- state facts and concepts in your own words;
- use the left hand margin's key words and questions;
- talk through, or illustrate definitions, concepts, etc.; and
- create your own examples.

4. Reflect

Write your reflections on the class in the lower part of the page such as questions, your own thinking, and own experiences as they relate to the topic. This will help you remember. You need to apply, compare and evaluate.

5. Review

Review is the same as recitation in that you cover over your notes and using cues in the left hand margin remember as much as you can about the facts and ideas covered in the class. The more often you can do this, the more fixed the information will become in your memory.