

From Taking Notes to Taking Tests: Taking and Processing Notes

Why take notes?	Curve of Forgetting	Tips for Processing your Notes:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Listening & reading is not learning. Effective note-taking forces you to think about and process the material. Notes are a shortcut in the learning process. Good note takers study less. Notes are the first line-of-defense against the curve of forgetting (see image right). Effective note-taking engages the same parts of your brain that tests questions engage. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Process notes the same day you take them (up to 60% of material is lost after 9 hrs.) You should spend as much time processing notes as taking them. Mark vocab to make flashcards & put a star by items likely to be on test. Group similar items together & connect related terms visually. Highlight material by difficulty & write down any question you have.

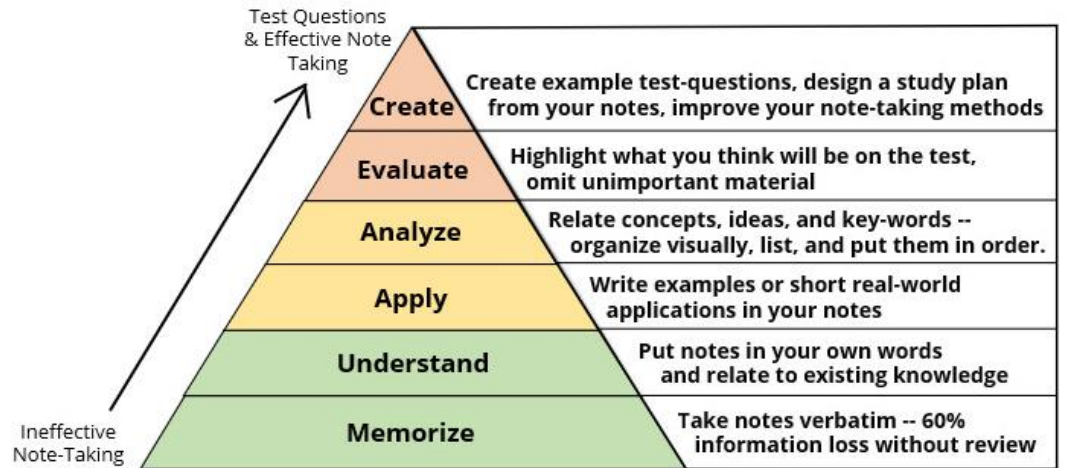
Take Notes
Process Notes

Steps to Effective Note Taking

Step One: Prepare	Step Two: Think	Step Three: Omit	Step Four: Process	Step Five: Prioritize	Step Six: Improve
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Preview your readings, noting headers, topics, & the overall structure of the material. Check your syllabus for hints on the topic Review notes from the last class period 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reading and re-reading is not learning Relate, apply, organize, and make decisions as you take notes – don't just transcribe! Taking notes by hand promotes thinking & better outcomes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Writing down and connecting key-points and concepts is far more important than capturing every word. You can worry about filling in information you omitted later during the processing stage 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Go back and process your notes <u>the same day you take them</u> Organize, relate, and fill in any missed info This step is key for retention and to ensure you critically process what you've learned 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Highlight by difficulty: Green: Understand Yellow: Partially know Red: Don't understand Write down any questions you have Both will be useful when you review and prepare for you test 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> After each test, review your note-taking methods to improve or change what doesn't work Look at the chart below and ask yourself if your methods engage you critically

Effective versus Ineffective Note-Taking

- New students see note-taking as a boring task you do before the real process of studying starts. In fact, taking and (especially) processing notes is a key part of the studying process itself.
- Poor note-taking—the kind governed by mindlessly transcribing material and lectures—is largely a waste of time.
- Effective note-taking, however, engages the same critical thinking skills you'll use on the test, acting as a massive shortcut to studying.
- The chart to the right shows the types of note-taking and note processing methods that engage your critical thinking the most

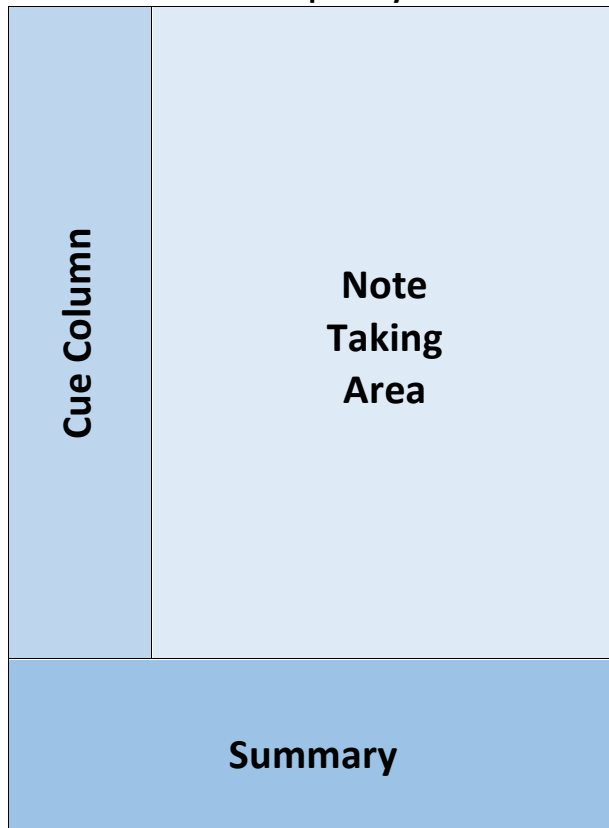


See Back for Note-taking Methods →

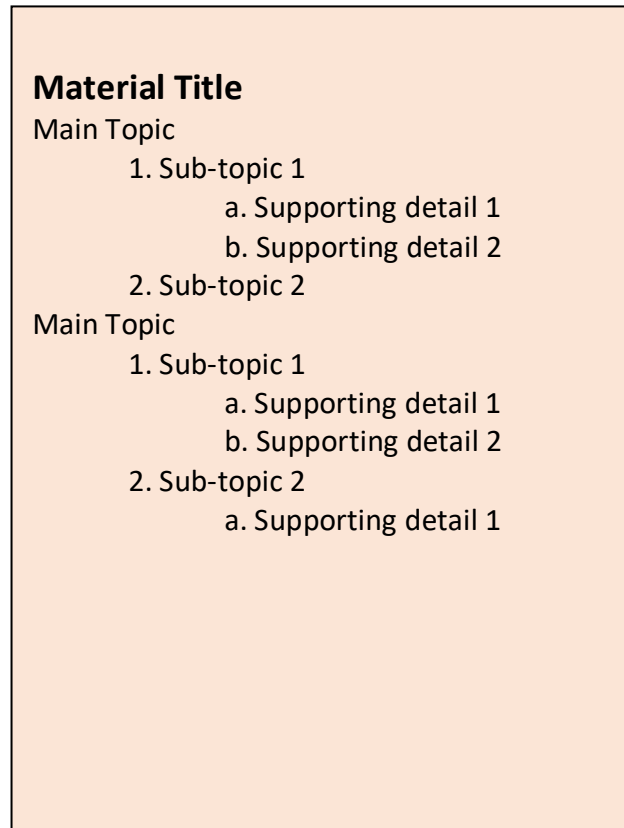
Three Proven Note-taking Methods

Cornell Method	Outline Method	Mapping Method
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Organized around 3 sections: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Cue Column: Main ideas, key-words, or concepts -Note Area: Elaborates on the cue column -Summary: Filled in after the notes are taken (within 24 hours), summarizing & processing the notes Great for organizing key ideas, summarizing material, or preparing for exams Cover the note section and use the cue area to review or turn key-words into questions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Organized based on indentation and letter/numbering schemes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Main Topic: Main ideas, key-words, or concepts -Sub-topic: Key related ideas or topics -Supporting Detail: Information about main or sub-topic Great for textbooks, instructor powerpoints, or when the material already has a structure to it Organizes material within a topic well but doesn't show relationships between other main topics 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Organized visually and spatially, using shapes, arrows, and colors, often branching outward Good for dense lectures and unorganized material Easy to relate and organize ideas, especially for visual learners Great if using note-taking software on a computer or tablet where a page has no defined space (ideas can branch in any direction infinitely and can be moved around at will)

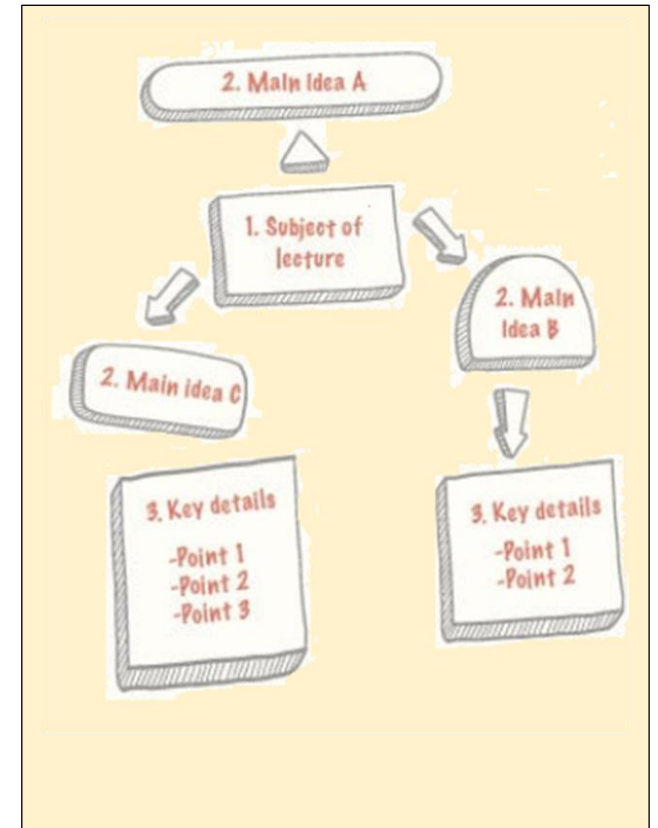
Cornell Paper Layout



Outline Paper Layout



Mapping Paper Layout



From Taking Notes to Taking Tests: Taking and Processing Notes

Note Processing & Study Methods:

Match the items in the left column to the corresponding item in the column on the right.

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|--|--|
| ___ 1). Take notes verbatim | a). When the material seems especially important |
| ___ 2). Re-write or re-type notes in your own words | b). When you have lots of definitions and vocabulary |
| ___ 3). Make flashcards from notes | c). When you have ranked the material by difficulty |
| ___ 4). Come up with examples or real-world applications | d). When you have lots of related concepts, ideas, and key-words |
| ___ 5). Make a concept map, graph, or diagram | e). When you are not sure the material is relevant |
| ___ 6). Organize, list, and reorder your notes | f). When you want to forget 60% of material after 9 hours |
| ___ 7). Highlight or star possible test material | g). When you have ideas or theories with practical application |
| ___ 8). Mark unnecessary material to omit or remove | h). When you are familiar with the material and test format |
| ___ 9). Organize notes by difficulty | i). When notes aren't relatable or familiar to what you already know |
| ___ 10). Design a study plan from your notes | j). When your notes are unorganized & unprocessed |
| ___ 11). Create test questions from your notes | k). When you know where to focus and what to spend less time on |

It is important for new students to examine their study habits, try new methods, and remove ineffective ones. Not all study methods are created equal, and some engage far more of your brain for far longer. Higher-order note processing methods reduce the time you take to study and increase its effectiveness. Answer the questions below to help find a new method and evaluate your current study habits.

How many of the above note processing methods have you used before? How many do you use regularly?

Do you do more of the items from the top of the list (less critical thinking) or the bottom (more critical thinking)?

Pick the highest order method you regularly use for note-taking/processing and try a method one step higher the next time you study. What method did you pick and why might it be more effective?