



How to Teach Students to Take Notes & Organize Notes

Note-taking can be an enemy. It happens when the student has written a lot on paper and doesn't know later how to put the data back together. The dreadful fate of Humpty Dumpty fell on the student. However, note-taking can also be a very rewarding friend. This happens when the student has written pertinent data, categorized it well and then made a logical summary out of what was read. The result is a well organized, well researched output.

The system is a modified use of the Cornell Note-taking System, as it only addresses the area of reading. The Cornell Note-taking system, developed by Walter Pauk of Cornell University in the 1950s, has been a standard note-taking system for many schools around the world for purposes of getting information on reading and listening to lectures. The Cornell Note-taking page divides an 8.5" x 11" page into three sections:

- Cue Column
- Note-taking Column
- Summary

A [printable example note-taking page](#), [a note-taking explanation page](#), and various [note-taking templates](#) can all be useful for students learning the system. The following are instructions on what to write on the three main sections. Depending on the volume of the reading, a student may extend the Cue Column and Note-taking Column to a few pages with the Summary section adjusting to the last page.

In the Cue Column of the Note-taking, Write Down the Main Sections

Main sections are the huge chunks of ideas that the writer develops. The writer may spend many paragraphs to explain this huge chunk. In this sample essay titled "[What the Gospel Is and Isn't](#)," the author has already made it clear from the title a hint at the major ideas this essay will tackle: (1) what the gospel is, and, (2) what the gospel isn't. The student may write these categories as the main sections of the note-taking.

Some reading materials like "[The Expulsive Power of an Affection](#)" by Thomas Chalmers do not have apparent sections. What the student will do then is to read carefully, making marks on the paper where the transitions are and attribute a phrase or sentence on for that section. It is

Advised not to use solitary words as it will not be very helpful later in the Summary. Write a phrase, a clause, or a sentence but never a word. For example, write "The sorrow of having affection but no object" – Chalmers talks about this from pages 1-3. Another possible section after the first one would be "The idolizing pleasure of wealth." A student may need to continue adding up sections as the student deems necessary.

**In the Next Column of the Note-taking, Annotate the Parallel Cue Column**

The student must justify the validity of the Cue Column by presenting data after data that support the parallel Cue Column. This is the part where the teacher would look to see if the student was able to note the correct sections. For example, taking the aforementioned essay "What the Gospel...", the author also put some lead sentence for his arguments. If the Cue Column contains the statement "What the Gospel is NOT," the note-taking section will have the following "The Gospel is NOT man's response to it." It is okay to justify your Cue Column with an initial direct quotation. But what the student will do next is to give the gist of "The Gospel is NOT man's response to it" by stating in his own words what the writer was communicating.

Read on

[The 5 Best Note Taking Strategies](#)

[How to Study Successfully](#)

[How to Read College Textbooks](#)

In the Summary of the Note-taking, Summarize the Relationship of the Ideas in the Cue Column

Always remember that the ideas in the Cue Column are very strategic because they will form the content of the summary. One could say that the note-taking column supports the Cue Column while the Cue Column supports the summary. Put it in another way: the Note-taking Column is the premise of the Cue Column and the Cue Column serves as the premise of the summary. The reason why it is important to connect them is because the student assumes this forms the coherent structure in the author's head.

Make sure to establish relationship between the ideas. For example, in a summary of Mancur Olson's *The Logic of Collective Action*, reviewers wrote this summary:

"When members of a group agree to work together to achieve a collective goal, each member as an individual faces powerful disincentives, Olson showed, that can frustrate the efforts of the group as a whole. For example, when each can foresee that his or her relatively small contribution to a collective enterprise will not affect its overall success, many will fail to contribute – a phenomenon known as free riding – and leave to everyone else the burden of supplying the collective good. As a consequence, collective enterprises based on cooperation, and supported by the entire collectivity, nevertheless often fail."

Notice that it is written focusing on the relationship of the ideas and not merely listing them down (that's what one does in a Cue Column). **A summary is not a paragraph form list but a paragraph of relationship of the ideas on the Cue Column. Notice the summary below utilizing the three points of this article.**

Step-by-step Instruction on Making the Most of Note-taking

Utilizing the Cornell Note-taking template, a student must enter in the Cue Column the main sections of the reading assignment to show important ideas upon which the writer is building upon. These main sections would then be annotated in the corresponding Note-taking Column space to buttress the strength of the main section.



SOURCES:

Read more at Suite101: [How to Take Notes & Organize Them: Teacher-to-Student Guide](http://www.suite101.com/content/how-to-take-notes--organize-them-teacher-to-student-guide-a335294#ixzz1EWqZu3b1)
<http://www.suite101.com/content/how-to-take-notes--organize-them-teacher-to-student-guide-a335294#ixzz1EWqZu3b1>

Information for this document taken from an article regarding a step-by-step instruction on making the most of note-taking on school readings. It uses the Cornell Note-taking page for maximum results. Feb 1, 2011 [John Phillip Pesebre](#)